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Master's Thesis

Managing the Integration of Marketing and Sales in International B2B Companies: Challenges and Development Possibilities

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ABSTRACT

The well working collaboration between marketing and sales is going to be of great significance especially within B2B companies due to major changes the world and traditional structures of companies are facing. The traditional roles of marketing and sales have changed as well, as marketing is taking a greater responsibility of the B2B sales process. The phenomenon is more current due to worldwide Covid-19, which emphasizes the digital tools and the role of marketing further. A crucial factor in B2B companies' success will be, how marketing and sales are managed to integrate. This study will focus on how the integration of marketing and sales can be enhanced by the manageable activities within organizational factors.

The empirical part of this study was conducted as qualitative research and the semi-structured interviews included interviews from six management level people working with marketing or sales and the key persons in terms of the integration. The main findings emphasize the responsibility of management in enabling the integration and support the utilization of digital tools. Also, ensuring a common understanding and goals through effective and open communication and organizational procedures is key in successful integration.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Markkinoinnin ja myynnin hyvin toimiva yhteistyö on korostunut ja korostuu edelleen erityisesti B2B-yrityksissä, kun maailma ja näin myös liiketoiminnan perinteiset rakenteet ovat muutosten kourissa. Myynnin ja markkinoinnin perinteiset roolit ovat muuttuneet markkinoinnin vastuun kattaessa yhä suuremman osan B2B myyntiprosessista. Ilmiön ajankohtaisuutta on lisännyt maailmanlaajuinen Covid-19 pandemia, joka korostaa markkinointia ja digitaalisia työkaluja entisestään. B2B-yritysten menestymisen edellytykseksi nouseekin ratkaisevaksi tekijäksi se, kuinka markkinointi ja myynti pystytään integroimaan toiminnallisesti toisiinsa. Tässä tutkimuksessa keskitytään tutkimaan sitä, kuinka myynnin ja markkinoinnin integroimista voidaan tehostaa johdon hallinnassa olevien organisatoristen tekijöiden avulla.

Tutkimuksen empiirinen osa on toteutettu laadullisena tutkimuksena, jossa teemahaastatteluja hyödyntäen haastateltiin kuutta markkinoinnin tai myynnin johtohenkilöä sekä integroinnin avainhenkilöä. Tulokset korostavat johdon vastuuta ja toimia integroinnin mahdollistamisessa sekä puoltavat erityisesti digitaalisten välineiden implementointia. Yhteisen ymmärryksen luominen rooleista, vastuista sekä tavoitteista tehokkaan ja avoimen kommunikaation avulla sekä toimintamallien tasavertainen asetanta ovat avainasemassa menestyksekkääseen integrointiin.

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In Espoo, 5.4.2021

Emilia Karjula

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1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will first introduce the background and aim for this study, which will be followed by the preliminary literature review to present a summary of the existing literature and research on the topic. Then, the research questions and theoretical framework for this study will be presented. Lastly, key concepts and delimitations are defined and the research methodology for conducting this study will be discussed.

1.1 Background & Aim of the study

The world and business structures are facing significant changes, which makes the collaboration between marketing and sales today more important than ever in determining business' success (Andersen, Archacki, Mustaghni & Premo 2018). Hence, a question of crucial significance for individual B2B company's future and success is, how these functions are managed to integrate functionally with each other. The structure of the sales process has changed radically due to the development of technologies, unlimited availability of information as well as conscious and informed consumers. Earlier, the salespeople have been responsible for creating and awakening customer needs, whereas now the role of the sales especially in the beginning of the process has lightened. (Andersen et al. 2018; Von Schantz 2018) Today, the B2B buyer is empowered by the internet and most often the buying process begins online – by consuming marketing content (Andersen et al. 2018). Marketing's role as part of the sales-funnel has seemingly grown and it's now responsible for producing and distributing all that information for people to consume, making the collaboration pivotal between marketing and sales.

There has been relatively low interest in previous research for the interdepartmental relationship between marketing and sales, compared with marketing and other functions. Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy (2007) provide an explanation for the lack of research by noting, that sales and marketing are often seen as one function within an organization. This might be the actual structure in the smallest firms, but larger firms in fact have most frequently separated these two functions, hence being discrete departments. (Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy 2007; Biemans, Makovec Brenčič, & Malshe 2010) However, research suggest, that there is relatively little difference in the

interfunctional conflict or collaboration in organizations having their marketing and sales operating as two geographically separate functions or as a single joint function (Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy 2009). Due to internationalization and changes in environment, international businesses' departments may even locate in different countries and their international structures may create challenges and contradictions for operations (Quelch & Hoff 1986). Beside to increasing internationalization, the international focus in this study has been chosen as it emphasizes the emerging challenges further and also provides additional insights and perspectives to the subject. However, despite the increasing impact of internationalization, it lacks of existing research in the integration context.

The studies during the years have shown, that the collaboration between marketing and sales isn't working effectively and managers do recognize the need for greater coordination between marketing and sales. In fact, integrating sales and marketing has been emphasized as one of the key changes in organizations and is one of the main issues the management of the sales and marketing face. (Rouzies, Anderson, Kohli, Michaels, Weitz & Zoltners 2005) As Andersen et al. (2018) claim, for most companies the biggest problem hindering the collaboration between marketing and sales lies in the fact that marketing and sales are operating in separate silos, having their own processes, incentives, cultures and goals.

In today's changing environment, there are also other factors affecting the businesses and their operations, requiring them to adapt to the changing environment. A recent example can be found from the Covid-19 pandemic, which has driven companies to adapt and organize their processes and operations in a new way. This means, that in practice, companies have been required to rapidly adapt to the digital technologies and tools, which means not only new challenges but also possibilities for businesses. Due to Covid-19, the traditional sales meetings, marketing events and traveling are being forbidden and cancelled, which for its part hinders the starting of a sales process in B2B. Hence, digital technologies and -tools are increasing their emphasis as part of integrating marketing and sales. However, possibilities in technologies for enhancing the cooperation between marketing and sales have been noticed earlier. For instance, Järvinen & Taiminen (2016) represent that IT development creates new opportunities

for enhancing the cooperating between marketing and selling processes, by for example, enhancing the communication and dataflow.

1.2 Preliminary review

The aim of the literature review is to identify and organize the main concepts of the study by briefly introducing the existing literature and research on the topic (Rowley & Slack 2004). Hence, the preliminary literature of this study will summarize the existing knowledge from previous studies and literature of integrating marketing and sales and the manageable challenges emerging between the two functions.

Despite of the strategic importance of marketing-sales interface, the documented literature is limited. Can be seen, that attention towards marketing-sales interface has been lower than it has been with other functions and for instance, between marketing and R&D, manufacturing & production, product development, finance and quality. For the most part, the existing research about the marketing-sales interface is conceptual. (Malshe 2011) On the other hand, the perspectives and backgrounds of the marketing and sales departments can be seen to be more similar than they are for example, in R&D and marketing functions according to Rouzies et al. (2005), which not only leaves space for assumptions but also creates possibilities for development within organizations. There have been reported several outcomes in previous studies, that suggest the integration of marketing and sales, including enhancing the performance of sales, affecting overall business performance, creating customer-value as well as enhancing learning capabilities. (Rouzies et al. 2005; Malshe 2011) Besides, Andersen et al. (2018) note, that integrating marketing and sales is crucial today due to digitalization and changing customer behavior, which have changed the B2B field.

In order to analyze the marketing-sales interface and to successfully improve the collaboration, the previous studies represent different manageable organizational factors to explore. From these organizational factors can be found the causes for the gap between marketing and sales as well as areas for development. Previous studies represent both impediments and accelerators, to illustrate best practices for enhancing the integration. In fact, Madhani (2016) states, that researching the impediments as well as facilitators and integrators is pivotal when analyzing the relationship between

marketing and sales. He proposes that major causes behind conflicts arise from communication, different timeframes and goals, as well as separate identities. According to his study, marketing and sales are usually managed and structured as separate functions with independent goals. Sales usually focus on relationships and short-term tactical objectives while marketing pursues for long-term perspective such as brand building and adopts a data-oriented and analytical behavior. The study shows, that sales-teams frequently complain about the lack of up-to-date information whereas marketing-teams say the information they have gathered isn't used by sales. (Madhani 2016)

Andersen et al. (2018) indicate to their experience and articulate, that management is setting up the common goals, building the culture and teams as well as deciding ways to communicate. Hence, there is a vital role for management in creating a sense of a common purpose and organizing the structures and processes in an effective way. (Andersen et al. 2018) Moreover, Madhani (2016) support the view by noting, that top management has a pivotal role in reducing the inter-functional conflict. He also notes, that it is the responsibility of the top management to take care of the complex relationship between marketing and sales and enhance working collaboratively.

The study by Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy (2007) show the complexity in information flows. Their findings indicate, that there might be meaningful market information available, but the information and data isn't shared or analyzed due to lack of structure and established processes. Can be also seen, that both informal and formal communication is required in order to make sure that all activities are coordinated between marketing and sales. The study shows, that the lowest level of collaboration was found in a case company adopting only informal communication. For this company, the market information from the sales was held by management, which they didn't know how and didn't have the processes to disseminate the information between marketing and sales departments. (Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy 2007)

Madhani (2016) also proposes, that the collaboration between marketing and sales requires effective distribution of information and adjusting of both department's activities to adapt to the concerns and aspects of each other. However, in terms of sharing and adjusting, the organizational culture has a pivotal role. It's also suggested to

connect company's marketing automation or analytics software with CRM system. Hence, the communication would be enhanced as marketing would be able to give more essential information to sales, and the same way sales would provide feedback for marketing about which program is successful, which would help the decision-making and planning of marketing and sales activities. Andersen et al. (2018) bring up, that regular communication is the key and notes, that nowadays many successful leaders invest in frequent communication via multiple channels, which also makes the alignment and planning of activities easier. Furthermore, Malshe (2011) suggest based on the study, that firms should build communication bridges across different levels between marketing and sales functions, in order to connect the marketing- and salespeople at the middle and bottom of the way. However, Rouzies et al. (2005) represent an inverted U-shaped relationship in cooperation and communication. This means, that according to their findings an increased communication may also impede the collaboration.

The study conducted by Rouzies et al. (2005) represent a conceptual framework and suggest several manageable actions in order to improve the alignment between marketing and sales. They articulate also the reasons for conflict and note, that salespeople usually focus on, for example month-to-month sales while marketing teams focus on building long-term competitive advantage. In addition, while salespeople are constantly contacting the individual customers and prospects, marketers handle aggregations of these customers and analyze the market data in order to understand them better. According to the study, the communication flow between marketing and sales isn't working nor the activities are supporting one another. The study shows, that the lack of relevant data as well as understanding of each other's roles are key sources causing the conflicts. (Rouzies et al. 2005) Furthermore, Malshe (2011) represents the challenges between marketing and sales and supports Rouzies et al. (2005) and Madhani (2016) by noting, that varying objectives, lack of role definition and cultural mismatch, are working against collaboration between marketing and sales.

In respect of international companies, the international structures of the companies are creating challenges and contradictions for operations. Challenges for international companies may emerge for example from adapting the operations and goals with different areas or countries. (Quelch & Hoff 1986) In addition, as the business grow, the

functions can be managed from different areas and countries, which may lead to standardizing elements and cause the clash with the local needs (Dewhurst, Harris & Heywood 2012). In addition, Dewsnap & Jobber (2000) propose, that a close physical proximity improves the integration between marketing and sales. They note, that long distances hinder the collaboration causing for example decision-making delays, and argue, that the physical location of sales vis-à-vis their counterpart in marketing is crucial.

Dewsnap & Jobber (2000) note in their study, that formalization and de-centralization as part of organizational structure have been found to have positive effect on the integration of marketing and sales. This means, that increased formalization leads to clearly defining roles, responsibilities and performance standards, which eventually is shown in higher level of integration. The research also suggests, that de-centralization and increased participation to decision making are positively related to cross-functional integration.

Järvinen & Taiminen (2016) finds that behind IT development lies various opportunities for improving the interfaces between marketing and B2B sales process. The study contributes to the gaps between marketing and sales and demonstrates, that aligning these processes with marketing automation will have a significant and enhancing impact on the collaboration. Moreover, Madhani (2016) discuss the value of IT by stating, that IT resources can be used for example to improve organization's internal communication, which in fact, also has a key role when integrating marketing and sales besides the fact, that there might be new possibilities for development.

Andersen et al. (2018) discuss in their study about the changing environment caused by digitalization and digital tools which are reshaping the B2B marketplace. However, they note, that the changes can't be found only in technology, but it can be also seen as a paradigm shift in how B2B consumers are consuming information and content, making informed buying decisions and engaging with the salespeople. Hence, the importance of integrating marketing and sales is now greater than ever. According to their experience with many B2B market leaders and senior marketing and sales executives, it is necessary for B2B companies to transform the way of engaging customers, using data and technology, structuring the organization and acquiring new skills.

Furthermore, they propose, that integrating marketing and sales nowadays is already a prerequisite in order to get the whole value from the possibilities that technology and data provide. (Andersen et al. 2018) Furthermore, Redding (2015) supports the view by stating, that technology such as marketing automation or CRM systems can create a framework for people to utilize in order to build best practice sales and marketing integration. Hence, technology alone isn't the solution, but it can be used as an integrative tool towards better alignment and goals that have been set up.

Table 1. Main resources for existing literature and research contributing to this study.

Author & Research	Theme	Key Findings
Andersen, P., Archacki, R., Mustaghni, B. & Premo, R. (2018). Building an integrated marketing and sales engine for B2B.	Changing roles of marketing and sales pushing towards integration.	Digital transformation is a key in the integration.
Järvinen, J., & Taiminen, H. (2016). Harnessing marketing automation for B2B content marketing.	Using marketing automation in B2B content marketing with a contribution to sales- and marketing funnels.	By integrating sales and marketing with marketing automation and CRM systems, the efficiency of marketing and sales is improved.
Rouziès, D., Anderson, E., Kohli, A. K., Michaels, R. E., Weitz, B. A., & Zoltners, A. A. (2005). Sales and Marketing Integration: a Proposed Framework.	Conceptual framework proposing a set of integrating mechanisms.	Several manageable factors influencing the integration. Integration results as a better business performance.
Meunier-Fitz Hugh, K. & Piercy, N. (2007). Exploring collaboration between sales and marketing.	Integrators and facilitators assisting with the collaboration of marketing and sales.	There is a positive correlation between the integration and enhanced business performance. Management has a pivotal role in the integration.
Madhani, P. (2016). Competitiveness and Sustaining Performance: Integrating Sales and Marketing.	Major source of conflicts between marketing and sales and major facilitators for integration.	Role of the management becomes crucial in the integration.

In order that company is able to stay successful, the management of B2B companies needs to act and respond to the changes and prerequisites by integrating marketing and sales. Therefore, management needs to rearrange and think the organizational

factors that affect the integration as well as understand the prevailing source of conflicts between marketing and sales in order to be successful in the integration.

1.3 Research questions

In order to achieve the aim of this study, the main research question is:

How the integration of marketing and sales can be enhanced by manageable enablers and what needs to be taken into account?

There are two sub-questions provided to answer the main research question. These sub-questions aid the main question and provide such essential information, that leads to give a comprehensive answer for the main research question. The two sub-questions are:

What are the challenges between marketing and sales in terms of integration?

What are the manageable organizational factors enabling the alignment and how those can be developed to enhance the integration?

1.4 Theoretical framework

Theories and concepts in theoretical framework aim at explaining, predicting and understanding the phenomena as well as often challenges and extends the current knowledge. Theoretical framework represents the structure that either supports or holds the theory of a study. The theory explaining the existence of the study's research problem is introduced and described by theoretical framework. (Sacred Heart University) The theoretical framework of this study is described below in Figure 1 and represents the path from the emerging research problem and starting point to the operating area and then aim of the study. It bears the research questions and perspective, which here is the manageable organizational factors to enhance the integration of marketing and sales.
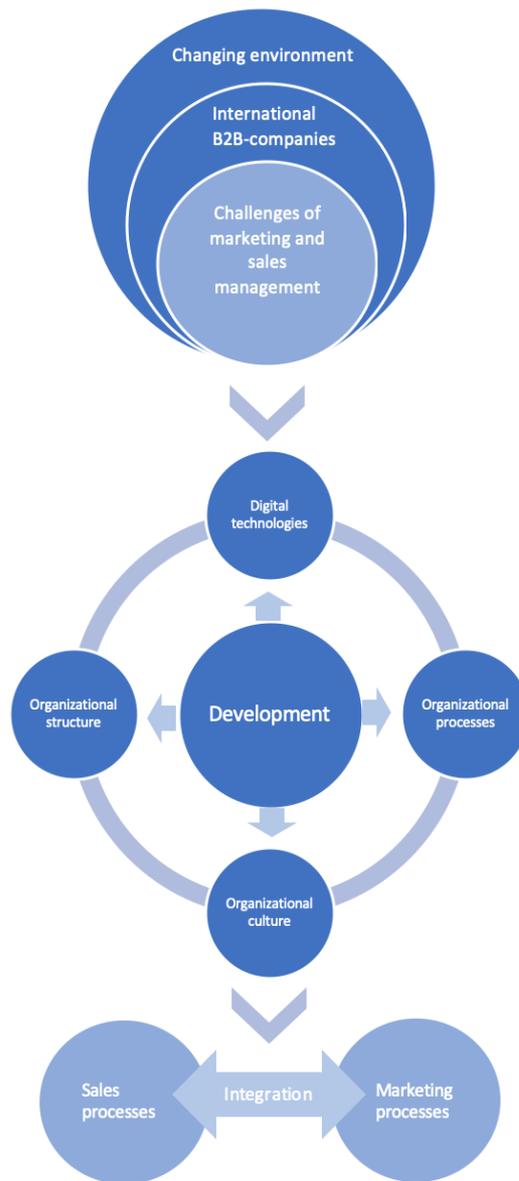
Figure 1. Theoretical framework.

The focus in this study is in international B2B firms and managing the integration of marketing and sales processes. Figure 1. illustrates the theoretical framework as a process for this research. First it shows the context from which the research problem and importance of integrating marketing and sales arise. Then it moves to the integration challenges and to the main focus of this study, by introducing the managerially controllable areas in which also the development will happen, to integrate and enhance the integration of marketing and sales. Lastly, by developing these four areas, a successful outcome would be integrated marketing and sales processes. Rouzies et al. (2005) define these organizational factors showed in *Figure 1.* as integrating

mechanisms, which this study will focus on. The next chapter will introduce the key concepts of this study, which are now briefly defined and went through more detailed in the theory part.

1.5 Definitions and key concepts

In this chapter, the main concepts regarding the study are defined. The concepts explained here have risen to a significant role in previous studies in terms of the researched topic and are common areas for discussions around the phenomenon.

Marketing process is about understanding the marketplace and consumer needs, constructing activities that create customer value, building strong relationships and engaging with the customers as well as capturing the value from the customers in return. (Kotler, Armstrong & Opresnik 2018, 29-30)

Sales process is a set of systematic and repeatable steps for salespeople to take in order to take the prospect from all the way from awareness to closing the deal and making a prospect a customer. Traditionally, there are 7 steps in the sales process, including prospecting, pre-approach, approach, presentation, handling objections, closing and follow-up. (Plaksij 2020; Dubinsky 1980)

Organizational culture is about how organization do things. It is the consistent and observable patterns of behavior within an organization and includes the values and rituals which are integrating the people in the organization. (Watkins 2013)

Organizational structure represents the framework for the relations on jobs, operating processes, systems, people and teams or groups making efforts in order to achieve the set-up goals. It can be seen also as way of dividing, organizing and coordinating organizational activities. (Ahmady, Mehrpour & Nikooravesh 2016) The roles, power and responsibilities that are determined, coordinated and controlled and also the distribution of information between different levels of management are determined according to organizational structure. (Business Dictionary 2020a)

Organizational processes are the actions, steps or the activities, that are planned and designed to be achieved eventually. Organizational processes help companies in utilizing the company's resources and capabilities and also to recognize competitive advantage. Clearly defined processes help in clarifying the roles, responsibilities and transitional procedures. Organizational processes include for example the goals and objectives, processes for communication and incentives regarding the marketing-sales interface. (Rouzies et al. 2005; Hughes, Le Bon & Malshe 2012)

Digital technologies are used in changing the way of operating. Digital technologies can be utilized for creating new or modifying current business processes, culture as well as customer experiences in order to respond to the changing business and market requirements. (Salesforce 2020) Digital technologies can be defined as electronic tools, resources, systems or devices, that can be utilized for generating, storing or processing data (Victoria State Government 2019).

1.6 Delimitations

In this study the focus will be on international B2B tech-companies, since the international aspect is essential in order to comprehensive research the phenomenon beside that there isn't a lot of existing research regarding the international aspect with integrating marketing and sales. B2B-context is chosen due to the interesting changes particularly concerning the B2B marketplace, which entails actions from the B2B companies in terms of integrating marketing and sales (Andersen et al. 2018). Tech industry is chosen as a modern and developing sector to bring coherency and comparison between companies in the same industry. In addition, a hypothesis can be, that tech-industries might be ahead with the utilization of digital tools, which this study will research as well. This study focuses on organizational level and especially managerial view, including the managerially controllable activities within organization in order to manage effectively the integration of marketing and sales. This study will not focus on the outcomes as a result of integration.

1.7 Research methodology

This study is carried out as a qualitative research, since it requires in-depth information around the topic. In the empirical part, management level persons that are associated with the marketing and sales from international companies in B2B sector are interviewed. The interviews are conducted as individual semi-structured interviews and are consisting of a dialogue between the researcher and interviewee. Semi-structured interview provides a flexible interview protocol, where the interviewer asks a set of pre-defined but open-ended questions and may support and control the interview with follow-up questions. (DeJonckheere & Vaughn 2019)

In general, qualitative research comes into question, when the researched phenomenon is new or requires profound information. This kind of unmeasurable phenomenon include persons' values, motivation and intentions. In qualitative research, the standpoint for conducting an analyze, is to understand what the person means. (Puusa, Reijonen, Juuti & Laukkanen 2015, 85) On the other hand, as Merriam (1995) notes, qualitative methods can be used also for situations and phenomena, that are already familiar but would require new perspectives and basis for exploring the phenomenon. In qualitative research, the focus is on daily interactions, how things turn out as well as individual meanings of the events for people that are included (Lapan, Quartaroli & Riemer 2011). Independence is one of the main features that also divides qualitative research from quantitative. Thus, here the gathered data is being analyzed as an entity and exceptions are ignored.

2. CONTEXTUAL DRIVERS FOR ALIGNING MARKETING AND SALES

The world and traditional business structures are facing massive changes now and in the future. Digitalization and advances in technology, globalization, demographic changes as well as the recent worldwide pandemic Covid-19 have challenged companies to act and change the way of doing and organizing businesses. (Chris Cox 2014; Reeves & Deimler 2011) There can be seen to appear a request for reconsidering the traditional organization structures and creating so called integrator roles such as CRM process managers, aiming to integrate relevant business functions. Contributions show, that there are various contextual issues that are forcing marketing and sales to become closer as functional units. (Matthyssens & Johnston 2006)

The shift from more traditional organizational structures into focusing more on network models for example, emphasizing the cooperation as the key element, is becoming a significant factor for success. In practice, this would mean shifting from the traditional and common functional structure, where the functions are organized separately as well as managed independently of the others more into horizontal structure, which encourages to cooperation and decentralized decision making. The dissolution of these traditional organization structures, which the current changing B2B environment requires now more than ever, increases and supports the collaboration between functions, which is crucial particularly between marketing and sales. (Majorel 2019; Andersen et al. 2018) Hence, these changing B2B-circumstances make it even more critical to coordinate the different functional units like marketing and sales in particular, to utilize the skills and knowledge in order to solve business challenges (Pfeffer & Salanick 1978).

Digitalization has had a boosting role in many ways when it comes to changes in business structures and hence the importance of integrating marketing and sales. Research have found digitalization to be one of the main drivers for interfunctional coordination as well as an enhancing factor for coordination between the functions. (Granath 2019; Ruiz-Alba et al. 2019) From a marketing and sales perspective, due to digitalization, all the required information for the consumer is available online, and

consumers are able to find all the information about the product or service, compare variables and do the research online. This has radically changed the role of sales as consumers are no longer dependent only on the information they get from sales. This on the other hand means, that the information consumers are getting from the internet is produced by marketing, which has increased marketing's role in sales process and in fact, more than half of the sales process is depending on the efforts by marketing. This, as part of entity is emphasizing the importance of marketing and sales working together and aligning these functions. (Granath 2019)

However, not only digitalization affects to the consumer side but also the way functions such as marketing and sales operate and co-operate in an organization. According to a study by Ruiz-Alba et al. (2019), digitalization seems to highlight three areas particularly when it comes to cooperation between functions such as marketing and sales. Communication was one of the key areas, where digitalization had a significant impact as information was able to be shared more easily between employees and functions that might locate in different places. Due to for example video conferences and the use of digital sharing platforms the cooperation between functions has increased enormously. Marketing- and salespeople are able to share information more effectively with each other and the essential information is available and accessible which is critical in terms of the better coordination. However, it is also important for the managers to understand the role of digitalization. (Ruiz-Alba et al. 2019)

Rapid and unexpected changes in the world and environment, that affect also business operations are becoming more common, which can be seen for example from the recent pandemic and crisis Covid-19. This has raised new expectations and pressure to the management, as it is expected to provide effective responses to organize activities in a new way (D'Auria & De Smet 2020). Changes and crisis like this force businesses to reorganize their processes and the way of working. Covid-19 acted as a booster for digitalization and one of the biggest visible changes for organizations can be found from the communication ways. (Hetemäki 2020; Tilastokeskus 2020) Business meetings have shifted from conference rooms to online, which on the other hand has made it possible for everyone to join despite the geographical location. This is notable especially, because salespeople are usually dispersed and apart from marketing (Kotler et al. 2006). Covid-19 has also put more focus on sharing information

and supporting tools such as cloud service. Cloud services have become more valuable as information and data needs to be available for everyone, which remote work is emphasizing. (Alashhab, Anbar, Singh, Leau, Al-Sai & Alhayja'a 2020) These facts are meaningful especially for effective marketing and sales collaboration, where information needs to be shared and utilized effectively for example by communication channels of CRM systems. Has been noticed, that due to the crisis, barriers regarding sharing of data have been overcome. (European Commission 2020) According to a research by Elisa, there has been a significant change especially in the sales process, as for example, more than fifty percent of the sales meetings have been conducted online and the use of digital marketing channels has almost doubled. In addition, there has been an increase in the use of internal digital communication tools as well as digital monitoring systems. (Elisa 2020) All these activities need attention from the management, as they need to be arranged as effectively as possible in order to stay profitable and successful in the future.

Another pull factor for aligning marketing and sales is internationalization and its opportunities for businesses which often drives companies to reorganizing their business structures. Internationalization causes and drives, for its part, structural changes such as relocating divisions and functional units (Parker 2005, 65). Can be said, that when people are physically close, they are more likely to interact more with each other and there are better chances for the functions to work more collaboratively. It is also characteristic, that marketing function is more centralized, while salespeople remain dispersed even geographically. (Kotler, Rackham & Krishnaswamy 2006) This, on the other hand, is speeded up by the internationalization and globalization as companies are looking for competitive advantage and business opportunities abroad. In addition, this emphasizes not only the challenges management is facing but also the importance of aligning marketing and sales.

3. INTEGRATING MARKETING AND SALES

Some researchers define interdepartmental integration as the degree to which functions or department engage in common activities. It has been perceived as the degree to which functions work together and share resources in order to make decisions, develop plans and assess performance. (Rouzies et al. 2005) The existing research have observed, that the relationship between marketing and sales has been a critical factor for success within companies but the knowledge about the subject is at a low level (Kovalainen 2013). The interfunctional relationship between marketing and sales has been given relatively little, though increasing attention by researchers and popular press, and the existing marketing and sales literature are stressing the need for functional interfaces (Hughes et al. 2012). Regardless of the various attempts companies have taken to address the issue, the misalignment still remains (Patterson 2007). Has been also suggested, that there is space for improvement in marketing and sales cooperation when it comes to marketing and sales management process. Furthermore, the need for aligning marketing and sales is growing due to several factors and changes in the environment that were also covered in Chapter 2., as well as prerequisites for growing the business, which is why the misalignment can be ignored no longer (Andersen et al. 2018).

Kelly, Johnston & Danheiser (2017) argue, that in order for a company to survive and succeed, the focus should be in creating value for customers, which on the other hand requires the alignment of marketing, sales and customers. B2B companies are typically heavily product focused and often slower in adapting the customer-centric model (Redding 2015). The misalignment is expensive for companies and it's been considered costing them over one trillion dollars per year. Hence, the matter of alignment is an important case for the management and truly something, that is worth management's attention and focus. To justify management's role slightly, can be seen, that the misalignment between marketing and sales is leading businesses to fail around the globe. What is more, the lack of marketing and sales alignment is found to be the main reason for organization's annual stagnant or declining revenue. (Matthyssens & Johnston 2006; MacDonald 2021) In fact, well aligned companies had over 32%

annual revenue growth while less aligned companies had an average of 7% decline in revenue according to Forrester Research (Litt 2015).

Marketing and sales units have been traditionally seen to work independently and in silos, which not only hinders the cross-functional coordination of marketing and sales but also may prevent the business to grow, for instance (Madhani 2016). For example, Aaker (2009) uses silos to demonstrate the dynamics of independent functions. Can be also noted, that when functional units lack the coordination and work towards different directions, it may generate conflicts in terms of goals as well as result as units working in silos. (Aaker 2009; Ruiz-Alba, Guesalaga, Ayestáran & Morales Mediano 2019) By integrating marketing and sales, the two teams work together for commonly shared goals in order to achieve the overall aim of increased revenue, which they are both responsible for (Granath 2019; Patterson 2007).

Rouzies et al. (2005) define the marketing and sales relationship as the extent to which the marketing and sales activities carried out by both functional units are supporting each other. The integration of marketing and sales encases the interaction as well as collaboration. Interaction means developing structured communication between marketing and sales functions by means of meetings and sharing information. Collaboration imply working closely and inter-functional teamwork. (Rouzies et al. 2005; Homburg, Jensen, Krohmer 2008; Kahn 1996) Hence, can be noted, that marketing and sales integration means, that the marketing and sales processes are aimed to get closer and cooperate with each other. Research propose different steps and models for effective integration between marketing and sales and there can be observed to be common themes from which the integration stems from. The frequently suggested areas to focus on in the process of aligning marketing and sales arise from communication, management, organization process,- structure and -design as well as defining the roles and aligning the goals. (Madhani 2016; Patterson 2007; Malshe 2011; Andersen et al. 2018)

There have been several achieved positive outcomes by aligning marketing and sales. MacDonald (2021) discuss in the case study, that according to Aberdeen Group, companies that have aligned marketing and sales effectively have generated better brand awareness as well as increased the average size of a deal. Moreover, the research

show, that successful alignment has resulted increasing the revenue by 32%, win rates by 38%, as well as retaining 36% more existing customers. The same case study represents, that according to the findings by Sirius Decisions, B2B companies with strongly aligned marketing and sales have achieved 24% faster growth and 27% faster profit growth in a period of over three years. (MacDonald 2021)

3.1 Evolving roles of marketing and sales

Marketing- and sales roles are often poorly understood by each other within an organization but also evolving together with the environmental changes. Due to the undefined roles as well as scarce resources marketing and sales are fighting for in a company, conflicts arise regularly (Kotler et al. 2006). If taken into account the dominant development of marketing- and sales roles, the clarification of each's role becomes to an even greater significance in successful aligning of marketing and sales. Can be said, that traditionally the sales were responsible for marketing, sales and customer service of the potential customers, but today many of the traditional responsibilities of sales have been distributed to marketing (Ropponen 2018). These changes originate from the change and evolution in consumer habits, expectations and how they purchase, which has made the traditional sales techniques ineffective. (Jones, Brown, Zoltners & Weitz 2005; MacDonald 2021)

Traditionally the salesperson has been the only source of information for the consumer, which has now changed (Laaksonen 2015). Nowadays, most of consumers' purchase processes are conducted online and it's been found, that in fact, 53% of consumers prefer to use online to do the research rather than interacting with a salesperson. There has been a notably shift from salesperson's task to awake consumer's interest by for example cold call towards that consumers do the information search by themselves as the research by MacDonald (2021) show, that today 90% of the buyers are not even willing to take a cold call. According to this particular research as well as research by Järvinen & Taiminen (2015), there have been findings, which indicate, that an average B2B-buyer rely on online sources for information search and will not contact or wish not to be contacted by a salesperson before they have completed approximately 60% of the sales process. Can be said, that sales in fact is part of the

wider marketing mix. As over half of the traditional sales process is now depending on the efforts made by marketing, there is a serious need for these two functions to work together in order to ensure, that leads are converted into customers and revenue is generated. (McDonald 2021; Granath 2019)

Figure 2. Representation of the change in marketing and sales roles during the purchase process according to MacDonald (2021).

As the Figure 2 indicates, the funnel representing marketing and sales processes within an organization has evolved and will be evolving in the future. The change has moved weight from sales to marketing, making a sales-driven funnel more into marketing-driven funnel. What is more, the consumer is gaining more control of the process as they are self-serving their needs instead of engaging with a salesperson, which emphasizes the role of marketing at the beginning of the buying process even more. (MacDonald 2021; Neeson 2013) Executives have recognized, that beside of traditional 4P's product, pricing, place and promotion, the parts such as segmentation, targeting and positioning, are nowadays belonging more and more to tasks of marketing, which highlights marketing as an independent player and also leads to increased disagreements. (Kotler et al. 2006)

Due to the active role of B2B-buyers in information search and evaluation online, marketing and especially content marketing has risen into crucial role in terms of supporting sales. Marketing has become more content-driven as it aims to create awareness and interest as well as engage potential customers during the early stages (Andersen et al. 2018) Beside that a potential new B2B customer uses internet as an initial source of information during the purchase process, the first touch point is also typically occurring online. (Wiersema 2013; Järvinen & Taiminen 2015) This means, that the marketing efforts and the produced content usually represent the first interaction for the consumer with the product, service or brand. Furthermore, the content and hence actions by marketing, which are already covering over half of the purchasing process, play critical role whether the consumer wants to proceed in the process and talk with a salesperson. When the process proceeds to discussion with a salesperson, the prospective buyer has already positioned the product beforehand based on the available content, which can cause additional challenges for the salesperson. (Neeson 2013)

The whole process of taking the prospective buyer through the sales process and converting into customer is becoming more data-driven due to introduction of various digital technologies and -tools. With the help of sales- and marketing automation tools and CRM systems, it's now possible to gather a wide range of data about prospects as well as share and utilize the data effectively between marketing and sales. The data-driven process does not only affect to the work of marketing and sales but also makes the cooperation between these two units more efficient. (Järvinen & Taiminen 2015; MacDonald 2021; Kotler et al. 2006)

3.2 Managerial challenges between marketing and sales

Top management is represented to be responsible for the complex and prevailing relationship as well as improving the alignment between marketing and sales (Holden 1999). There can be seen to be several areas that the management is able to affect by its actions and attitudes such as the goals, culture, communication and coordination of processes, for example. At the same time, these areas can be seen to represent as the source of conflicts between marketing and sales. (Madhani 2016)

There has been historically a tension between marketing and sales, which has been bred by various factors, such as physical distance which is aggravating the culture clash. Marketing- and sales organizations are typically separated geographically and led from different places, which is one of the accelerating factors for marketing and sales working typically in silos. (Madhani 2016) In addition, according to Madhani (2016), these two functions are usually managed differently and whereas marketing is typically more centralized, sales is decentralized. In addition, marketing and sales managers have quite different norms and philosophies leading to different conflicts (Beverland, Steel & Dapiran 2006). These attributes highlight the management and communication problem between these units (Kotler et al. 2006). These kinds of situations may be emphasized especially within international companies, where local perspective needs to be taken into account and implemented when planning the marketing activities. This might also contribute to contradictions with sales. (Quelch & Hoff 1986) In terms of international companies it is seldom the case, that global standardized marketing would be applied, which means even larger number of local managers in different countries with different goals and usually condemning the centralized decision making. (Quelch & Hoff 1986)

In addition, physical distance creates natural gaps to communication, and communication is highlighted in the literature to be one of the main challenges between marketing and sales yet itself. Ineffective communication is leading to eroding mutual understanding and trust (Altschuler 2017). The communication and interaction are hindered due to physical distance, which then leads to lack in exchanging work, resources and assistance (Ruekert & Walkert 1987). Due to long distances and marketing and sales locating separately especially in international firms, there is a lack of face-to-face meetings between the two functions. Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic has decreased face-to-face meetings into the minimum, which assumingly will affect also future's interaction.

According to a research, situations that require problem solving or resolving differences would be most effectively communicated face-to-face whereas issues such as information updates would be communicated effectively online (Skopp, Workman, Adler & Grahm 2015). It's also researched, that face-to-face communication is a key contributor in building the relationships in various ways (Hinds & Kiesler 2002, 93). As a

conclusion can be observed, that this is highlighting the challenge of integrating marketing and sales, as there appears the kind of matters that would according to Skopp et al. (2015) require face-to-face meetings. However, the major problem from the management's perspective is seemingly to have the relevant content and people involved in the meetings, that will then boost the cooperation towards more effective outcome (Kotler et al. 2006).

Emphasized by the overall communication challenge, marketing and sales lack of closed-loop communication flow as well as feedback mechanism. This problem becomes visible as marketing complaints about sales poor leads' follow-up and on the other hand, sales are complaining about lack of timely available and irrelevant information as well as unqualified leads from marketing (Cespedes 1994; Madhani 2016). As Kotler et al. (2006) discuss about the importance of communication and highlight the need for sales and marketing to know when and with whom they should be communicating with, can be said, that the issue is part of something to be considered by the management (Madhani 2016). This can be seen to arise from misunderstanding of each other's roles and responsibilities, which for its part, is causing even more contradictions and should be also taken care by the management (Kotler et al. 2006; Madhani 2016). In addition to understanding each other's roles and responsibilities, language barrier is causing wrong assumptions and misunderstandings. Not only are both sides usually unaware of each other's roles but also speak different language, starting from different perceptions of leads and the nurturing process (Madhani 2016).

Whereas marketing think sales is too myopic and focusing too much on individuals, not focusing on the larger market or having a long-term perspective, sales say that marketing isn't aware of the reality of the marketplace. Both undervalue other's contributions or doesn't understand the roles nor the goals of each other's. (Kotler et al. 2006) Hence, another major challenge when it comes to managing marketing and sales and their alignment arises from misaligned goals, even though both are working towards common aim of increased revenue. Typically marketing and sales are setting their goals and strategies separately. However, even though the goals were aligned, it has been found, that it would still miss a linkage in order to achieve those goals. The common meetings have been found to focus on wide range on things instead of

focusing on addressing the relevant issues and aligned targets. (Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy 2009)

There is a case example from a fortune 250 B2B company, whose novel product line had been failed. The company was blaming the failure in the timing of product delivery or inefficient sales. However, the reason for the failure was found from misaligned goals between marketing and sales. Particularly it was from pricing and sales compensation strategies which weren't aligned with the aim of growing market share in which the product price was based. (Ritz, Steward, Morgan & Hair Jr. 2018) Marketing might want to pursue a premium pricing strategy in order to build and maintain such premium positioning or achieve revenue goals. However, this usually conflicts with sales' discount pricing, that sales pursue to meet their sales targets. The situation can eventually be solved by management (Kotler et al. 2006).

In international business, making the procedures, operations models as well as goals applicable at a regional- and country level is challenging which then serves as a place for contradictions and emphasized the role of goals (Giammarresi 2016). For example, management's decision, whether to approach with more standardized global marketing strategy or adapting to the local level, can be seen to be a key role in determining also the cooperation between marketing and sales. This is because the big issue of having standardized strategy is about tailoring the concept to fit everywhere, which might be challenging in terms of goals and local needs. In terms of decision making, marketing is typically one of the last functions that is directed centrally. It's common for marketing to have local country managers who are responsible for making decisions in that country. (Quelch & Hoff 1986) Their goal is usually directed towards future and it's typical for marketing to have a long-term orientation (Montgomery & Webster 1997). In fact, most companies reward marketing on their performance in isolation from other departments and their goals, and marketing is usually aimed to increase the market share. (Coombs & Gomez-Mejia 1991; Turner 1979).

On the other hand, it's typical to have a manager for a region, which contains several countries. It's becoming more common that companies require their regional managers to reach profit and sales goals not only for each product but also every country within the regions. These managers have a responsibility of profit-and-loss for their

own markets and sometimes it might be the case, that sales are sacrificing long-term global profit in order to maximize short-term profits in a few countries. This can be also explained by the sales' incentives that are driving towards short-term focus. (Ritz et al. 2018) It may be the case, that the goals frequently set up by top management are misaligned and against to which both marketing and sales performance is measured. Hence, marketing and sales would be therefore rewarded for behaviors and results that are inconsistent with each other's objectives and thus hinder the collaboration. (Madhani 2016)

Another main area for challenges is concerning the variety and volume of content which requires various people, skills, processes and technologies in order to success-fully deliver localized content that is targeting global markets. (Giammarresi 2016) Due to the evidence from Järvinen & Taiminen's (2015) research of B2B buyers' increasing interest towards digital communication channels in the purchasing decisions and marketing's increasing significancy in that process, the produced content and content marketing overall is a good example of a procedure, that isn't applicable to every country as standardized (Segura 2019). Hence and overall, it's important to have such leadership to manage differences of culture and operating conditions across the countries (Godiwalla 2015).

The trend of digitalization as well as Covid-19 has changed not only the behavior of B2B buyers but also sellers' activities, which also has pushed marketers and sellers to rethink and design the digital customer journey in a new way. The journey of getting a prospect into customer is gaining increasingly attention, which also means, that the importance of impactful content and building relationships will increase. Hence, marketing will be in more crucial role as well as the data, that marketing needs to base its actions and share with sales. (Honkanen 2020) This means, that sales should implement the data to working and decision making by learning new tools or ways of working.

As seen from a Finnish international B2B-company Glaston's quarterly report, Covid-19 has forced organizations to cancel the sales meetings as well as marketing events, which hinders the start of B2B-processes at a personal level. This may make it also harder for sales to engage potential customers through digital channels as it was

researched that face-to-face-meetings are the best in building relationships (Hinds & Kiesler 2002, 93). This requires the development of new marketing- and sales activities and ways of for example, doing product presentations and building the customer relationship. (Glaston 2020) This change is highlighting marketing's role as well as digital tools even more. As the roles between marketing and sales have already been unknown or in contradiction with each other, the changes in environment require even more actions such as clarifying the roles and responsibilities from the management, as Madhani (2016) emphasizes the role of the management in organizing the relationship between marketing and sales.

4. MANAGEMENT INTEGRATION MECHANISMS

The existing literature of the marketing and sales interface offers several frameworks and insights into the general themes as well as dimensions, that would be considered to utilize in order to have more cooperative marketing-sales interface. For example, Rouzies et al. (2005) discuss and evaluate culture, structure, processes and people as enablers when aligning marketing and sales. The research suggests actions and policies, that are managerially controllable and can be utilized to enhance the integration between marketing and sales (Rouzies et al. 2005). Hughes et al. (2012) provide a complementary framework to Rouzies et al. (2005) and offers some additional insights with it as well as Madhani (2016), who suggests major facilitators facilitating marketing and sales integration. Järvinen & Taiminen (2015) are contributing to the academic discussion about aligning marketing and sales in B2B sector by introducing ways of how to enhance the integration of marketing and sales with advancements in IT. In addition, Madhani (2016) suggest IT infrastructure, which represents various digital tools, as one of the facilitators in linking not only marketing and sales but all functions throughout the organization.

Table 2. Dimensions of aligning marketing and sales. (Rouzies et al. 2005; Madhani 2016; Järvinen & Taiminen 2015; Hughes et al. 2012).

MANAGEMENT

Organizational structure	Organizational processes	Organizational culture	Digital technologies
• Cross-functional teams • Decentralization • Integrators • Roles & Responsibilities	• Communication • Integrated goals • Incentives • Performance measurement	• Data-driven • Sub-cultures • Language • Values	• Information systems • Marketing automation

Table 2. presents the common and frequent themes among the existing literature about the suggested dimensions to tackle with to the issue of marketing and sales integration. Can be seen, that dimensions and mechanisms have strong linkages with each other in the integration of marketing and sales and different mechanisms affect one another.

4.1 Organizational structure

Organizational structure defines how the activities within an organization are directed in order to achieve the determined objectives and goals (Kenton 2020). Even though marketing and sales work for the increasing revenue, the main objective remains in creating customer value as the focus of marketing and sales integration lies in meeting customer needs and providing them greater value than competitors (Madhani 2016). Marketing and sales integration belongs to the components of market-driven organizations (Rouzies et al. 2005). Nowadays, companies that are adapting the market orientation, are structuring their activities in a more customer-oriented way, which allows them to gather greater information about their potential customers. (Homburg, Workman & Jensen 2002; Satish, Sharma, Kaufman & Raman 2005) The existing literature presents some structural approaches to support and enhance the integration of marketing and sales (Rouzies et al. 2005).

Putting up cross functional teams consisting of people from the two functions, is one of the structural approach to improve the alignment of marketing and sales (Rouzies et al. 2005; Johnson, Matthes & Friend 2019). Cross functional teams are part of solution to those organizational conflicts caused by different goal orientations. These teams usually have the focus on common organizational goals instead of function's individual goals. (Madhani 2016; Maltz & Kohli 2000) The teams would be for example tasked to address certain issues or perform on various activities from marketing or sales funnel, such as pricing or customer messaging, for example. This aims at developing a better understanding of the issues in both functions as well as appreciation of each other's roles and responsibilities. (Rouzies et al. 2005) Moreover, Oliva (2006) suggests a joint department operating under one manager, which would improve the collaboration by creating bridges between marketing and sales, improving

communications, aligning activities and reducing conflicts. Likewise, an executive board member leads jointly marketing and sales functions within the organization, which results as better integration between marketing and sales (Lorge 1999). In addition, Madhani (2016) suggests job rotations as a meaningful way to enhance the sharing of knowledge across marketing and sales. It's proposed, that in order to increase the knowledge of each other's roles, marketing team could attend to sales meetings and vice versa. (Madhani 2016) However, some research present, that cross functional teams may not always enhance the performance besides, that conflicts may arise initiated by the different backgrounds of marketing and salespersons (Gladstein & Caldwell 1992; Kotler et al. 2006). Nevertheless, as marketing can be often seen as a supporting function to sales, therefore if marketing is going to help sales, at first hand it requires, that marketing is understanding salesperson's experience (Madhani 2016).

Another structural way to enhance the integration of marketing and sales is decentralizing instead of centralizing. Centralization means the extent to which the authority of decision-making in an organization is placed at higher levels of the company (Aiken & Hage 1968). With decentralization, it is likely for a company to be able to induce cross functional communication and resource exchange. In order to decentralize the structure, it has been suggested, that marketing and sales would be reporting to one person, for example a single vice president representing both marketing and sales, who would then report forward to CEO. (Rouzies et al. 2005) Decentralization would also assist with the issue about management's lack of knowledge and experience about the local marketplaces, which seems to hamper especially the salespeople, who are well aware of the marketplace nuances (Ritz et al. 2018). When redesigning the organizational structure, decentralized decision making comes into question, as it allows the rights to the people close to customers and with the best knowledge of the marketplace, such as marketing or sales (Vantrappen & Wirtz 2017). This can be seen to be emphasized in the case of international firms, where circumstances vary by country.

Decentralization is solving also the issue regarding problems related to physical distance and there have been notably positive effects from co-locating marketing and sales. Typically, when people are physically close to each other, they will naturally interact more and are also more likely to work more effectively together. (Kotler et al.

2006) According to some studies, a close physical proximity is seen as a remarkable advantage when aligning the two functions (Andersen et al. 2018; Dewsnap & Jobber 2000).

When it comes to roles, responsibilities as well as integrators, which Rouzies et al. (2005) suggested to use in integration between marketing and sales, it is important, that management clarify the mutually dependent roles, that have the possibility to role ambiguity (Menon, Jaworski & Kohli 1997). To further deepen the understanding of each other's roles, Madhani (2016) suggest model such as Service Level Agreement (SLA) in order to understand their shared responsibilities. With SLA marketing and sales are committing to support each other and they are defining their accomplishments so that both sides benefit from each other's.

When improving the aligning of marketing and sales with integrators, assigned employees would be in integrators roles. For example, marketing managers could be responsible for the coordination of marketing and sales activities such as pricing or advertising in specific segment (Rouzies et al. 2005). There have been positive recognized effects from the research by Weitz & Anderson (1981), as they noticed, that with the help of integrators, the goals and perspectives of both marketing and sales were recognized besides, that the integrators were able to resolve possible conflicts with the right and unique skills, knowledge and mandate they had. However, effective using of integrators to support the integration of marketing and sales might be relevant only in transition phases, such as new product launches as using integrators might require hiring them (Rouzies et al. 2005)

4.2 Organizational processes

Alignment between marketing and sales can be also improved with some process approaches. The discovered process approaches in the existing research include communication processes, goals and reward systems, incentives as well as performance measurement (Rouzies et al. 2005; Madhani 2016) The newer research discuss also adapting the content marketing approach into digital marketing communications as a way to enhance the integration of marketing and sales (Järvinen & Taiminen 2015).

Communication appears as a key driver for integration. In order to effectively coordinate between departments, they need communication. (Ruekert & Walker 1987). Communication can be divided into two types, informal and formal communication. In this study, the main focus will be on formal communication, such as meetings, conferences or data share through digital systems, since formal communication belongs to management's influence and management has the ability to encourage communications between marketing and sales (Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy 2006; Madhani 2016). However, management can encourage to informal communication as well. Management is able to develop formal type of communication by arranging the different defined procedures and processes regarding information change in organization. In addition, formal meetings become to a greater significance, as informal communication, which refers to more casual contacts, are reduced significantly due to Covid-19.

Cespedes (1993) not only highlights the importance of formal communication as a linkage between two functions but also states, that for example having formal meetings between marketing and sales indicates a signal of the importance of collaboration, that is placed by the senior management. To highlight this, Kahn & Mentzer (1998) suggest that companies should increase the number of focused meetings as well as ensure the documentation of data and information that is being exchanged. In addition, by analytically investigating and qualifying the impact of the process how marketing activities turn into qualified leads, it ties up marketing and sales together and belongs to one of the successful companies' practices (Oliva 2006). Moreover, Souder (1988) suggests arranging frequent meetings to discuss joint involvements as well as to enhance the information sharing. Achieving an optimal level of communication frequency is also highlighted by Maltz & Kohli (1996), which can be achieved by both formal and informal communication. These actions aim to get marketing and sales work closely together and keep both sides informed at all times about what is happening (Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy 2006).

According to a research, the greatest collaboration between marketing and sales were found from a company, that organized joint planning meetings, where the common objectives and goals were then discussed and set. In addition, this best performed

company had a high level of formal communication and valued the senior management's role in setting such strategies that support in achieving the objectives. (Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy 2009)

Communication can be seen to be one of the key enabler in setting integrated goals and objectives between marketing and sales. This view is supported by Rouzies et al. (2005), as the research about team goal setting found that mutual participation in planning the goals is important in order to accept the goals and motivate both sides to achieve them, which then has a positive effect on the marketing and sales integration. As Madhani (2016) discussed about the top management's role in goal setting whereas Rouzies et al. (2005) suggest involving both functional units in the goal planning, a conclusion can be made, that It needs to be ensured, that top management isn't doing the decisions alone in order to avoid strategies, that won't support both marketing and sales objectives.

Another effective internal process and mechanism for enhancing the collaboration can be found from performance measurement and reward systems besides, that these can be seen to play key role in integrating the goals (Madhani 2016; Rouzies et al. 2005). There has been reported to be positive effect on several dimensions of marketing integration with other functional units from using incentive rewards systems, and these are found to likely enhance the marketing and sales integration (Dewsnap & Jobber 2000; Menon et al. 1997). It has been suggested, that marketing and sales rewards should be aligned in a way that makes them share responsibility for revenue objectives (Madhani 2016). Salespersons could have a compensate for example from increasing organizational profits, which would refer to achieving super-ordinate goal and hence provide sales an incentive to invest in collaboration and increase profitability further (Gomez-Mejia & Balkan 1989). Furthermore, there should be a linkage between salespersons' bonus schemes and the successful implementation of a marketing strategy (Strahle, Spiro & Acito 1996) It needs to be taken into consideration, that marketing is rarely rewarded for helping sales to achieve specific sales targets. Hence, marketing rewards could be related to increasing profitability or for example to successfully introducing new brands or products to the market (Madhani 2016; Alldredge, Girffin & Kotcher 1999)

4.3 Organizational culture

Schein & Schein (2017) defines organizational culture as the common norms and be-liefs shared within the organization and its members. Top management is playing a key role in establishing the culture and environment in the organization as well as enabling to create and execute strategies to achieve organizational objectives. In or-der to make marketing and sales collaborate they are required to share information and adjust activities to meet with each other's perspectives, which is facilitated by organizational culture that is placing a premium on adapting and sharing. The culture is also determining how people and teams interact with each other within the organi-zation.

Organizational culture is typically consisting of subcultures, encasing cultures of dif-ferent functional units and individual's own cultural differences. There has been an observation of the need to manage across cultural boundaries (Beverland et al. 2006). Culture can be divided into macroculture and microculture, where macroculture is re-ferring to the whole wide organization's culture and microculture to the subcultures that typically occur within macroculture. (Schein & Schein 2017) For example, market-ing and sales usually have their own sub-cultures and even though these don't have to be identical, in order to facilitate the integration there must be a crossover (Madhani 2016). Also, Beverland et al. (2006) suggest, that interdependent cultures facilitate cross-functional working and sharing.

Sales and marketing are typically oriented differently, which on the other hand may originate from the differences in goals, that are known to affect also sales' more com-petitive nature if compared to marketing. Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy (2009) found out, that organization's orientation influences the collaboration between marketing and sales and for example market orientation places a greater emphasis on interdepart-mental coordination but equally a sales orientation can be successful. Rouzies et al. (2005) propose, that there are unwritten rules and norms, that help in resolving arising dilemmas in organizations. For example, Hofstede (1998) defines various cultural di-mensions such as process oriented versus results oriented, employee versus job ori-ented, parochial versus professional orientation, open versus closed, loose control versus tight control and normative versus pragmatic orientation. Such norms that

appear within teams should be ensured to be optimally shared for two functional units to effectively work collaboratively.

Regarding to marketing and sales interface, it has been found by Beverland et al. (2006), that by increasing the information sharing between marketing and sales, marketers are able to link micro-level information from the sales with macro approaches, which then affects their perceptions of sales and facilitates the strategy implementation. This kind of information sharing allows marketing and sales to get a better understanding of each other's roles and hence also reduce the cultural distance. (Beverland et al. 2006) The culture is also determining how eagerly people will share information (Madhani 2016).

An average B2B buyer's purchase process has been moving more and more to online which has required marketing and sales to collaborate more but has also set a greater significancy on data. Data is improving insights into customers' purchasing behavior and thus makes the adoption of a more data driven culture essential. However, in order for companies to obtain value from the data to support their business processes, there should prevail such open-minded culture towards data, that the management supports (Wedel & Kannan 2016). In addition, Waller (2020) suggest that data-driven culture begins from the top management, who set an expectation that decisions should be anchored in data. For the marketing and sales interface, the data means particularly the information about the customer, that ideally will be shared and distributed between marketing and sales. However, despite of large investments, even the world's leading companies are struggling to manage to implement a data-driven culture to their organizations (Bean & Davenport 2019).

Schein (2010) emphasizes also establishing a common language as a dimension of culture within organization in order to manage the internal integration. To achieve consensus on goals, group or team needs shared language and shared assumptions, which is strongly associated with communication (Schein 2010, 78). Also, Oliva (2006) found in his research, that companies with aligned language between marketing and sales achieved better results. Establishing the common language by defining jointly the key terms and meanings were seen essential for achieving collaboration and prevent from wrong assumptions of each other's (Schein 2010, 97; Oliva 2006).

Organizational values can be defined as internalized normative beliefs that are guiding individuals' behavior. Shared values have gained a great level of managerial attention, and some have stated, that shared values are serving as the only glue the company has. (McDonald & Gandz 1992) Hence, organization's values may provide essential support when integrating functions which makes it important to ensure that the company has shared values. It's also suggested, that when members of a unit are sharing the values, they can form the basis for social norms and expectations to be developed (O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell 1991). Some research suggest, that values should be openly discussed and evaluated in terms of the people organization consists of as well as values' significancy (McDonald & Gandz 1992).

4.4 Digital technologies

Whereas different digital technologies can be used to enhance the integration of marketing and sales, integrating marketing and sales has become a prerequisite in order to gather the full value of new capabilities that technology and data enable and to deliver the purchasing experience, that today's B2B customers expects (Andersen et al. 2018). Putting the right technologies and systems in place will help bridging marketing and sales (MacDonald 2021). Beside the distribution of information, digital technologies can be seen to support also in the exchange of work, resource and assistance that require communication and interaction as Ruekert & Walker (1987) noted it to be crucial in interfunctional integration. However, can be seen, that the existing research lack of discussion about utilizing digital technologies in the integration process, even though digital tools can be seen to serve as crucial source for communication, which on the other hand has gained a lot of attention among researchers.

In general, IT infrastructure serves as a crucial backbone when linking functions and facilitates internal integration as well as ensures, that the value of both marketing and sales efforts become transpire and visible. (Brah & Lim 2006; Madhani 2016) This study will focus on digital technologies, that are serving as possible solutions to prevailing managerial challenges between marketing and sales and as development areas for management to enable a better alignment between marketing and sales.

Therefore, digital tools such as information systems, marketing automation and digital communication tools will be discussed.

Järvinen & Taiminen (2015) suggest, that management should take actions to integrate marketing and sales systems and also to develop a common funnel for them. By integrating marketing and sales systems both marketing and sales could get deeper insight into data that will help them to learn from each other as well as work more effectively (Wiersema 2013). Marketing and sales both have different customer experiences and insights. For example, sales have a large amount of unfiltered customer exposure, which highlight how essential it is to have shared databases. (Madhani 2016) In their research, Järvinen & Taiminen (2015) found, that implementing marketing automation as an IT tool can help support in the alignment of marketing and sales, and it has been gaining increasing attention in the B2B sector. It is worth noting, that the line between CRM and marketing automation can be seen to be blurred at sometimes as often marketing automation can be included to CRM. With a good implementation, CRM and marketing automation can serve as a glue to align marketing and sales within B2B companies and make them a more customer-centric business. However, utilizing marketing automation as an integrator is still a novel subject and existing research lack of evidence. According to a study, CRM and marketing automation can help B2B organizations to align marketing and sales but it can only serve as a framework for companies to use in order to build best practice marketing and sales alignment. Management's role was seen crucial in successful alignment when utilizing these digital tools. (Redding 2015)

As also content marketing has gained an essential role in improving the marketing and sales alignment within B2B companies, marketing automation tools make the content marketing even more effective and help in the arguments concerning leads. By using marketing automation in this context, it's observed to align the marketing and sales funnel which leads to increased transparency between these functions and fosters the collaboration. What is more, Järvinen & Taiminen (2015) note, that by integrating the marketing and sales funnel, there are expanded opportunities for managerial tracking as managers are able to track the quality and quantity of marketing leads and undergo sales' activity towards leads follow up. (Järvinen & Taiminen 2015)

Digital tools can be utilized also to enhance the communication, which on the other hand can reduce the feeling of physical distance, which might be the case especially for international companies where marketing and sales are located separately. Digital communication tools enable organizations to organize for example formal meetings between marketing and sales to enhance the integration, regardless of one's location. As communication and information share were seen to be key drivers for integrating marketing and sales, the barrier for interacting and communicating may be assumed to be lowered due to increased possibility to communicate online. Besides, utilization of digital communication tools is more likely increasing the amount of attendees for a meeting, as participation doesn't look the place. Even though informal communication can be seen to be less in management's control than formal type, by enabling informal communication through the existence of digital communication tools may enhance also the integration, as for example the research by Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy (2006) show, that best performed companies in the integration were implementing both formal and informal communication.

There are various digital or online communication tools to be utilized in the internal communication between marketing and sales whether it is about formal or informal communication. For example, Microsoft 365 is providing organizations many organization wide communications channels to choose from depending on the company and its needs. The goal is to share the right information to the right people at the right time. (Microsoft 2020a). For example, regarding videoconferences, the usage of a well-known Microsoft Teams has increased by 50% during six months due to Covid-19 outbreak. (Spataro 2020a; Liu 2020) What is more, digital communication tools may also affect positively to the organization culture by choosing the circulated information and the way the information is shared (Microsoft 2020a). This can be seen to positively affect to marketing and sales integration which benefits from openness and transparency.

Needs to be taken into notice, that communication isn't necessarily verbal, but can be also referred when salesperson puts customer information after a meeting into a CRM-system (Salmi 2020). Hence also different cloud-based solutions whether it's about CRMs or other platforms, serve as effective and flexible formal ways to share information and data between marketing and sales due to the accessibility regardless of

the device or location (Microsoft 2021a). These systems give also the enhanced opportunity to document information.

Management needs to ensure that employees' have the skills to encompass digital technologies besides, that these are available and optimally integrated in order to achieve integration (Andersen et al. 2018; Järvinen & Taiminen 2015). In some cases, this may require recruiting new digital and analytical talents and driving digital transformation programs (Andersen et al. 2018).

5. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This chapter will explain how the study is conducted as well as the used methods in the interviews. First, the case will be described which will be followed by describing the data collection methods as well as how the data is analyzed. Furthermore, the reliability and validity of the study are discussed and evaluated.

5.1 Research method

This research is conducted as a qualitative research, which is typically used for explaining complex or novel phenomenon in a real-world context in order to gather new information around the topic (Puusa et al. 2015, 85; Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). The relationship between marketing and sales yet itself is complex but it has also grown into a phenomenon in different discussions, which is emphasized by how crucial the collaboration has evolved and thus also manage. Therefore, due to the complex nature not only in terms of the relationship but also from the managerial view, qualitative research would best suit this study.

The study will be conducted by interviews, as interviews work as a way to gather information about the meanings and interpretations that people lay on different subjects which will support in achieving this research's aim (Koskinen, Alasuutari & Peltonen 2005, 106) This research will follow a semi-structured interview method, where specific themes are covered with questions that are allowed to evolve around the themes, hence leaving space for complementary questions (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2016). Semi-structured interviews allow interviews to have contextual flexibility while still focusing on the particular themes (Farquhar 2012). Hence, interviews were slightly modified based on the role and expertise the interviewee had.

The decision between a theme interview and a more open and in-depth interview was made in order to prevent from several additional specified questions that open interviews typically have, as the questions would thus have been too ambiguous (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018).

The aim of the study is to develop an understanding about the integration challenges between marketing and sales and how the integration could be enhanced by developing manageable activities. In this study the manageable activities include the organizational processes, -structure and culture as well as digital technologies, which were also representing the themes for the core question. Hence, theme interviews will suit this study as it is intended to study phenomena and seek answers for various challenges (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018)

5.2 Case description

The main data for this research is gathered by the interviews, that are conducted via online Teams -meetings during February 2021. The interviews were recorded in order to be able to transcribe them and hence also increase the trustworthiness of the study. There were 6 interviews, with people from 3 companies. According to the focus of this study, the companies were all representing international B2B companies and they were all operating in technology industry. The roles of the selected interviewees were consisting of chief marketing officers, sales leads and top management such as CEO or development director roles. The main focus in the interviews was to gather in-depth information and insights about their opinions and experiences regarding the integration, how it has been enhanced or could be enhanced further by different managerial activities and what are the existing and emerging challenges. This kind of profound information, that seeks to research beliefs, attitudes and motivation are typical for qualitative research, that is represented in this study (Puusa et al. 2014)

Before the interviews, the interviewees were informed about the themes and core questions that the discussion was being built on. Furthermore, the aim of the study was explained. The questions are shown in Appendix 1. The interview structure was constituting of the themes, which were specified by the core questions. These core questions were supported, when needed, with additional spontaneous questions after interviewee's respond, in order to form a coherent understanding, which is also one of the benefits in theme interviews (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018). The themes guiding the interviews are based on the theoretical framework about what has been already

studied and what is known around the topic (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018). The interviews were held either in Finnish or English, depending on the interviewee's language.

Table 3. Selection criteria for the interviewees and selected companies.

Type of criteria	Criteria selection
Interviewee	- Current role and experience from marketing/sales - Management level role - Influence on integration
Company	- B2B company - Operating in a technology industry - International company - Actions towards integration had been made

The selection criteria for companies and interviewees have been summarized in Table 3. The study has been narrowed down to international B2B companies because especially B2B market is facing new and big changes in terms of B2B buyer's behavior as well as digital technologies that are reshaping the B2B marketplace. Besides, the Covid-19 pandemic has seemingly hindered the starting of B2B sales process, which has traditionally been performed face to face and now shifted almost fully online. This change emphasizes marketing organization's role in the B2B context, which makes the phenomenon critical for B2B businesses' success. International aspect has been chosen to gather new insights and broaden the view with essential factors regarding the integration. Internationalization is becoming a current topic for many companies seeking for business growth and the international organization structure can be seen affecting the integration of marketing and sales significantly. The research topic was also narrowed to technology companies in order to increase the comparability as well as to explore if it has an impact on the utilization of digital technologies, that can be used as tools to enhance the integration.

The selections for interviewees were made in order to ensure that the interviewees had a significant role or view for the marketing and sales integration and that they were able to have an impact with the managerial actions. However, in the interviews not every role was represented in every company and the selected interviewees' roles were varying depending on the company's size and how the company is organized. This decision stems from the fact that not every title means same in every organization, which is why the interviewees were picked based on their expertise and experience as well as influence on the topic. Table 4. below represents the interviewees and companies for this research showing their backgrounds and roles.

Table 4. Background information of the companies and interviewees.

Company	Interviewee	Role	Experience in the company	Company size
Company 1	Interviewee A	Chief Marketing Officer	2.5 years	Globally 160.000, locally 370 employees
	Interviewee B	Sales Lead	7 years	
	Interviewee C	Product Marketing Manager	3 years	
Company 2	Interviewee D	CEO	20 years	60 employees
	Interviewee E	Chief Marketing Officer	2 years	
Company 3	Interviewee F	Development Manager/Partner	6.5 years	app. 100 employees

5.3 Data analysis methods

The analysis of qualitative analysis can be divided into two groups, where the other is guided by the theoretical or epistemological positioning such as grounded theory. The other group on the other hand, doesn't follow a specific theory or epistemology but applies several different theoretical approaches and baselines. This study belongs to

the latter group, as it represents a qualitative content analysis where a sample of text is being analyzed. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018)

The empirical study was conducted by recorded theme interviews, which were later transcribed into written texts. Permissions for recording were asked beforehand. As a total 52 pages of transcribed written text was being generated from the interviews. The interviews were all held online via Teams and the recording enabled easier and more trustworthy transcription and thus also analyzing the text and findings. Furthermore, recording enables the interviewer to concentrate on the discussion and dynamics in the interview, which for this study also mean that it was possible to ask additional questions based on the previous answers and thus get more insights on the topic (Kvale 2007, 94). This study included the research for example of attitudes, which makes it important to observe the words, facial expressions and tone of voice, that recording, and in this case the video Teams -recording enabled (Kvale 2007, 94). As the studied phenomenon is quite complex and raises opinions, it is important that the role of the author is objective as objective perspective supports the trustworthiness and fairness in terms of observations (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009).

As these interviews were conducted as theme interviews, the questions and topics were divided into themes, which also helped in the interpretation of the findings. In addition, depending on the interviewee and his or her position, some topics and questions were given more attention than others, which on the other hand gave indicators of the interviewees attitude or perception of the particular topic. Furthermore, depending on the role of the interviewee and whether he or she was representing sales or marketing, the answers varied on the perspective especially within interviewees that had only experience from sales or marketing. To present the findings, a common way is to use quotes from the interviewee's answers as quotes are usually meant to validate the findings as well as to vitalize the report in order to contribute to the artistic and scientific value of the report (Sandelowski 1994).

In addition, this qualitative research can be seen to represent a deductive analysis, which reasons broader generalizations into specific observations (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018). However, if comparing conclusive and exploratory research in terms of this study, exploratory research provides a range of causes and alternative options for a

specific problem whereas conclusive identifies the final information and findings for research (Sandhusen 2000). Hence, this study follows also more an exploratory approach as there are room for further research and findings as well, and the findings presented in this study are not final and represented as the only truth.

5.4 Saturation

Saturation has gained a greater acceptance as a methodological principle in research conducted by qualitative methods. Saturation is a commonly used criterion to determine discontinuing for collecting or analyzing data, hence it can be used in justifying that further data collection or analysis would be unnecessary. (Saunders, Sim, Kingstone, Baker, Waterfield, Bartlam, Burroughs & Jinks 2017) In this study the amount of interviewed companies and people within the companies was enough as similar instances were appearing and giving enough empirical confidence, which is why no additional data would be needed to achieve saturation. The focus on thinking the data in terms of rich and thick instead of sample's size has been proposed in the literature as well, which fits especially for this qualitative study that searches for in-depth information within its framework that the delimitations have set up. (Fusch & Ness 2015). If increasing the amount of interviews, additional information would have been outside of this study's focus.

It is notable, that after the third interview when interviewees D, F and B were being interviewed from different companies, the gathered data started to increase in depth, all the essential themes for this study were raised up and similarities in the responses were found. As Fusch & Ness (2015) suggest, a larger amount of samples isn't a guarantee of data saturation and one needs to decide the sample size that fits to specific research. Hence, it's supported, that in terms of this study, more interviews would not have given additional value for this study and study's focus and delimitations. However, doubling the three interviews to a total of six interviews increases the empirical confident to a good level in terms of this study and its aim.

The probing continued until the saturation had been reached as well as a full understanding of participants' perspective. In this study, the data was collected until the

gathered data would provide answers to achieve the aim of this study and ensure the research's trustworthiness.

5.5 Reliability and validity

The trustworthy of a qualitative research comes into question when it is being examined whether the research has studied the topic that was intended with the right and relevant method (Merriam 1995). This can be evaluated with reliability and validity. Typically, reliability and validity are used when one needs to make sure, that the research and represented arguments are trustworthy (Koskinen et al. 2005, 253). Reliability and validity are noticed to be essential factors when planning the research, analyzing the results as well as when evaluating the quality of the research (Patton 2001).

Reliability signifies the degree of consistency, which can be measured by how repeatable the research is (Koskinen et al. 2015, 255). However, due to the qualitative nature of this study, it is not likely that the results would be repeatable nor the results would be the same if the study was conducted again. Replicability is not possible without precise identification and perfect description of the utilized strategies to data-collection (LeCompte & Goetz 1982). Hence, reliability isn't the most appropriate measurement for a qualitative research like the one in question. (Saunders et al. 2016) Moreover, it's been suggested, that the external reliability, which would measure whether independent researchers would discover similar results in similar settings, could be measured by for example imitating the ethnographical factors (LeCompte & Goetz 1982). As this study is conducted anonymously, the ethnographic can't be replicated either to enhance the reliability of this study. Hence, the reliability for this study is not high.

Validity, on the other hand, speaks for the research's trustworthiness and evaluates whether the research has studied what was promised (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 136). Validity can be measured from two perspectives, internal and external validity. Internal validity refers to the degree to which the study creates a cause-effect relationship between the observed outcome and treatment. Here, the question is about a logical process which for a research means report's structure. (Slack & Draugalis 2001) In this

study the theory is presented first which is followed by the procedures and relevant empirical data as well as the discussion which assess the effect of bias. Hence the internal validity can be stated to be at a good level. External validity observes the degree of applicability of the research's findings outside the study's context. Hence It refers to the extent to which the research findings can be extrapolated in other settings (LeCompte & Goetz 1982). The results and conclusions of this study would not hold true across various people, timeframes or settings due to the limited number of interviewees as well as unique and changing perceptions and situations of the researched companies and management.

It needs to be also taken into consideration, that the prejudices of the research's author may turn out as problematic in terms of evaluation of the trustworthiness of research's results (Metsämuuronen 2009, 253). Moreover, the data is analyzed by the researcher by herself, which emphasizes to have the objectivity during every stage of the research. The objective role supports that the observations made by the researcher are reliable and unbiased (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 135).

6. FINDINGS

This chapter focuses on analyzing the conducted interviews and discussing the findings. The findings are presented and distinguished by the themes that the interviews were structured. The key findings, that emerged from the analysis are represented. This chapter aims to give an empirical view on the challenges and enabling managerial factors for integrating marketing and sales and hence give insights also to the development possibilities around the research topic.

6.1 Source of conflicts

All of the interviews included questions regarding challenges in the collaboration between marketing and sales as well as the possible areas for conflicts. Furthermore, answers were gathered for exploring the factors that are hindering the integration from the specific managerial role. The challenges are important focus for this research as they also represent as a source for developing possibilities and explaining the phenomenon more broadly. The challenges also reveal insights about marketing and sales' collaboration and how they are working together and thus supports the aspect about enhancing factors which will be discussed in the next chapter.

One of the common themes regarding challenges between marketing and sales aroused from misunderstanding of the roles. Especially marketing people noted, that salespeople typically aren't fully aware of what marketing is actually doing, what is the purpose of marketing and how marketing is affecting sales' work. The interviews pointed out the continuous need for marketing to demonstrate sales the importance of their role. On the other hand, sales say that marketing isn't generating new sales nor driving for activities that would be relevant for sales. This indicates that especially the role of marketing is misunderstood. Interviewee A gives a practical example, that emphasizes the perceived feeling for marketing about that the role of marketing isn't completely understood by sales:

" Marketing team typically is required to do different sales trainings but the sales isn't doing any trainings about marketing, which would increase their awareness of marketing's role and purpose. " – Interviewee A

Even though the aim for both marketing and sales in B2B companies can be seen to be generating sales through satisfied customers, the targets for each remain at least partly separate which stems from the KPI's that measure marketing and sales' typically individual measurements. According to the findings, sales may think, that marketing is focusing on fruitless things that are not generating sales and that the measurements for marketing are directed poorly from sales' aspect. This highlights furthermore the misunderstanding of roles, as the purpose of marketing activities seem to remain unclear for sales. Interviewee E as a chief marketing officer (CMO) emphasizes and clarifies the issue by stating:

" In my opinion marketing only exists to support sales and there are two ways of marketing: one which is strictly connected and directed to sales but also the long-term marketing dominated activities like brand building. In order to succeed in the marketing, you need to do both. " – Interviewee E

Hence, can be concluded, that one of the remaining challenges is about the fact, that sales doesn't understand the long-term marketing activities, that are not supporting directly sales but that are essential for the long-term success. Interviewee A describes the challenge:

" It needs to be discussed together what are the needs and sales need to understand, what are marketing's resources to do things as we can't serve every team and person. " - Interviewee A

Salespeople typically found it challenging, that marketing has had performance measurement, that were misaligned from sales objectives. Interviewee B, representing a sales lead, describes how different performance measurements can hinder the collaboration significantly when it comes to lead generation, that can be seen to be one of the main chores for marketing to support sales with:

" The leads that marketing handed over to sales, ended up being useless for sales only because the performance of marketing was measured on specific things, which led to qualifying leads with wrong criteria. " – Interviewee B

As the statement by Interviewee B indicates, can be observed, that this kind of challenge regarding the determination of a lead originates from gaps in the common understanding and language. However, this kind of observation doesn't necessarily indicate about marketing's misunderstanding of sales' role but more likely it is a result of the performance measurements and goals.

The results show, that sales typically say, that they aren't aware of what is happening in marketing but on the other hand, the same can't be seen from marketing side. The interviews also indicate about that especially marketing was highlighting the focus for operating as a team whereas sales didn't see marketing's role as important as marketing saw and knew sales' role. What is more, can be observed, that not all salespeople utilize the information, that creates additional value for sales. These findings among others indicate, that the misunderstood about each other's roles links more to sales understanding of marketing.

Another common challenge hindering the integration originates from communication. The results for Company 1. indicate, that even though marketing would be linked to sales and its measurements, the system is so difficult, that it is still hard to communicate to sales. This may affect sales' perception of marketing and create wrong assumptions. Furthermore, Interviewee B, representing sales lead, states the following about the adverse effects that originate from preconceptions:

" There are prejudices on either side, which leads to that not everything is utilized even though if it was available. " – Interviewee B

Another challenge regarding communication aroused from marketing, as marketing people found it relatively hard to have a dialog where they could argue the value of marketing to salespeople. Moreover, communication was highlighted as a challenge in a sense, that even though there were tools for communication it is challenging to put it into practice and find a model, that the sales would get the information it needs

at the right time. Another factor hindering the communication and hence the collaboration between marketing and sales was found from the language barrier, which was caused by the international organizational structure.

When it comes to international B2B-companies, the results show, that the international structure is partly causing challenges between marketing and sales as well. For Company 1. different settings for goals, that are coming from the global top management, were perceived to result as a conflict of interest and hindering the teamwork between marketing and sales, as especially marketing is being directed to conduct different activities that the sales would wish them to do. Interviewee B describes the situation from sales perspective:

" Here the decision making is on a very high level and then the execution happens on a local level, which means that everything comes ready and handed to you and this restricts the activities a bit. " – Interviewee B

Interviewee D from Company 2. pointed out, that the physical distance and when the departments are locating in different countries, decreases the communication. Findings from Company 1. indicate, that international organization structure leads to limited local empowerment and control. This will then result as limited resources for marketing to conduct their activities, which then leads to marketing inability to support sales completely in every area. Interviewee E describes the challenges for an international company as follows:

" When it comes to localization, you can't really translate everything. There are different languages, different focus areas and a different product setup. I definitely think it is a challenge as every market and country's specific branch of a company has its own culture, its own way of working and it's hard to implement the same way of thinking. "
– Interviewee E

Furthermore, when it comes to B2B-context, especially marketing people found, that the product-oriented culture, that seems to be common for B2B-companies, plays as a hindering factor for the culture to support the integration between marketing and sales. The interviewee E stated:

" In B2B-industry you don't focus that much on marketing. It seems to be a tradition, that within B2B either you don't prioritize marketing or you don't understand the value." – Interviewee E

When it comes to digital tools, there were few challenges that were hindering the collaboration. Results from company 2 show, that that a traditional product oriented B2B company with a traditional culture isn't supporting as effectively the implementation of digital tools to enhance the integration. Furthermore, the digital selling was becoming to the surface during the interviews. B2B companies have experienced a forced shift towards digital selling due to Covid-19, and it was widely seen in the interviews, that at least partly this kind of change is here to stay. However, even though the case companies are all representing technology companies, it was interesting to see, that there were challenges related to implementing and learning the use of digital tools, which was also reasoned by salespeople hastiness. Salespeople busy timetables were also highlighted in major of the interviews by both marketing and salespeople and the example of Company 1 shows, that even though the company would have the relevant data and digital tools, salespeople may not usually have time to use them even though they would get some additional value from that for their work. What is more, a lot of manual work was still needed in Company 2 and the lack of digital integration tools to share the information between marketing and sales was still hindering the effective collaboration. In addition, marketing automation wasn't used in Company 2 as it was in other companies.

The interviews indicate also about challenges originated from the organizational culture. Can be seen, that the cultural change as well as digital selling for example cause, that sales is required to learn new ways of doing. The findings on the other hand show, that typically sales may be more traditional with traditional ways of selling as well as low diversity which might then hinder the new modern ways of doing as well as implementing new digital technologies, for example.

Table 5. below presents quotes from the interviewees representing both marketing and sales' perspectives about the emerging challenges between the functions.

Table 5. Aggregation of quotes regarding challenges.

Sales perspective	Marketing perspective
" In general, the tonality might be, that marketing isn't generating any new sales. Sales may think, that marketing is driving for activities that are irrelevant for sales. " *– Interviewee B*	*" In my opinion marketing only exists to support sales and there are two ways of marketing: one which is strictly connected and directed to sales but also the long-term marketing dominated activities like brand building. In order to succeed in the marketing, you need to do both. "* *– Interviewee E*
" Here the decision making is on a very high level and then the execution happens on a local level, which means that everything comes ready and handed to you and this restricts the activities a bit. " – Interviewee B	*" It needs to be discussed together what are the needs and sales need to understand, what are marketing's resources to do things as we can't serve every team and person. "* *- Interviewee A*
" It's important that marketing understands the goals for sales and what sales needs. " *– Interviewee B*	" Sales isn't educated about what marketing is, what it means to their work and what is the value. " – Interviewee A

6.2 Managing the integration

The next chapters will present and discuss the findings from the interviews related to how the integration can be enabled and enhanced with manageable organizational factors. These organizational factors can be perceived as managerial integration mechanisms.

6.2.1 Developing organizational structure

The interviews showed many insights and ways to enhance the integration by manageable developments in the areas within organizational structure. The results also show the actual effects of Covid-19 as it can be seen to have forced companies to make changes in the organization and ways of working. It is worth of mentioning, that for example Company 3 had to transform the organization due to the Covid-19 and for

example reorganize their sales as it was becoming obvious, that the decrease in face to face -meetings forced to implement new ways of doing sales. At the same time, to enhance the collaboration, Company 3 combined its two separate marketing teams locating in different countries into one in order to have one solid international marketing team.

One of the common themes arousing from the interviews was related to rooting for more decentralized decision making and local empowerment instead of centralization. It was commonly seen, that the best solution would be if there were more influence on the local marketing and sales teams that are more close to the end customers. This was seen to create more flexibility, serve customer better as well as enable the better collaboration of marketing and sales. For example, Interviewee F from Company 3 pointed out, that nowadays their company has a very self-imposed marketing team which may decide independently, what they think are the most effective purposes and ways to use the marketing budget. This kind of freedom is provenly affecting also to the actions of marketing as thus marketing is enabled to give more direct support to sales. Interviewee B from Company 1 supports the view by emphasizing the local empowerment and suggesting the local decision making for marketing by stating:

" When things are done on behalf of local country and its customers, the role for the teamwork between marketing and sales grows to a greater significancy. " - Interviewee B

The findings show, that in terms of international organization it was seen important that if the departments are dispersed regionally and locating different countries as it is the case for Company 2 for example, it is important to have joint meetings such as kick-offs to gather together and discuss things. In addition, for example Company 2 had combined its marketing teams locating in different countries to work as one team. Integrating international teams had also other positive effects in terms on consistency according to Interviewee F:

" It's important for an international company to be international in every function, which will then increase the credibility but also consistency between functions. "
– Interviewee F

However, the Covid-19 has showed that the meetings don't necessarily need to be face to face and in fact the interviews indicate, that online meetings were seen even more efficient in terms of information sharing and decision making as well as low-threshold as the focus was in the essentials. Interviewee D describes the joint meetings as follows:

" When we had the joint kick-offs where we physically attended it was kind of like that there were 50 people and one was speaking in front in turn. Now that these were online we were more discussing together and it felt more collective. " – Interviewee D

There were also findings about integrating marketing and sales by actions bringing the two teams closer together and towards a cross-functional team. There were findings about the suggestion of bringing for example marketing people closer to the customer interface in order to increase the awareness of the customers and their needs, as customer also determines the aim for both marketing and sales. In addition, it was proposed that it's important for a management to be aware of what is happening in the customer interface in order to set relevant goals for marketing and sales. As for Company 3, interviewee F proposes regarding cross-functional teams, that taking marketing as part of a sales-project from the very start and enabling marketing to come also to the customer interface by having even conversations with the customers will increase the level of integration. Interviewee F says, that in their company there is one salesperson and one marketer working as a team for every customer case and they are deciding and identifying together what is the best way to proceed. Interviewee C notes the importance of having marketing closer to the customer interface by noting:

" The best insights are received from the customer interface which would then help in planning also the marketing as there would be some actual truth to follow. "
– Interviewee C

The results from the interviews also show, that marketing people were also perceiving important, that the top management really sees marketing and takes marketing into account in decisions. Hence, especially marketing people place responsibility also to the management to ensure, that marketing and its role is understood by sales and they are supported by the management in order to also look important in the eyes of

sales. This can be also seen to have a linkage to the finding, that marketing seem to need continuously argue its importance to sales. Interviewee A comments the role for the top management:

" It's extremely important that marketing is on the top management's agenda and that the message will flow down from the top. Then the message will be strengthen in the manager layer all the way to the field. " – Interviewee A

Interviewee E talks also about top management's responsibility by arguing:

" The management needs to ensure that marketing gets enough air time to talk about its potential benefits. " – Interviewee E

The statements by Interviewees A and E regarding the importance of management's support in making marketing's role visible get a strengthening argument from Interviewee B:

" I know and see the value that marketing brings to sales but not every salesperson does. " – Interviewee B

This note by Interviewee B can be strengthening the significance of management in showing the value of marketing to salespeople which would enable, that marketing activities would fully support sales. However, even though management has a role in clarifying the roles for sales and especially for marketing, can be observed from the interviews that a lot of responsibility is also on marketing and sales managers to ensure that they are working together actively. Hence, can be seen, that in order to successfully clarify the roles and responsibilities, top management can't do it without marketing and sales efforts.

The results show successful efforts towards increasing the knowledge of each other's roles as well as to determine situations where they can support each other. It was seen important, that the marketing and sales departments are working closely and including each other's to their own agendas. The interviews show, that openness and transparency were key determinants in successful collaboration and having joint

meetings to discuss about things are essential in creating the transparency. The on-going dialog will also help in understanding of the resources that for example market-ing have to support sales, that will then also clarify what marketing is responsible and capable of doing. Interviewee B describes their actions for bringing the teams together:

" It's important that marketing is held close to sales. Sales and marketing have both set up teams and meetings to include each other to the agenda. It's a two-way road, that we are both aware of what we are doing. " Interviewee B

In Company 3 the Interviewee F as a development director was responsible for clari-fying the roles and responsibilities for marketing and sales. Interviewee F is also the one that conducts the performance appraisal for marketing- and salespeople in order to him to have a better knowledge of both departments and how they can best support each other. To enhance the integration by clarifying marketing and sales and their roles to each other's, it was also suggested to have different models and rehearsals to conduct in practice between marketing and sales teams. Interviewee F describes the practice, that they conducted:

" We suggested that both marketing and sales teams would create themselves so called 'my operating manuals' that would describe what are the responsibilities and what are not for each team, as well as describe for example to sales what are the things in terms of time, that marketing needs to focus on. " - Interviewee F

Selected quotes from marketing and sales representatives are shown below in Table 6. to illustrate both side's aspects in the area of organizational structure.

Table 6. Aggregation of quotes regarding aspects in organizational structure.

Sales perspective	Marketing perspective
" We suggested that both marketing and sales teams would create themselves so called 'my operating manuals' that would describe what are the responsibilities and what are not for each team. " *– Interviewee F*	*" The management needs to ensure that marketing gets enough air time to talk about its potential benefits. " – Interviewee E*
" It's important that marketing is close to sales. Sales needs to be aware of what marketing is doing and vice versa, so that marketing knows what are sales' priorities and align the activities with those. " – Interviewee B	*" We can't serve every sales team and person. We need to have a scalable model and look at a bigger picture and then conduct the most important activities. "* *- Interviewee A*
" When things are done on behalf of local country and its customers, the role for the teamwork between marketing and sales grows to a greater significancy. " *- Interviewee B*	*" The best insights are received from the customer interface which would then help in planning also the marketing as there would be some actual truth to follow. "* *– Interviewee C*

6.2.2 Developing organizational processes

Findings from the interviews show clearly, how the interviewees emphasize how the common and integrated goals were playing a crucial role in terms of successful integration of marketing and sales. It was seen critical that everyone was committed to the goals, whether the goals were discussed and decided together or implemented from the overall business plan. Hence, depending on the company size and structure, the results show differences how the goals were created. Can be seen, that when the goals were discussed and decided together, they were more likely to be understood and less contradictions, misunderstandings or challenges were appearing. It was also seen important, that the individual goals for both marketing and sales were transparent which would then ensure that for example sales is aware of what are the responsibilities of marketing. Interviewee F describes the Objectives and Key Results -model that they have implemented to generate clarification and transparency:

" There are few long- and short-term objectives and outcomes designed for every quarter which means, that for example marketing has 3-5 key-points what they need to proceed. When we make this transparent it will be clear for everyone. "
- Interviewee F

Furthermore, Interviewee A supports to be transparent about the needs and capabilities:

" We need to jointly discuss what are the needs and what marketing is capable of in terms of its resources as it needs to be remembered, that marketing can't serve every and each team or people. " – Interviewee A

Furthermore, can be seen that the case companies have shared business aims as B2B companies to help their customers to succeed in order to generate revenue themselves. Thus, customer's perspective was seemingly playing a crucial part when aligning the working, goals and making decisions. It was suggested, that the goal setting and hence also decision making of the top management would be taken to the customer interface -level in order to base the goals and decisions on what is actually happening with the customers instead of looking only at the reports and numbers. This would bring also the working of marketing and sales together as the goals would be ensured to serve both aims and also guide the top management to make decisions that serve the customers. Interviewee D comments on the issue by stating:

" Being in the customer interface tells the truth about what actually resonates and what doesn't and that would guide the planning for example where the marketing activities should really be directed. Sometimes it's just like that the decisions are based on the numbers and then the only aim is to close the gaps or generate just some happening so that numbers look good. " Interviewee C

Both marketing and sales have their own customer data that needs to be shared with each other even though can be seen, that marketing usually creates a larger amount of data. Interviewee A noted, that one way to integrate the goals was to continuously discuss with sales and be up-to-date about what the customers have on top of mind. Hence, can be seen, that the customer orientation is helping to integrate the working

and doing when the aim and targets would also be set in terms of customers and customer's goals.

The results show, that successful integration would mean someone taking the leadership on the integration in terms of goals in order to have goals that are supporting everyone and preventing marketing and sales working in silos. Interviewee F highlights how important it is to lead the integration by noting:

" From my perspective I can say, that the integration would not have been successful if someone hasn't taken the ownership of combining the marketing and sales' goals. "
– Interviewee F

It was commonly stated, that in order to integrate, marketing and sales need to work jointly and have an ongoing dialog with each other, even though the ways for example communicating seem to be varying. In addition, every interviewee highlighted the transparency in every aspect in order to have the full potential out of the collaboration. Besides, it was seen crucial, that both sides understand each other's priorities from the goals that have been set, and it is commonly decided what should be done. Interviewee A describes the collaboration:

" Our only aim is to help our customers to succeed. The only way to achieve in that is to cooperate, which requires open and continuous dialog with sales. " – Interviewee A

Findings show, that to support the integration there are regular and various meetings between marketing and sales to discuss and share information with each other. For example, in Company 1 both marketing and sales have arranged meetings to inform the counterpart or discuss important matters besides, that global sessions are arranged to inform about the bigger picture. However, it was commonly stated, that the quality over quantity in terms of meetings accounts, so marketing people doesn't need to be present in every sales meeting and vice versa. The results show, that also more informal communication ways are supported to enhance the open discussion between marketing and sales and hence also integration as the openness was seen crucial. Interviewee F tells about the big impact on the integration in terms of goals, when

marketing and sales have jointly meetings on a weekly basis to analyze the working together:

" There are many occasions during the week when both marketing and sales are discussing about what kind of campaigns are running at that moment, where sales is allocated and how does the lead generation look like in terms of statistics. "
– interviewee F

It was found out, that beside marketing- and sales teams having common meetings, it would be good, that managers would take time to go things through also separately. Hence, for example the actions and data could be explained more detailed in a separate meeting between marketing- and sales lead and decisions made. Interviewee E noted, that it's been observed to be a good way to have dyadic meetings between only CMO and sales managers in order to enhance the collaboration and common understanding by stating:

" I was participating to sales meetings and after a meeting I had a separate meeting with the sales manager to see what can we really do and what actions really means. So, I think it's a good way to participate in sales meetings and see if we put our marketing glasses on what does it really mean. " – Interviewee E

In order to enhance the communication and to have sales to listen marketing more, Company 1 has implemented a model called rhythm of connect. In this model marketing and sales have jointly decided the occasions where marketing and sales would jointly discuss about what for example sales need to learn, implement or understand to improve the collaboration. These kinds of meetings can be seen to contribute also to the clarification of roles. The results indicate, that especially communication from marketing to sales is needed as typically sales wasn't sure about what marketing is doing. However, at the same time can be seen, that marketing is educated more about sales than sales is about marketing, which can be seen to widen the gap in terms of sales' perception and understanding of marketing. To decrease the sales knowledge gap about marketing, efforts to clarify marketing to sales would be also seemingly needed.

Even though the performance measurements and goals especially for marketing were perceived as they were not completely supporting the sales, the findings show ways to enhance that process by integrating the sales goals with marketing measurements and for example including the effort and contribution from marketing to sales goals. To support the integration it was seen crucial, that the KPIs were integrated. Interviewee A describes how they are linking the marketing KPIs to support sales:

" Every campaign is linked to a specific sales scorecard measurements and 'sales-plays'. With this we ensure, that the messages marketing sends to the market are in sync with the sales goals. " - Interviewee A

Furthermore, in order to better align marketing and sales with each other, results speak for letting go of individual bonus systems and instead having incentives, that would align employees and support them to work for shared goals. Can be seen, that instead of looking at individual performance, the incentives should be shared with everyone. In addition, the findings show, that having a common bonus system for the whole company encourages everyone to help each other and work together, which support the integration of marketing and sales teams as well. Interviewee F describes the effects of common bonus system:

" We have a common bonus system for the whole company in order to support, that everyone is supporting each other at an optimal level and so that everyone is and feels to be involved. This will also create a shared source for motivation that will guide the doing towards common goals as well. " – Interviewee F

Table 7. shows the selected quotes illustrating the marketing and sales aspects for organizational processes.

Table 7. Aggregation of quotes regarding aspects in organizational processes.

Sales perspective	Marketing perspective
" There are many occasions during the week when both marketing and sales are discussing about what kind of campaigns are running at that moment, where sales is allocated and how does the lead generation look like in terms of statistics. " *– interviewee F*	*" Every campaign is linked to a specific sales scorecard measurements and sales-plays. With this we ensure, that the messages marketing sends to the market are in sync with the sales goals. "* *- Interviewee A*
" We have received a marketing 360 -view of customers, which has helped that we in sales know what marketing is doing. " *– Interviewee B*	*" There are few long- and short-term objectives and outcomes designed for every quarter which means, that for example marketing has 3-5 key-points what they need to proceed. When we make this transparent it will be clear for everyone. "* *- Interviewee F*
" Marketing has become closer to sales and customer interface so that marketing is also discussing straight with the customers. " *– Interviewee F*	*" Being in the customer interface tells the truth about what actually resonates and what doesn't and that would guide the planning for example where the marketing activities should really be directed. "* *– Interviewee C*

6.2.3 Developing organizational culture

The cultural aspects were overall following a quality over quantity mindset. The findings indicate about that the overall company culture will affect a lot especially on how sales is working, which will then affect also marketing and in the worst scenario increase the gap between marketing and sales. Hence, to bring also marketing and sales together, can be seen that in order to change marketing and sales subcultures it may require first changing the overall organizational culture. Findings show, that a typical culture for a traditional B2B company has usually been strongly product-oriented, which has determined also how marketing and sales are oriented. The results

from the case companies indicate, that having a customer-oriented mindset instead of product-oriented provides the best solution for all parties and makes it easier for marketing and sales to collaborate together. As the interviews showed, that when the customer is defining the ways of doing as well as the goals it makes it easier for marketing and sales to determine their working and goals. That is why the orientation and culture of a company seem to determine also how marketing and sales are working as a more customer-oriented behavior seem to take marketing more into account and part of the whole sales process. However, changing the organizational culture requires efforts especially from the management and interviewee A describes the change as following:

" The shift from product-oriented to a customer oriented-company requires a lot from sales as all of a sudden they need to become industry specialists and at the same time marketing gets also a new role as a strategic partner to the customer. This requires a huge cultural change and management of change. " – Interviewee A

In addition, it was commonly stated, that to support the organizational culture it is important that everyone is committed to the organizational values as well. Can be seen, that the values are guiding the working towards common and right direction that the customer will also observe. It will be also determining the ways of doing, which will also have an impact on the integration of marketing and sales.

An open culture in terms of data and communication was commonly supported to enhance the integration. In general, can be observed, that open culture supports also the data sharing and transparency, which makes the collaboration more efficient. Hence, encouraging and driving an open organizational culture is suggested to support a successful integration. All of the case companies were utilizing and supporting the use of data at some level, but some placed a greater emphasis on intuition and supported for example more experimental culture. Hence, even though data can be seen to be the main source to base the decisions, not all of the companies were fully adapted to data-driven culture nor even a completely data-based decision making was supported. In order to get marketing and sales to play better along, it was also seen beneficial that top management would base their decisions regarding marketing and sales less to only statistics as Interviewee D describes the issue:

" Top management only looks at the numbers and analytics but in order to guide the activities into the right direction and get the activities to support each other, they should go to customer interface and see what is really happening. " – Interviewee C

Can be seen, that marketing people were supporting more for data-driven culture and basing the decisions on data. This can be explained also with the nature of sales and marketing as well as that marketing is producing more data that sales is hoped for to utilize. Some emphasized data more as a support than base for decisions, which indicates of the desire not to pursue for a complete data-driven culture and for example Interviewee F noted:

" A lot of statistics is monitored but it's part of an experimental culture. One can use the data to support the decision making but in a lot of senses, it's also intuitive and people need to trust one's own instincts as well. " Interviewee F

There were various reasons for not pursuing data-driven culture, whether it was due to lack of resources or individual's, usually salesperson's own habits not to utilize all the available marketing data. However, can be observed from the interviews, that the role of the top management is seemingly crucial as the attitudes from management determine how the culture will be perceived in the layers below. The interviews show, that there would be more room for the management to determine how data-driven the culture should or should not be.

When it comes to marketing and sales' subcultures in terms of integrating marketing and sales, it was often stated, that having more diverse marketing and sales teams would enhance also the integration. Having more diverse teams was seen to help preventing from become stuck with old ways of doing things and for example speed up the implementation of digital tools, generating new ideas and help implementing a new culture as well. In addition, more diverse marketing and sales teams were seen to prevent from significant sub-culture clashes. This was mentioned to mean hiring new people from different age groups for example. Interviewee F describes the diversity as follows:

" If we had a more diverse team especially in terms of age, there could be more inno-vativeness and creativity in the daily working. " – Interviewee D

Table 8. below illustrates perspectives from both marketing and sales in terms of or-ganizational culture.

Table 8. Aggregation of quotes regarding aspects in organizational culture.

Sales perspective	Marketing perspective
" If we had a more diverse team especially in terms of age, there could be more inno-vativeness and creativity in the daily work-ing. " – Interviewee D	*" Sales were more traditional and with low diversity. Hence, sales might have different characteristics and less modern way of working vs. marketing. "* – Interviewee E
" Intuition is important also in the sales cases. " – Interviewee D	*" In marketing everything is based on the data. "* – Interviewee A
" Quality over quantity and I think that think-ing about the customer and customer satis-faction is more important than only to sell. " – Interviewee D	*" We are no longer marketing a customer only a product or service but a solution. This requires also new role from marketing as we are seen more as a strategic partner nowadays. "* – Interviewee A

6.2.4 Development of digital technologies

It was commonly shared opinion, that digital tools were playing crucial role now and in the future in the integration of marketing and sales. It was seen important, that mar-keting and sales would work in the same tools in order to ensure efficient allocating of information and to have the data available in one place. However, it wasn't seen man-datory that sales and marketing would have the same tools as the data can be still distributed easily between the systems. On the other hand, the most important thing was, that it's ensured that the data is available and it's being utilized. One of the com-mon things among interviewees especially in terms of distributing information to sales was, that the most crucial thing is to create the easy availability of information, which digital tools would enable. Interviewee E supports utilizing digital tools to enhance the integration:

" Working with tools that facilitate the collaboration makes integration a lot easier. "
– Interviewee E

Can be seen also, that the development of digital tools can be fast-paced nowadays and it can result as more effective ways of working as well as improved collaboration between marketing and sales. Interviewee A notes about the development:

" There has been a rapid development of getting marketing data to flow directly into sales CRM systems, whereas we used to went through all this data in meetings. "
– Interviewee A

The interviews show, that Covd-19 has forced to rearrange the way of meetings are conducted and information is shared. Common ways to utilize digital tools in terms of the integration were joint online groups established to share information through online meetings such as Microsoft Teams -meetings for example. In addition, online portals and -groups to discuss and inform both departments were utilized as well as cloud-based tools to not only share information internally but also to distribute it to end customer. Due to the pandemic, for example Company 1 has created regular marketing meetings on Microsoft Teams, where the marketing activities are informed especially to sales. This gives a low-threshold opportunity to get the information. Marketing automation was also seen to be in a key role not only for direct customer use but also as an internal tool. All of the companies were either utilizing marketing automation or starting the implementation and it was commonly stated to enhance the collaboration, reduce manual work and save time, as especially sales were perceived to be extremely busy. Interviewee A discuss about the role of marketing automation as follows:

" It [marketing automation] has created a whole new level of transparency to the doing as we have enabled, that all the actions that everyone is doing is flowing to the tools that marketing or sales is using so it's available and accessible. " – Interviewee A

Can be observed, that digital tools themself aren't serving as the only solution for effective teamwork between marketing and sales but for example how and to what extent digital tools have been encouraged to be utilized by top management. The findings show also, that management has an important role in creating an open attitude

towards digital technologies especially from sales side as results indicate more uncertainty about sales to marketing. Hence, can be seen, that management could take more responsibility also in the implementation of digital tools which on the other hand originates from reasoning marketing and its value to sales. Interviewee C supports the role for the management when it comes to harnessing digital tools:

" There are a lot of tools that sales could utilize but those should be clarified for the sales so they know what tools they can use and how, and what are beneficial. "
- Interviewee C

Marketing produces a huge amount of customer data, that can be distributed via digital technologies, which is why the efficient utilization digital technologies seem to require actions also before implementing the tools. According to the interviews, these actions would include the overall change in sales attitude towards marketing and training sales for using digital technologies to utilize the data, which would also support in the digital selling that has risen its head during the Covid-19. Hence, the results also show, that there is still unused potential within the companies when it comes to utilizing the available data between marketing and sales.

" Digital technologies have become to a great significancy as an internal tools as all the things that have been done will be documented in the tools that are available for all. " - Interviewee D

Table 9. shows the quotes from both marketing and sales sides to illustrate the aspects in terms of digital technologies in integration.

Table 9. Aggregation of quotes regarding aspects in digital tools.

Sales perspective	Marketing perspective
" Digital technologies have become to a great significancy as an internal tools as all the things that have been done will be documented in the tools that are available for all. " - Interviewee D	*" There has been a rapid development of getting marketing data to flow directly into sales CRM systems, whereas we used to went through all this data in meetings. "* *– Interviewee A*
" We are able to see what kind of interaction our company has with our customers or potential ones. " – Interviewee B	*" It [marketing automation] has created a whole new level of transparency to the doing as we have enabled, that all the actions that everyone is doing is flowing to the tools that marketing or sales is using so it's available and accessible. " – Interviewee A*
" It's important that our systems support the activities and that we have the visibility to what is happening. " – Interviewee B	*" Having integrated tools creates transparency and value for the seller, which is very important. " – Interviewee A*

7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The aim for this thesis was to research the manageable enabling and hindering organizational factors that are affecting the integration of marketing and sales. Furthermore, the research aims to discover the development possibilities in the organizational factors, which by identifying them can help to manage the integration. This chapter will cover the research questions by answering them and aligning the results from empirical research and theoretical part together in order to discover the theoretical contribution of the research. In the following chapter the results will be addressed in action and practice in the managerial implications chapter. Finally, the limitations of this research as well as possibilities for future research will be covered.

7.1 Theoretical contributions

This chapter will analyze the findings from the empirical and theoretical part by answering first the sub-questions following by answering the main research question lastly. The theories that the research was built on were presented in chapters 3 and 4, and the context for this study was discussed in chapter 2.

What are the challenges between marketing and sales in terms of integration?

The results present misaligned goals as one of the main challenges between marketing and sales. According to the existing literature, these usually originate from that management has set up the goals to be misaligned or that sales and marketing are guided by different incentives or performance measurements (Madhani 2016). The findings from the literature are supported by the empirical findings, as the findings from the empirical research show, that marketing KPIs are typically not fully supporting the sales targets. This may then result as ineffectiveness in the lead generation process for example, as well as sales already uncertain attitudes towards marketing.

Another challenge relates to attitudes and knowledge about each other's roles, as literature suggests, that one of the challenges concerns the fact about misunderstanding of each other's goals and roles (Le-Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy 2006; Madhani 2016;

Kotler et al. 2006). The empirical results support this view but on the other hand the interviews show, that misunderstanding lies especially in sales' understanding about marketing. Whereas the literature (Kotler et al. 2006) propose, that both are undervaluing other's contributions the empirical findings show, that marketing is educated and more aware of sales and its purpose. Hence, according to the interviews one of the remaining challenges between marketing and sales is that sales isn't educated enough about marketing. Besides, marketing feels the continuous need to reason its existence for sales as sales seem to have lack of knowledge about what is the purpose of marketing and what marketing is doing.

The literature also suggested, that sales usually feel that marketing doesn't know the reality of the marketplace (Kotler et al. 2006; Madhani 2016). The empirical results support the view partly, as especially for large companies the goals for marketing are set up by top management which usually takes then the decisions from the statistics and isn't aware of what is actually happening in customer interface. On the other hand, it was also seen in the existing literature that sales find marketing information irrelevant (Madhani 2016). However, marketing pursues both long- and short-term activities and the empirical findings show, that sales usually find the long-term activities irrelevant as those are not generating direct sales. Hence, the responsibilities and roles especially for marketing need to be clarified by the top management, as it would indicate about the issue's importance, when it comes from the management.

Existing literature raised communication as one of the biggest challenges between marketing and sales which was also noted in the interviews. It was found out, that physical distance hinders the communication itself as the barrier to get in touch with the opposite may grow. Besides, interviews show that the only discussions may be held in the formal online meetings if the functions are separated but the Covid-19 has made companies to rethink the nature of meetings as well. Literature suggested to prioritize face-to-face meetings between marketing and sales, however, interviews are not fully supporting this as it was also found, that the meetings can be more effective via online.

Both literature (Giammarresi 2016) and empirical research found it challenging to make the organization's ways of doing as well as specific models applicable to the

local level. Literature suggested, that whether an international company is approaching with more standardized marketing strategy, it will affect also the cooperation between marketing and sales (Quelch & Hoff 1986). This was proven in the interviews, as the extent of flexibility of marketing as well as the ability to support sales was determined by the level of standardization but also by the local empowerment and decision making.

Regarding the assumption of the ability of technology companies to utilize digital tools at the optimal level there was an interesting finding, that these companies still remain to have challenges in the implementation of digital tools when aligning marketing and sales. The digital transformation that was facilitated by the Covid-19 has been transforming the roles for marketing and sales and the literature suggest, that marketing will have a more crucial role as well as the data that marketing distributes to sales (Honkanen 2020). Especially now, that digital selling is taking a bigger role, the findings from the empirical part show, that implementing the data and digital tools more to the process is taking time and hence is challenging. Moreover, one of the challenges was the sales department's hastiness, which hinders the cooperation as the new world's situation requires a quick implementation of digital ways of doing but the ability from sales to keep up is hindering.

What are the manageable organizational factors enabling the alignment and how those can be developed to enhance the integration?

The manageable factors enabling the integration between marketing and sales are divided into factors within organizational structure, - processes, - culture and digital technologies. The results of this study show, that in terms of organizational structure, having cross-functional teams and for example attending each other's meetings will be beneficial in the integration (Madhani 2016). However, as the literature (Rouzies et al. 2005) propose to address only certain activities from the sales or marketing funnel together, evidence from the interviews suggest going through the whole process together from the start. Hence, there wasn't evidence in this study about cross functional teams not supporting the integration as some research propose (Gladstein & Caldwell 1992; Kotler et al. 2006).

Oliva (2006) suggested marketing and sales operating under one manager to enhance the collaboration, which is supported by the interviews, as it was found out that having a manager in the integrator role will be beneficial and Rouzies et al. (2005) proposed having integrators to align goals and recognize both marketing and sales perspectives. Another finding from developing organizational structure relates to literature's (Ritz et al. 2018) propose about decentralization. The interviews support decentralization and local empowerment as centralization was seen to hinder the collaboration due to management's [decision maker] lack of knowledge about the marketplace. This lack of knowledge was then affecting the collaboration in terms of misaligned activities and goals. Furthermore, in order to successfully integrate, literature emphasized the role of the management in most of the issues (Madhani 2016; Rouzies et al. 2005). The empirical findings show, that management's role is especially crucial in determining the roles and responsibilities, as the interviews show that especially marketing seem to be often misunderstood.

When it comes to organizational processes, communication was highlighted in both existing literature as well as in the interviews. Literature and interviews suggested to focus on frequent formal and focused meetings where the documentation is well done (Kahn & Mentzer 1998; Souder 1988). Literature also highlighted the role for informal communication (Maltz &Kohli 1996) which was seen also in the results of the case companies, as the best performed company in terms of integration had also implemented informal discussions regardless of the online environment that Covid-19 has forced everyone. In addition, as the evidence from literature (Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy 2009) show, that best aligned companies were having common meetings where goals were set together, the interviews support this view, as the best performed company for this study were discussing and planning the goals together. Both literature and interviews show, that this way the commitment and motivation for both marketing and sales will be ensured.

Results of this study were not supporting individual bonus systems. Whereas literature (Madhani 2016) suggest, that rewards should be aligned by linking marketing and sales to same objectives, the evidence from the best performed company show, that a successful way is to have same bonus systems for the whole company. To support the integration, best performed companies were also linking KPIs of marketing to

support sales objectives. Management needs to ensure, that KPIs are directed to right direction.

In terms of organizational culture as a manageable factor for integration, the organization's orientation and sub-cultures affect the integration. To support integration organization should be customer oriented, which supports literature's view about having a market orientation. B2B companies have traditionally been product-oriented which should be changed into customer orientation, which the results support. Hofstede (1998) listed various orientations such as open and loose orientation and suggested to share the orientation in order to collaborate. Open and loose orientations, that were listed by Hofstede (1998) are supported by the interviews to help in the integration as enabling an open culture was proven to enhance the integration and decentralization indicates of more loose control. However, both literature and interviews agree on that management and leadership are also crucial to successful integration. Hence, for example the results support to sharing an open culture as it helps in the integration by encouraging to communicate more frequently. The interviews raised also the aspect about diversity in teams, that support creating a specific culture. Existing literature lack of notes regarding diversity and its effects on integration.

Results from the interviews show, that whereas literature (Waller 2020) suggest to implement data-driven culture, results from the best performed companies show the need for including humanity and intuition as well. In addition, the results speak for the important of having common language especially when it comes to determining leads, which can be strengthen by focused meetings.

Enabling digital technologies and -tools enhances the integration and it encases a lot of possibilities for companies to develop. As Ruekert & Walker (1987) have stated, that digital tools help in the exchange of resources and assistance, the interviews support this as especially for international companies digital tools seem to be mandatory in order to exchange all this information and communicate. Redding (2015) stated, that digital tools can only be used as a framework for best practices but the interviews show, that digital tools are pivotal in the daily working and enabling the integration as well. Literature (Brah & Lim 2006; Madhani 2016) and interviews also go in hand in hand about the literature's argument of IT infrastructure's role in bringing both

marketing and sales efforts transpire and visible. As interviews showed, that especially marketing needs to be heard and understood, can be seen, that digital tools support in achieving that. Transparency and openness were also found to be essential for the collaboration which digital tools enable and enhance.

The role of the management was emphasized in enabling the digital tools to help the integration as well as ensuring that there are skilled employees and employees have the skills to utilize digital technologies (Redding 2015; Andersen et al. 2018). It was proven in the interviews, that education for both marketing and sales need to be ensured in order to enhance the common understanding of each other's roles, for example. Can be also concluded, that interview's findings about enabling the diversity in teams would ensure the needed skills. Besides, even though literature highlighted management's role in formal communication, the interviews from the successfully integrated company show, that management can also effect on the informal communication which is seen crucial part of successful integration.

How the integration of marketing and sales can be enhanced by manageable enablers and what needs to be taken into account?

Marketing and sales are known to typically work in silos and to have various challenges and disagreements surrounding them, which are preventing from collaborating effectively. However, at the same time and increasingly, the environment is pushing organizations to integrate marketing and sales in order to be successful in the changing and internationalizing environment. Integrating marketing and sales is also proved to enable the growth of a company as well as several other positive outcomes. In order to facilitate the integration, it's important for the management to be aware and understand the source of conflicts and hear both marketing and sales. This can be seen to help in basing the actions of development on right things and understand the phenomenon.

Organizational structure, -processes, -culture and digital technologies are manageable factors, that enable and provide possibilities to enhance the integration of marketing and sales. Changes in organizational structure facilitate the issue regarding the distance between marketing and sales that usually widens the gap between the

functions in international company. Organizations can rearrange their organizational structures by combining teams into one or creating cross-functional teams to conduct a project together to prevent from working in silos and achieve a better outcome from customer's perspective as well. Also, by rethinking the level of centralization and preferring a more decentralized decision making will facilitate the integration.

Developments in organizational processes to enhance the integration mean for one part improvements in communication via digital tools or meetings frequency. It's crucial to ensure, that everyone is committed to the goals which can be done by deciding the goals jointly with marketing and sales. Management's role in the processes is crucial and it needs to make sure, that the objectives and activities of both marketing and sales are directed to be aligned and also to ensure, that especially marketing is fully understood by sales and getting enough air-time to be able to support sales. Furthermore, to align the working, incentives should be more aligned and for example the same for the whole organization, as especially for B2B companies the aim is to serve the customer and ensure customer's success.

Integration of marketing and sales can be facilitated also by changes in organizational culture and the overall orientation and values of a company affects to the collaboration as well. Open culture facilitates the information sharing and communication, which are crucial for the integration. In addition, having a more loose culture which can be referred also to the suggestion about decentralization in organizational structure, would give flexibility especially for marketing to operate and support sales, which would enhance also the integration. Supporting a market orientation and customer-oriented mindset will be beneficial for the integration as well. Moreover, enabling a culture where both data and intuition have their roles is seen essential and supporting top management decision making, that will result optimal also for both marketing and sales.

Utilizing digital technologies in the daily working makes the integration a lot easier and effective as the information can be easily distributed whether it is about customer or internal information. It's important to ensure that marketing and sales systems are integrated or the information between systems is easily transferrable. The most important thing is, that both sales and marketing are finding the information and utilizing

it, which might require actions from the management regarding education or encourage to utilize the tools. Digital tools enable transparency, which is crucial for the integration. Marketing automation, cloud-based tools and -CRMs were seen essential in facilitating the integration.

To compare empirical findings with the theory when answering the main research question, can be seen, that the lack of diversity in teams was seen as one significant challenge or hindering factor, that wasn't presented in the existing research or literature. This study highlighted the importance of diverse teams in marketing and sales in order to play along better and understand and serve the variety of customers as well. Furthermore, related to the diversity issue, sales was seen as more traditional function compared to marketing, which was not only novel information but also hindering partly the integration especially in terms of implementing of modern digital tools to enhance the alignment. Whereas literature presented marketing and sales more as equal functions and both misunderstanding each other, this study proposes, that especially marketing feels, that sales doesn't understand marketing and its purpose and value. This will then prevent sales from utilizing the full potential of marketing and thus hinder the collaboration, which makes it notable for the research.

Furthermore, whereas this study focuses on the managerially controllable activities as the enhancing factors for integration, can be seen, that in fact, there are various factors within organization that are out of management's control and instead lies on individual's own responsibility. Hence, even though management would make organizational changes in order to enhance the integration, a lot is on the responsibility of individual eventually whether the integration will be successfully implemented. Moreover, this study hypothesized that being data-oriented company would be truism in a better integration, whereas the results speak for intuition and not following a complete data-oriented mindset.

7.2 Managerial implications

According to the insights and findings that were gathered from the existing literature and empirical research, some actions are proposed in this chapter for the

management to take into account and utilize in the integration between marketing and sales. Management has an essential role in the successful integration between marketing and sales and integration is something to put the focus on in order to succeed with it. Management should have a goal of both reducing the conflicts between marketing and sales as well as enhancing the collaboration. Management is able to do this by making changes within organizational factors and activities.

It is important, that management is aware of the prevailing challenges between marketing and sales in order to be aware of what are the areas for conflicts and hence improve and focus on the right things. This can be done by various exercises or common focused meetings. Top management should ensure, that both marketing and sales have aligned goals and objectives that will lead the activities of especially marketing to the right direction. What is more, management should clarify the roles and responsibilities of marketing and sales in order to reduce the conflicts related to misunderstandings as especially sales seem to find some of the marketing activities irrelevant. Hence, management needs to ensure that both marketing and sales are heard and understood, which can be supported by implementing different models or exercises or providing education and training. In order to marketing being fully able to be flexible and support sales, management should determine and estimate how centralized the decision-making actually needs to be for marketing. From the perspective of supporting sales, marketing needs more flexibility for example on where to use the marketing budget.

Management should make sure, that digital tools are supporting the integration and provide training for effective utilization of the tools. In addition, taking into account the rapidly changing environment and world as a such, there should be teams, which are diverse enough to support the integration. Due to the digitalization and Covid-19 the management should also provide communication tools that are supporting the new environment and changed circumstances, as frequent communication is pivotal for the integration. In terms of communication, management should encourage to both formal and informal communication, which is emphasized in international companies where marketing and sales might locate separate and online communication is the only way.

For B2B companies, there should be an open and customer-oriented culture instead of product-oriented, as it's supporting also the integration and brings marketing and sales closer to each other. Information and the activities should be transparent as well as easily accessible, which different digital tools facilitate beside the open culture.

7.3 Limitations and future research

In general, firstly, this research had a narrowed focus as it was limited to only B2B firms that were operating in a tech industry. This limitation may have affected on the results as B2B industry varies considerably from B2C due in terms of purchasing process, sales process, customer behavior, product portfolio and decision-making process to mention a few. Besides, expanding the industry from only tech to various industries or switching it to another may provide different insights. Tech-industry is one of the most rapidly changing and modern industries and for example the utilization of digital technologies may be at a higher level that in some other more traditional industries. Therefore, new and more insights could be gathered from either expanding the scope to both B2B and B2C companies or researching the topic from B2C aspect. In addition, researching more and various industries and for example using quantitative research would give more generalized results as this study focused on more detailed insights and phenomena and had limited participants as quantitative research. Furthermore, B2B and B2C -industries could be compared in terms of the integration in order to find the key success factors and the differences.

This study focused also on the manageable activities and factors and excluded the aspects on the very operational level, which leaves space for the future research about researching the operational level. The existing literature and research were lacking of the information about the role of digital technologies in the integration, which restricted also this study a bit. However, digital technologies and especially marketing automation are becoming more pivotal in terms of integration between marketing and sales and it was seen, that the digital transformation is rapid. Therefore, the companies of a near future would benefit from the research on how digital tools can be utilized effectively in the integration. Especially marketing automation was seen to play pivotal role

in the integration. Hence, narrowing the research down to marketing automation as a tool to integrate would be insightful especially in the future.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Structure for the core interview questions.

Background questions:
- The current title and role/responsibility?
- Experience in the current company/role?
- How aligned is your marketing and sales?
- How is your role in the cooperation between marketing and sales?

Themes & questions:

<u>Integration challenges</u>
- What have been the main areas for conflicts between marketing and sales?
- What in your position are the main challenges, that are hindering the integration?

<u>Management's integration mechanisms</u>
- What are the enhancing factors for integration?

Organizational structure
- How marketing and sales are organized in your company?
- What kind of actions have been made to enhance the cooperation between marketing and sales -teams?
  - Are there some integrator roles, that are taking part to both marketing and sales activities?
- How is the decision making organized – decentralized vs. centralized?
- How the responsibilities of marketing and sales have been clarified and by who?

Organizational processes
- What kind of actions have improved the internal communication?
- How are the reward systems supporting common goals?
- How the performance of marketing/sales is measured and is it supporting the alignment?

Organizational culture

- How would you describe the culture for marketing and sales and has it required some changes in terms of integration?

    - How these two functions are oriented?

- What efforts have been made in order to achieve a common understanding?

- Is the culture supporting information sharing and how it's been achieved?

Digital technologies

- How do you see the role of digital technologies in the integration?

- How do you utilize digital tools in the integration process?

    - Has the utilization of digital tools evolved during time and how do you see the future?