EXPLORING B2B CUSTOMER JOURNEYS: IDENTIFYING BARRIERS TO PURCHASING A SAAS PRODUCT ONLINE

Lappeenranta–Lahti University of Technology LUT

Master's Programme in International Marketing Management, Master's thesis

2022

Johanna Kotaniemi

Examiners: Associate Professor Anssi Tarkiainen

Professor Olli Kuivalainen

ABSTRACT

Lappeenranta–Lahti University of Technology LUT

LUT School of Business and Management

Business Administration

Johanna Kotaniemi

Exploring B2B customer journeys: Identifying barriers to purchasing a SaaS product online

Master's thesis

2022

93 pages, 5 figures, 9 tables and 1 appendix

Examiners: Associate Professor Anssi Tarkiainen & Professor Olli Kuivalainen

Keywords: B2B customer journey, organisational buying behaviour, customer experience, SaaS, subscription economy, barriers to purchase

Purchasing barriers in the B2B market in the subscription-model context is a subject that has not been widely studied, as most research focuses mainly on B2C settings and consumers' barriers to purchase. Although the subscription economy is a relatively new business model, it is already well established as a way of providing services to businesses. This research aimed to examine the B2B customer journeys and identify barriers to purchasing a SaaS product online.

The research was conducted through the means of the qualitative research method, and a case study was selected as the strategy for inquiry with a multiple-case design. The empirical data was collected through the means of semi-structured interviews of the commissioner company's stakeholders.

The findings concluded that the barriers to purchase are manifold and differ at different stages of the purchasing process. Invisibility in search engine results, unclear pricing, and failed trial are some of the elements that can stop customers from buying. Results also indicate that the traditional buying process fails to fully describe the process of subscription products. The research concluded by further providing managerial implications on ways companies can improve customer experience and reduce customers' fear of buying.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Lappeenrannan–Lahden teknillinen yliopisto LUT

LUT-kauppakorkeakoulu

Kauppatieteet

Johanna Kotaniemi

B2B ostopolku: SaaS-tuotteen verkko-ostamisen esteiden tunnistaminen

Kauppatieteiden pro gradu -tutkielma

2022

93 sivua, 5 kuvaa, 9 taulukkoa ja 1 liite

Tarkastajat: Apulaisprofessori Anssi Tarkiainen & Professori Olli Kuivalainen

Avainsanat: B2B ostopolku, organisaation ostokäyttäytyminen, asiakaskokemus, SaaS, tilaustalous, oston esteet

Oston esteitä B2B-markkinassa tilaustalouden kontekstissa ei ole laajalti tutkittu, sillä useimmat tutkimukset keskittyvät pääasiassa B2C-ympäristöön ja kuluttajien oston esteisiin. Vaikka tilaustalous nykymerkityksessään on suhteellisen uusi liiketoimintamalli, on se jo vakiinnuttanut asemansa tapana tarjota palveluja yrityksille. Tässä tutkimuksessa pyrittiinkin tarkastelemaan B2B-ostopolkuja sekä tunnistamaan mitkä tekijät estävät organisaatioita ostamasta SaaS-tuotteita verkosta.

Tutkimus toteutettiin kvalitatiivisen tutkimusmenetelmän avulla, ja tutkimusstrategiaksi valittiin tapaustutkimus, jossa on usean tapauksen malli. Empiirinen aineisto kerättiin toimeksiantajayrityksen sidosryhmistä puolistrukturoitujen haastattelujen avulla.

Tulokset osoittavat, että ostamisen esteet ovat moninaisia ja vaihtelevat ostoprosessin eri vaiheissa. Näkymättömyys hakukoneiden tuloksissa, epäselvä hinnoittelu ja epäonnistunut kokeilujakso ovat joitakin tekijöitä, jotka estävät asiakkaita ostamasta. Tulokset osoittavat myös, että perinteinen ostoprosessi ei täysin kuvaa tilaustuotteiden ostoprosessia. Tutkimuksen päätteeksi esitetään myös johtopäätöksiä siitä, miten yritykset voivat parantaa asiakaskokemusta ja vähentää asiakkaiden ostopelkoa.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are living in extraordinary times. Not only did I start my master's studies during a covid pandemic, but I am also about to finish them when there is a war in Europe. LUT University has shown remarkable strength and unity during these difficult times. Strength has been required from me, too, as combining a full-time work, and writing master's thesis was not always easy. But it was certainly worth it, and now it is time for new adventures. The importance of research and science to society cannot be overstated, and I hope that I can contribute to this by sharing what I have learned wherever the future takes me.

> "There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it." - Edith Wharton

Thank you to my spouse, friends, and family for supporting me and believing in me during this project.

29.05.2022 in Helsinki

Johanna Kotaniemi

Table of contents

Figures

Tables

Table 9: Managerial implications.

1. Introduction

Digitalization has disrupted the concept of sales (Andersen, Wenstrup & Taneja, 2016). As a result, organisational buyers have become more independent (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020) while purchasing patterns are increasingly becoming more complex (Lingqvist, Plotkin, & Stanley, 2015; Maechler, Sahni & Van Oostrum, 2016). Given the technological developments, the subscription economy and subscription business models have enabled organisations to implement software in an easy and cost-efficient way, allowing them to focus on their core business. However, when adopting new technology, customers may experience resistance or perceive risks related to the new solution so great that it becomes a barrier to purchase. Or do they? This study examines the business-to-business (B2B) customer journeys in relation to Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) and aims to identify the barriers to purchasing a SaaS product online. Given the relative novelty of the subscription business model and its character, it is important to study whether there are any characteristics of the customer journey of subscription products and what barriers to purchase are associated with them.

Ever since online shopping came into recognition, various studies have been conducted to identify the factors, barriers and drivers that influence the adoption of e-commerce. (Jain & Kulhar, 2019). Yet, few studies have explicitly taken the organisational perspective into account when examining barriers to purchasing, and studies have mainly focused on consumer purchasing behaviour. Previous studies have generally identified risks that may influence the customer's purchasing decision. Moreover, inertia and innovation resistance theory have been associated with the adoption of new technologies.

Even though the subscription economy has become a well-established model of providing services to businesses, there is only a little research addressing the customer journey or purchasing barriers related to the phenomenon. Thus, qualitative research methodology and interviews as a data collection method were deemed to serve the purpose of this study the most.

The findings of the study concluded that the barriers to purchase are manifold. Moreover, barriers to purchasing are different at different stages of the purchasing process. Invisibility in search engine results, unclear pricing and failed trial are some of the elements that can stop customers from buying. In addition, a lack of reliable references and bad reviews have a distrusting effect. During the evaluation, understandable pricing and communicating the benefits are considered important. Hence, unclear pricing and poorly communicated benefits cause confusion and may lead to rejection of the purchase. Moreover, results indicate that the trial period is consistently seen as part of the buying process of SaaS, and it has a pivotal implication in assuring that product is aligned with the customer's needs. Results also indicate that the traditional buying process fails to fully describe the process of subscription products.

To identify the purchasing barriers, the special characteristics of SaaS and its customer journey are examined first. Given the research question and the problem statement, this study is limited to the stages of the buying process before post-purchase behaviour. The first chapter of this study introduces the research problem, research questions and theoretical framework in brief, followed by the definitions and research methodology and data collection plan. The second chapter provides a more in-depth review of the theories related to the research problem and ties them more tightly together. Chapters 3,4 and 5 form the second part of the study where the research and the findings are presented, followed by conclusions, theoretical contributions, managerial implications, and suggestions for further research.

1.1. Motivation and background for the research

The thesis has a commissioner company, which is a Finnish software start-up. Commissioner company and the case are presented more carefully in chapter 3.1. The topic for the thesis came from work, as the commissioner company is building an ecommerce for its SaaS product. Currently, the software is mostly sold through traditional selling methods like cold calls and emails. The purpose of this study is to provide valuable information and a profound understanding of how buying processes flow and where and what purchasing barriers occur

in the B2B customer journey. Moreover, this study aims to identify the critical success factors within the B2B buying process, from the seller's point of view. Thus, this research is conducted to specifically examine the purchasing process of SaaS.

1.2. Literature review

In this chapter, earlier literature on the B2B customer journey and B2B buying process in context of SaaS is discussed briefly. The purpose of the literature review is to provide a comprehensive overview of what has already been discussed in the field. After reading this chapter, the reader should have a better understanding of what has already been studied. Also the research gap that was previously identified, is justified.

Since the 1990s, the internet has changed the way of buying and selling (Jain & Kulhar, 2019). Ever since online shopping came into recognition, various studies have been conducted to find out factors affecting online shopping drivers, adoption, and barriers (Jain & Kulhar, 2019). Yet, there are only a handful of studies on digitalization's effect on B2B buying behaviour and even fewer studies examining the B2B buying process and behaviour in the subscription economy context. Only few studies have explicitly taken the organisational perspective into account when examining barriers to purchasing, and studies have mainly focused on consumer purchasing behaviour. Given the impact of digitalisation on the buying behaviour of organisations, there is a clear lack of research on buying behaviour and purchasing barriers in the B2B environment today. Additionally, there seems to be a deficiency in studying the impact of the subscription economy on B2B purchasing behaviour. Hence, there is clearly room, if not demand for a study like this.

The proliferation of SaaS solutions in today's technology landscape is reflected in the growing number and variety of SaaS solutions available and the rapidly growing user base of popular SaaS technologies such as Zoom, Salesforce and HubSpot (Mero et al., 2022). Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) refers to the selling of software that is remotely hosted, managed, owned, developed, and delivered by the internet by the vendor (Gonzalez &

Zainuddin, 2011; Oliveira et al., 2019; Cho & Chan, 2015). Even many long-established software companies are now shifted toward SaaS business models and the global revenues from SaaS providers are expected to exceed USD 140 billion in 2022 (Mero et al., 2022).

In the B2B sector, the subscription concept is often used under various synonyms, e.g. SaaS in the software industry (Schuh et al. 2020). Tani, Troise and O'Driscoll (2022) define subscription business model as a business model where customers periodically pay a fee to access a product or service. Consistently, Schuh et al. (2020) see the recurring fee for a defined product, content, or service as a fundamental characteristic of the subscription business model.

According to Mero et al. (2022), the growing popularity of SaaS technologies has been reinforced by features that help organisations make rapid adoption decisions. Given the subscription revenue model, in which the provider charges a monthly fee, the upfront cost of acquiring SaaS is often negligible and, in addition to this, the installation and set-up of SaaS are considered technically fast and easy (Mero et al., 2022).

These characteristics, among others, differentiate the adoption of SaaS technology from more traditional technology, as the perceived risk changes from a potential loss of invested capital to a potential loss of SaaS-related opportunities. (Mero et al., 2022). As a result, Mero et al. (2022) see that organisations are encouraged to skip cautious assessments and make rapid adoption decisions to utilise the potential of SaaS technologies. Furthermore, Mero et al. argue that SaaS applications are attractive to businesses because of their low upfront capital costs, easy accessibility, free trials, direct subscriptions, and automatic update cycles (Mero et al. 2022).

According to SaaS Finland, there are about 500 domestic SaaS companies in Finland (SaaS Finland 2022). In a survey of 123 Finnish B2B SaaS companies, 42 percent reported offering a self-service buying experience, i.e., subscribing (Vendep Capital 2020, 17). Moreover, McKinsey B2B customer decision journey survey from 2016 found, that 46 percent of

buyers said they would be willing to buy from a supplier's website if the option were available and the service efficient (Angevine, Plotkin & Stanley, 2017). Given the opportunities the subscription business model offers to suppliers, organisations need to design and execute informative and communicative customer journeys, and thus aiming to remove the barriers that prevent customers from buying.

The concept of sales has been revolutionized by digitalization. With the ubiquity of information, the growth of "as-a-service" business models and the decentralisation of account relationships, the sales cycle as we used to know, is disrupting (Andersen, Wenstrup & Taneja, 2016). And so are the customer journeys. As customer journeys have become increasingly complex and individualized, the current literature is no longer able to capture what the customers really experience (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020). Simultaneously, customer experience has become more important and competed among companies, as product quality and value are no longer enough, but you need to be able to create excellent customer experiences as well (Edelman & Singer, 2017).

Organisational buyers differ in many ways from a consumer, including the information they perceive to be important and the decision process they follow (Mudambi, 2002). Survey conducted by Gartner found, that 77% of B2B buyers described their latest purchase as "very complex" or "challenging" (Gartner, 2019). With advancements in commerce technologies and other market drivers, B2B buyers are looking to gain more control and streamline their buying processes, which has forced companies to evolve their strategies and leverage digital solutions to meet the needs of B2B buyers (Burns, 2021). As customers have taken a bigger role in their experiences, B2B selling has become less linear and the path to closed sales more complicated (Lingqvist, Plotkin, and Stanley, 2015).

Jaakkola et al. (2018) found customers and buyers are increasingly taking contact to sellers only after they already know what they need to solve their problems, stemming from customers' increasing access to technical product information that is adequate from their point of view and the wider experience of other customers. Moreover, as business buyers have been influenced by their consumer shopping experience, their behaviour has become

more consumer-like; fluid, social, real-time, and modular (Lingqvist, Plotkin, and Stanley, 2015). According to Lingqvist, Plotkin and Stanley (2015), in comparison to B2C, B2B companies tend to have more critical customer journeys that are long, complex, technical and consist of a continuous interaction of services and sales touchpoints. Given the different departments and different functional and hierarchical levels across multiple touchpoints in the B2B context and the explosion in potential customer touchpoints, firm's control of customer experience is reduced and thus made the efforts to manage and control experiences and journeys increasingly complex (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Witell et al., 2020).

Lemon and Verhoef (2016) conceptualise touchpoints as individual contacts between a company and a customer at different stages in the customer experience, that are experienced at every stage of the customer journey, and only some of them are under the company's control. Given the multitouch and multichannel nature of today's customer journeys, with new stimuli emerging every day, a company needs to understand the wide range of touchpoints within and outside its control, both online and offline (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Becker & Jaakkola, 2020).

In order to contribute to the B2B customer journey, firms must understand how and why customers make purchase decisions (Mohr, Sengupta and Slater 2014, 234). There has been discussion regarding the differences between the B2C and B2B customer journeys. As previously these two have been kept strictly separate from each other, Witell et al. (2020) have found that only in recent years has there been a growing consensus that the two share many similarities. Witell et al. (2020) conceptualize B2B customer journey as a set of relational processes to meet the customer's business needs. Furthermore, Lemon and Verhoef (2016) describe the process as dynamic, moving from the pre-purchase to the purchase and post-purchase stage, incorporating prior experiences and external factors.

According to a survey by Schwartz & Kim in 2012, more than 70% of buyers kickstart their buying process with a Google search, aiming to improve their understanding of the market and products (Marvasti et al., 2021). Consistently, Marvasti et al. (2021) have found that digitally-driven information search now forms a significant part of the B2B customer

journey, as buyers spend a significant amount of time searching and analysing digitally available information.

Additionally, Marvasti et al. (2021) argue that digitally accessible information has reduced the buyer's dependence on sellers, as they can access a wide range of information without sellers being involved in the process. According to Angevine, Plotkin and Stanley (2017), B2B customers' demand for efficient service is resulting from their experiences in the online consumer world: they want immediate response and ease of use, including the ability to find highly relevant and accurate information effortlessly, wherever they are on the customer decision journey. Witell et al. (2020) have therefore rightfully argued that the experiences of business customers are likely to resemble customer experiences in business-to-consumer (B2C) contexts. One study found that waiting ten seconds for a page to load can cause up to 50% of potential customers to give up and leave, indicating customers' criticality to poor digital experiences and that businesses should focus on creating an effective digital customer experience strategy (Borowski, 2015).

The organisational buying process can be described through a five-stage model, in which the buying process is described with five different stages that are problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase behaviour (Kotler & Keller, 2016, 195; Mohr, Sengupta & Slater, 2014, 236). Tyrväinen and Selin (2011) divide SaaS buyer roles into top management, business management, technical buyers, and end users. In the subscription economy, the end user is considered to be the most important target group and thus efforts should be placed into their service experience, as they will convince others in the organisation to do the same (Virtanen, 2021c). Moreover. customers' willingness to adopt new technologies such as SaaS is influenced by several factors and concerns (Mohr, Sengupta & Slater, 2014, 240), which companies must address in order to remove the potential barriers to purchase.

Barriers to purchase are anything that stops or slows customers' purchase of a solution (Cromulent Marketing, 2018). Kotler and Keller (2016, 200) argue customer's decision to modify, postpone or avoid a purchase decision is influenced by one or more perceived risks.

New technologies and their adoption are often associated with innovation resistance theory (IRT), which refers to the resistance to innovations and the lack of willingness to accept innovation (Seth et al., 2020; Kaur et al., 2020). Furthermore, perceived risks can relate to functionality, finance, time, attitudes, or unanticipated situational factors, and may cause the buyer journey to either change or end (Kotler & Keller, 2016, 199). In addition, inertia, which refers to the tendency of customers to stick to their current habits or actions, even when presented with a better alternative, can get in the way of acquiring new solutions (Seth et al., 2020). Organisations therefore need to understand the factors that provoke a sense of risk and provide information and support to reduce it (Kotler & Keller, 2016, 200).

Understanding customers' buying barriers is vital and can help increase demand, enable self-service research, and improve sales enablement and sales efficiency. As a company's job is to help customers solve a problem, it is crucial to develop an outside-in understanding of the things that hamper prospects' attempts to find a solution to their problem. (Cromulent marketing, 2018). According to Virtanen (2021c) selling, whether online or in-store, is a combination of ease and removing the fear of purchase for the customer and, to overcome the fear of buying, customer needs to be reassured that they are making the right decision.

As presented in this chapter, the B2B buying process is complex and affected by several touchpoints and stimuli both online and offline. Additionally, organisational buyers' journey is affected by several issues, of which some can become a barrier to purchase. However, how well the organisational buying process represents the buying process of SaaS, remains unclear. Hence, the current research does not provide a direct answer to the questions: what is the specific nature of the organisational purchasing process when buying SaaS, what are the barriers to purchasing that arise during the process, and do the barriers to purchase differ at different stages of the purchasing process? By first defining the characteristics of SaaS, this study aims to determine the nature of the SaaS buying process and the factors that influence B2B customers' buying decisions. A further aim is to gain a deeper understanding of the company's buying process and the barriers to purchasing SaaS products online.

1.3. Research questions and aim

This paper aims to identify the barriers to purchasing a SaaS product online. Thus, the aim is to identify the most critical barriers to purchase, and at which stage they occur in the buyer's journey. Given the complex nature and multi-level decision-making in the B2B buying process, offline behaviour is included to the research, even though the focus is on the online purchase event. Only by looking at the whole process can we understand what has led to online action. Offline behaviour cannot be excluded either, as it is assumed that barriers to purchase also exist in an offline context, such as within an organisation.

The aim of this research contains the main research question. To answer the main research question, sub-questions are formed to support the main research question. Main research question and sub-questions are:

MQ: What factors prevent organisations from buying SaaS products online and how?

SQ1: What are the specific features of SaaS?

SQ2: What is the buying process of SaaS like?

SQ3: What factors affect B2B customer's purchase decision and how?

Table 1 presents the research design with thesis matrix, which defines the research questions, related theories, and concepts as well as how this thesis aims to answer these questions.

Table 1. Thesis matrix.

Research Questions	Theories	Concepts	Research Design
Main RQ: What factors prevent organisations from buying SaaS products online and how?	Organisational buying behaviour, innovation resistance theory	B2B market, digital customer journey, Software-as-a-Service, barriers to purchase, technology adoption	Academic journals, literature, online sources, and interviews
SQ1: What are the specific features of SaaS?	High-technology innovations	Software-as-a-service, subscription economy	Academic journals, literature, online sources
SQ2: What is the buying process of SaaS like?	Organisational buying behaviour, High-technology customers' purchase process	Software-as-a-Service, customer journey, touchpoints	Academic journals, literature, and interviews
SQ3: What factors affect B2B customer's purchase decision and how?	Value proposition, high-technology customers' purchase process	Customer experience, Customer perceived value, purchasing barriers	Academic journals, literature, online sources, and interviews

Main theories supporting this study are organisational buying behaviour and high-technology customer's purchase process. Concepts, that complement these theories are customer journey, customer experience, Software-as-a-service, subscription economy and barriers to purchase. Research design of this study is descriptive in nature and, to answer the research questions, academic journals and literature, and online sources to complement these, as well as interviews, were used as data sources.

1.4. Delimitations

This study emphasizes on providing information from the phenomenon of digitalization of the B2B customer journeys, organisational buying behaviour and buying process from the general perspective. The information on barriers to purchase are more precisely delimited to B2B context and purchasing a SaaS product. Primary data collection is limited to B2B

context, however often theory is derived from B2C concept. Delimitation to B2B market is explained with the commissioner company's operational environment, which represents this segment.

Theoretical concepts are limited to the customer experience, customer journey, organisational buying behaviour and buying process, Software-as-a-Service, and barriers to purchase. These concepts are seen to be connected to one another and are essential to examine and understand for producing more insights of the phenomenon and the subjects examined for this study.

This research focuses on analysing the information obtained from the interviews. Given the size of the sample, it limits the study. Hence, possible divergences may occur. Interviewees were selected from commissioner company's stakeholders. Importance was given to experience in organisational purchasing behaviour and processes, and expertise in SaaS. Empirical data was collected from domestic sources as most commissioner company's customers operate in Finland.

1.5. Theoretical framework

This chapter discloses the relevant key concepts that are used in the research and their relationships to one another. As illustrated in the theoretical framework in Figure 1, larger phenomenon is the digitalization and the digitalization of B2B buying process. The concept of customer journey is illustrated through B2B market, focusing on the purchases of SaaS. The concept of purchasing barriers to a SaaS product is examined through the B2B customer journey and organisational buying process and thus, creating a perspective of the topic through these themes.

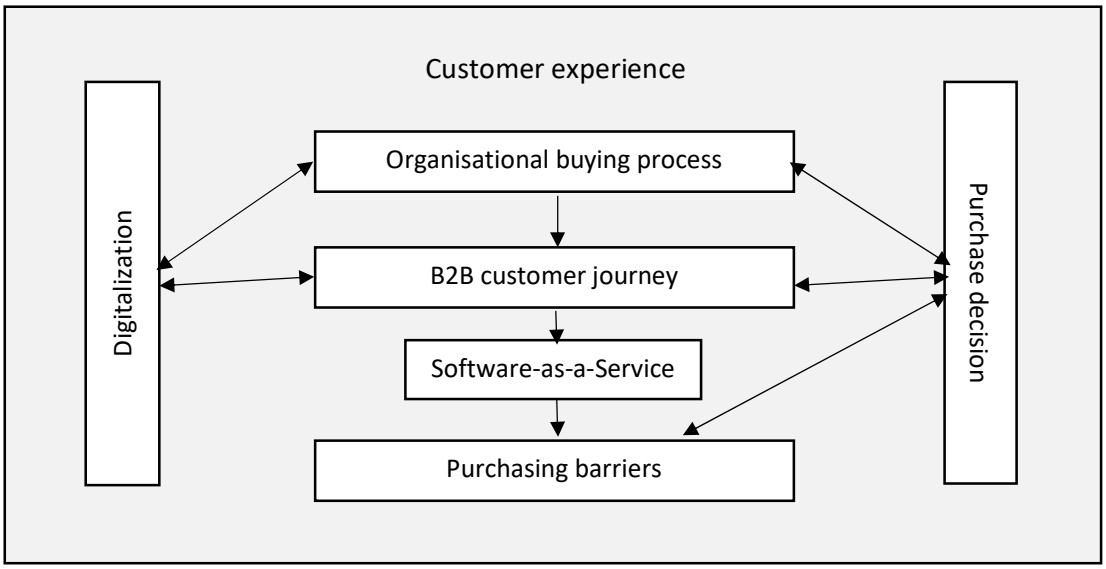

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework.

The framework starts from mapping the organisational buying process and B2B customer journey, including the identification of the different stages of the B2B buying process. Customer experience is present throughout the customer journey. As this research aims to answer the question "What factors prevent organisations from buying SaaS products online and how?", the main focus of this study is on SaaS and identifying the purchasing barriers related to them. Thus, research examines the B2B buying process in the context of subscription-model, and aims to create a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

1.6. Definitions

B2B

B2B refers to business to business, meaning one business selling products or services to another business, whereas B2C refers to businesses selling directly to consumers.

Customer experience (CX)

Customer experience can be defined as encompassing every aspect of company's offering, the quality of customer care, but also advertising, packaging, product and service features,

ease of use and reliability. (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Moreover, it is customers' nondeliberate, spontaneous responses and reactions to offering-related stimuli residing in various touchpoints along the customer journey (Witell et al. 2020).

Customer journey

Customer journey is the entire experience a customer has while communicating with a brand.

Customer perceived value

Customer perceived value is a result of customers' perceived benefits that are generated from customer perception of supplier company's offering and how it responds to customer needs and goals (Graf & Maas, 2008; Yoo & Park, 2016).

Customer value proposition

A customer value proposition (CVP) is a strategic tool that company uses to communicate how it aims to provide value to customers (Payne, Frow & Eggert, 2017). Moreover, value proposition should capture the essence of why buyer should purchase a product or use a service, and appeal to customer's strongest decision making drivers (Mohr, Sengupta & Slater 2014, 58).

Digital customer experience

Digital customer experience refers to experiences experienced through digital interface (Borowski, 2015).

High-technology buying process

A theoretical framework that describes the factors and stages related to the buying process of a high-technology products. Mohr, Sengupta and Slater have divided high-tech customers'

purchase process to five stages: problem recognition, information search, evaluate alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase evaluation (2014, 236).

Organisational buying behaviour

A theoretical framework that describes the buying process within organisations, that are often described as complex and lengthy, requiring multilevel decision-making.

SaaS

Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) refers to the selling of software that is remotely hosted, managed, owned, developed, and delivered by the internet by the vendor (Gonzalez & Zainuddin, 2011; Oliveira et al., 2019; Cho & Chan, 2015).

Touchpoint

Customer experience consists of individual contacts between the firm and the customer at distinct points in the experience, called touchpoints (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

1.7. Research methodology and data collection plan

Preliminary data for the thesis was collected through existing literature and academic journals. The purpose of the preliminary data is to present what is already known and examined, as well as to demonstrate the research gap. Moreover, it is assumed to support the primary data and the findings. Data was collected from academic databases and, to some extent, websites. Websites were used to complement information on topics that were not sufficiently present on other sources.

Initially, the search was started with keywords “B2B customer journey”, “barriers to purchase”, “SaaS customer journey” and “digital customer journey” in Google Scholar and Science Direct. Preference was given to the studies which directly strike the keyword search

and that were less than 10 years old. Studies were also selected by snowballing method which were referred by the selected studies.

For the empirical part of the research, qualitative research method was deemed to be the most adequate method. Case study was selected as the strategy for inquiry with multiple-case design. Since there are no previous studies that would specifically match to this paper's research problem, a deeper understanding of the topic is needed and therefore, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the data collection method. Interviewees were selected from commissioner company's stakeholders, all from different organisations and operating in different functions in an organisation. In total, six persons were interviewed.

1.8. Structure of thesis

The thesis consists of two parts: theoretical part (chapter 2) and empirical part (chapters 3, 4 & 5). The theoretical part of the research familiarizes reader to previous studies and the topic of this research. Moreover, it illustrates the research problem and research questions as well as justifies the topic choice of the research. In the literature review the research gap is identified more clearly and the topic is tied more closely to the theoretical framework. Thus, theoretical part aims to provide a more in-depth view of the topic.

Empirical part begins with the introduction of the research design and methods, and the description of research context and the case. Findings are presented in chapter 4 and in the final chapter, findings are discussed in relation to research questions and conclusions of the study are presented. Lastly, theoretical contributions, managerial implications, and further research proposals are presented.

2. SaaS customer journey in B2B setting

In this chapter the theoretical framework of this paper is presented in more detail and tied more closely together. First, the special characteristics of SaaS in relation with both the product and the purchasing process are presented. Next, the organisational buying behaviour and organisational buying process and customer journeys are presented. Finally, the concept of purchasing barriers is presented with the key theories related to it, followed by insights on how purchasing barriers can be tackled.

As there are still relatively few studies on the research problem, research and consulting organisations, for instance, can provide more timely information. Thus, these and other additional sources are used to fill the gaps that research yet fails to sufficiently capture.

2.1. Software-as-a-Service

Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) refers to the software that is remotely hosted, managed, owned, developed, and delivered by the internet by the vendor (Gonzalez & Zainuddin, 2011; Oliveira et al., 2019; Cho & Chan, 2015; Satyanarayana, 2012). According to Gonzalez and Zainuddin (2011), SaaS vendors typically build their software from the ground up and continue to host and maintain it. In terms of architecture, SaaS is based on the multi-tenancy model, which refers to the concept of a single software instance serving and fulfilling the needs of multiple clients (Gonzalez & Zainuddin, 2011; Satyanarayana, 2012).

A client who subscribes to a SaaS application receives on-demand access to the software in a self-service manner that is independent of either a device or a location, without the need to use its own server space or install and maintain the software, because upgrades and new features are available on a continuous basis (Gonzalez & Zainuddin, 2011; Mero et al. 2022). Peppard and Rylander (2006) argue that the delivery of services over the internet has changed the concept of value system from a chain to a network. According to them, the process of creating value in a cloud computing environment is determined by the

interdependencies between market actors, which include not only clients and vendors, but also external entities such as hardware providers and professional groups (Peppard and Rylander, 2006).

According to Mero et al. (2022), the increasing popularity of SaaS technologies has been fuelled by features that enable organizations to make quick adoption decisions. Indeed, the SaaS model has brought radical change to the software industry, especially in terms of pricing and upgrade models (Satyanarayana, 2012). For example, because most providers operate on a subscription revenue model in which the provider charges a monthly fee, the upfront cost of acquiring SaaS is frequently negligible, and installation and set-up of SaaS is considered technically fast and easy (Mero et al., 2022; Satyanarayana, 2012; Gonzalez and Zainuddin, 2011).

Mero et al. (2022) argue that these characteristics, among others, distinguish SaaS technology adoption from more traditional technologies because perceived risk shifts from the potential loss of invested capital to the potential loss of SaaS-related opportunities. As a result, Mero et al. (2022) observe that organizations are encouraged to bypass cautious evaluations and make quick adoption decisions in order to capitalize on the underlying potential of SaaS technologies. Furthermore, SaaS applications are appealing to businesses because they require no upfront capital costs and offer convenience, free trials, direct subscriptions, and automated upgrade cycles (Mero et al. 2022; Venkatachalam et al. 2014; Gonzalez and Zainuddin, 2011). Due to its centralized servers and data processing facilities that reduce electronic waste as well as usage of power supply, SaaS is also more environmentally sustainable than traditional software (Gonzalez & Zainuddin, 2011).

Studies present that the concept of agility has expanded from the field of IT and software development into various areas of business (Bianchi, Marzi, and Guerni, 2020; Mero et al. 2022). This is due to irreversible amendments in the business environment and how they operate, that have forced organisations to seek more agile ways to operate and adapt to changes. Thus, agile organisations are associated with increased variety and speed in their

organisational actions, which allow them to gain a competitive advantage for instance, by adopting new technologies and solutions (Mero et al. 2022).

According to Gonzalez and Zainuddin (2011), negative aspects of SaaS are data security concerns and one-size-fits-all model. Service providers must follow the network security agreement in order to guarantee the interactive security (Satyanarayana, 2012) and service providers are actively working towards minimizing security concerns. For instance, SaaS vendors have developed technologies to address data security concerns and implemented configurability in the software to accommodate the need of a diverse set of customers (Gonzalez & Zainuddin, 2011). These customer-specific product configurations, manage which features of the service are available to different customers (Satyanarayana, 2012).

The configurability of SaaS applications can be defined through five configurable aspects, which are user interface workflow, data, access control and miscellaneous configurability options (Arya et al., 2010). User interface refers to the ability to change the look and feel of the user interface features to match the client's preferences, for example to be able to restructure page layouts or change the colours (Arya et al., 2010; Kang, Kang & Hur, 2011). Workflow refers to the ability to change the activities, user roles and rules within the software, to match with the specific organisational workflows (Arya et al., 2010).

Data refers to the ability to store specific data requirements in the database and to add or delete data object and fields (Arya et al., 2010; Kang, Kang & Hur, 2011). Arya et al. (2010) argue data is the most important aspect of SaaS configurability because it is the data that drives the SaaS application. The ability to create individual accounts for end users and determine which functions each user should have access to is referred to as access control (Arya et al., 2010; Kang, Kang & Hur, 2011). Kang et al. (2011) discovered that the configurability of an organisational structure is an essential feature because it is a unique aspect of user organisation that is frequently changed and cannot be considered during the development stage. Lastly, there are the miscellaneous configurability options, which refer to options that extend the software, such as adding language options to serve clients from various regions (Arya et al., 2010).

Maturity level of SaaS can be described based on its configurability level, of which there are four (Hudli et al., 2009; Satyanarayana, 2012). Level one maturity indicates that the software is customized for individual clients and thus does not provide configuration options (Satyanarayana, 2012), whereas level two maturity indicates that the software provides minimal configurability options (Hudli et al., 2009). Level three maturity implies that extended configurability options are offered for clients, and multi-tenancy is fully supported by the software, and only a single instance is available to all clients (Hudli et al., 2009). According to Satyanarayana (2012), this approach allows for more efficient use of server resources with no discernible difference to the end user, but it is ultimately limited in its ability to scale massively. Level four maturity implies that in addition to multi-tenancy, software is hosted in a multi-tiered architecture and is highly configurable and scalable (Hudli et al., 2009; Satyanarayana, 2012).

SaaS customers differ from traditional customers. In contrast to an old-style software acquisition, where customers pay a one-time fee for a perpetual license, the customer pays a recurring monthly fee for the use of the functionality (Satyanarayana, 2012). Moreover, according to Satyanarayana (2012), vendor's success is inextricably linked to the success of the customer in the SaaS model because the vendor is only compensated if the client is satisfied with the software and renews their subscription. Unsatisfied SaaS users can easily unsubscribe and switch to a competing provider, unlike traditional software models (Satyanarayana, 2012). Tyrväinen and Selin (2011) divide SaaS buyer roles into top management, business management, technical buyers and end users. They have also found that the role of the buyer of SaaS is shifting from technical buyers to business directors and suggest, that the role of buyer shifts according to the life cycle of the product (Tyrväinen & Selin, 2011).

2.1.1. SaaS business in Finland

According to SaaS Finland there are about 500 domestic SaaS companies (SaaS Finland 2022). By Virtanen (2021c), there are very good product development and coding skills in Finland, even by international standards. However, Finns are significantly behind many

countries in sales capability, which is part of the reason Finland is not home to several unicorn software companies, like its southern and western neighbours (Virtanen, 2021c).

A survey from 2020 found that 54% of the respondent Finnish SaaS companies use internet sales as part of their sales models (Vendep Capital 2020, 5). However, Virtanen (2021c) sees two shortcomings Finnish companies have in sales: the ability to scale digital sales and the courage to sell. Hence, companies need to learn how to use digital customer engagement as part of sales, and in addition to product development, invest more in sales and marketing (Virtanen, 2021c). According to Virtanen (2021c) sales too often fall into a consultative approach, building customer-specific implementations which, however, do not scale and are therefore not suitable for a subscription service.

The trend in SaaS pricing is towards value-based pricing (Virtanen, 2021c). Virtanen (2021c) argues that when the price of a service can be clearly justified by the value it creates e.g. time saved or increased revenue, it is easier for a potential customer to justify a purchase decision. A survey "State of SaaS in the Nordics 2021" by Vendep Capital, found that 47% of the respondents have published prices on the website (Vendep Capital 2021, 26). Moreover, 40% have possibility to try before buying, and 64% allow signing up for a demo online (Vendep Capital 2021, 26).

From those companies with public pricing, 67% offered free trial, 66% had enterprise price option and 34% had named plans. 31% offered annual discounts. (Vendep Capital 2021, 28) Virtanen (2021c) sees freemiums, free trials or either a guided or stand-alone demos helping the customer to get to know the service and to test whether the service solves the customer's need. According to Virtanen (2021c) the key to growth is that the customer knows how to use the service and feels they are getting value from the service before the payment barrier.

Product-led growth (PLG) strategy is one of the most efficient ways to generate growth within SaaS solutions (Clearbit, 2021). PLG is a customer acquisition model in which the product and its excellent user experience drive a company's growth and all funnel stages.

(Clearbit, 2021; Vendep Capital 2020, 17). Finnish SaaS companies have employed typical PLG tactics such as free trial and self-service buying experience. In general Finnish SaaS companies use PLG tactics as much as or more than their international peers. (Vendep Capital 2020, 18) Getting users into a freemium product or trial is the single most important source of leads for SaaS businesses (Clearbit, 2021). Moreover, the power of productization and pricing should not be underestimated, since a well-packaged service visualizes growth opportunities for the customer and encourages the customer to grow, creating growth for the service provider (Virtanen, 2021b).

To conclude, SaaS and subscription solutions offer great opportunities for companies. Moreover, as decision-making positions are now seated by the people born in the 80s (Virtanen, 2021a), they are breaking old patterns and are more open to adopting agile, innovative solutions. It is also evident, that as monthly subscriptions have become more common, buying "in the cloud" has become the new normal (Virtanen 2021a). In the next chapters, organisational buying process and behaviours are discussed more closely.

2.2. Organisational buying process

Three main types of organisational buying situations are new task, straight rebuy, and modified rebuy (Inoni, Salami, and Olannye, 2019). New task refers to a purchasing situation in which the buyer purchases a service or product for the first time (Kotler & Keller, 2016, 215). According to Inoni et al. (2019), new task requires more information search due to buyer's limited knowledge and lack of user experience. Straight rebuy refers to situation where purchasing department reorders items on a routine basis and the supplier is already familiar with the buyer criteria (Kotler & Keller, 2016, 215; Inoni, Salami, and Olannye, 2019). Modified rebuy, on the other hand, refers to a purchasing situation in which the buyer wishes to change product specifications, prices, or other terms (Kotler & Keller, 2016, 215).

Kotler and Keller (2016, 214-215) argue, that the amount of decisions business buyer must make depends on the complexity of the problem being solved, newness of the buying

requirements and number of people involved; the greater the cost or risk, the larger the buying team and the greater the information gathering, the longer the process. Larger organisations have separate decision-making units, buying centres, and buying team or unit consists of individuals and groups who participate in the purchasing decision-making process (Kotler & Keller, 2016, 216; Inoni, Salami, and Olannye, 2019). Typical roles in the process include initiators, users, influencers, deciders, approvers, buyers, and gatekeepers (Kotler & Keller, 2016, 216).

Inoni et al. (2019) define initiators as the person who first recognizes the need and suggests purchasing a certain product or service, whereas users are the ones that will use the purchased product or service. Influencers impact the buying decision for example by helping define specifications and providing information for the evaluation of alternatives (Kotler & Keller, 2016, 216; Inoni, Salami, and Olannye, 2019). Deciders are people who decide on product requirements or on suppliers along with the supply terms and risk assessments (Inoni, Salami, and Olannye, 2019). According to Kotler and Keller (2016, 216), approvers are people who have the authority to choose the supplier and agree on the terms of the purchase, whereas gatekeepers are individuals who could prevent sellers or information from reaching the purchasing unit. Gatekeepers are usually administrators, secretaries, or purchasing managers who are familiar with the product, problems, functions, and potential suppliers (Inoni, Salami, and Olannye, 2019). Multiple people can play multiple roles, or one person can play multiple roles. (Kotler & Keller, 2016, 216; Inoni, Salami, and Olannye, 2019).

Organisational buyer's journey has been described in several ways in the literature. Typically, buyer's journey is considered to include awareness, consideration, and decision stages. Moreover, the buying process can be described through a five-stage model, in which the buying process is described with five different stages that are problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase behaviour (Kotler & Keller, 2016, 195; Mohr, Sengupta & Slater, 2014, 236).

Buying process starts when a problem or need is triggered by internal or external stimuli (Kotler & Keller, 2016, 220; Mohr, Sengupta & Slater, 2014, 236). Process continues with

information search, where customer seeks to find out, if there are solutions available that would solve their problem (Kotler & Keller, 2016, 196). Mohr et al. (2014, 236) argue that the amount of information needed is individual and varies by product category and customer type. During the information search, the customer may seek information from personal sources such as friends, commercial sources such as vendors, public sources such as the internet, or experiential sources such as examining the product during a demonstration (Mohr, Sengupta & Slater, 2014, 236). Moreover, buyer determines the general characteristics and requirements for the acquisition (Inoni, Salami, and Olannye, 2019) and tries to identify the most appropriate suppliers (Kotler & Keller, 2016, 221).

At the evaluation of alternatives, few options are being evaluated and compared to one another and, typically, most attention is paid to attributes that deliver the sought-after benefits (Kotler & Keller, 2016, 197). According to Mohr et al. (2014, 236), customers may experience a variety of emotions when deciding whether or not to make a purchase; therefore, understanding the factors that influence customers' evaluation of potential solutions is critical. During the evaluation stage, customer forms opinions about the desirability of various alternatives, while during the purchase stage customer comes to an agreement with the chosen seller. During the post-purchase stage, the customer evaluates how well the product delivered on the features and benefits that were promised. (Mohr, Sengupta & Slater, 2014, 236) Moreover, clients' post-adoption usage patterns can give company valuable information when targeting particular customers for future opportunities (Mohr, Sengupta & Slater, 2014, 239). B2B buying process is illustrated in the Figure 2 below.

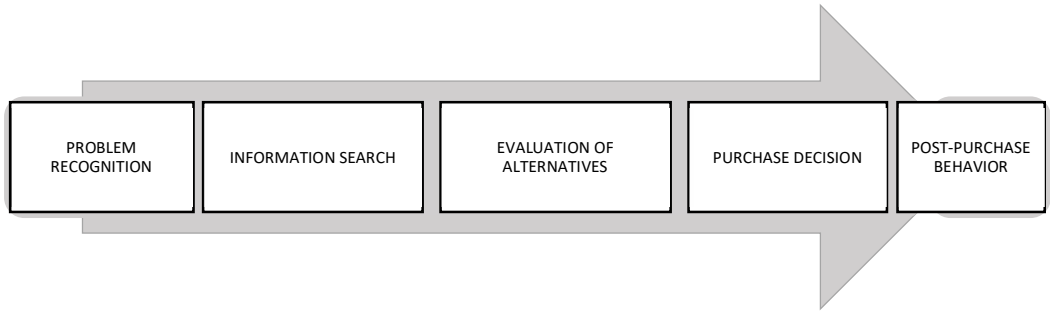

Figure 2. B2B buying process.

Kooij (2019) argues, that the organisational buyer journey model does not fully describe the SaaS buyer journey, because in SaaS, the majority of the profits often occur 12 to 18 months following the original commitment. Hence, a new model to describe the future revenue was needed. SaaS buyer journey can be described with a bow tie model, which places a strong emphasis on the onboard, impact and growth stages, which, according to Virtanen (2021b), are essential for SaaS growth.

Virtanen (2021b) sees onboarding as one of the most critical stages after subscription, as organisations must have ability to get the customer log in again after the first time. According to Virtanen (2021b) this is one of the most critical moments for customer continuity. The key is whether the customer feels they are getting what they were promised and whether they are using the service. Thus, the aim in the first weeks of a customer's engagement, or the trial period, is to deliver value to the customer. Once the initial threshold is crossed, it is easier to return to the service. (Virtanen, 2021b)

Kooij's bow tie model divides the buyer journey to land and expand. "Land" includes the pre-purchase stages awareness, education, and selection, whereas "expand" includes the post-purchase stages onboard, impact and growth (Van der Kooij, 2019). Bow tie model is illustrated in the Figure 3 below.

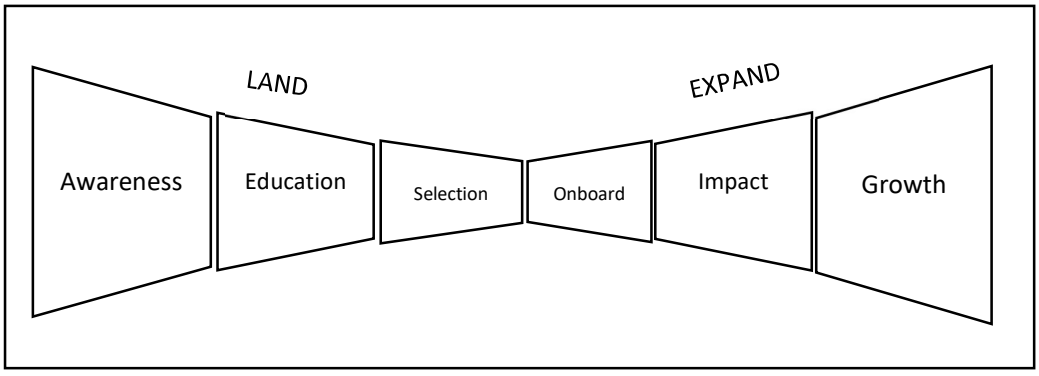

Figure 3. Bow tie model by Kooij.

Compared to the B2C, B2B companies tend to have more critical customer journeys that are long, complex, technical and consist of a continuous interaction of services and sales touchpoints (Lingqvist, Plotkin, and Stanley, 2015). As previously these two have been kept strictly separate from each other, Witell et al. have found that only in recent years there has been a growing consensus that the two share many similarities (2020). That said, Witell et al. (2020) conceptualize B2B customer journey as a set of relational processes to meet the customer's business needs. Given the different departments and different functional and hierarchical levels across multiple touchpoints in B2B context and the explosion in potential customer touchpoints, firm's control of customer experience is reduced and thus made the efforts to manage and control experiences and journeys increasingly complex (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Witell et al., 2020).

Lemon and Verhoef (2016) define touchpoints as individual contacts between the firm and the customer at distinct points in the customer experience. Thus, touchpoints are experienced in each stage of the customer journey, which only some are under firm's control (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Touchpoints can be brand-owned, partner-owned, customer-owned and social, external or independent (Witell et al., 2020; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Moreover, customers are likely to interact with each of these in each state of the experience (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Lemon and Verhoef (2016) define brand-owned touchpoints as customer interactions during the experience that are designed, managed, and controlled by the firm. Brand-owned touchpoints include brand-controlled elements of the marketing mix, such as packaging, pricing, services, and sales force, as well as brand-owned media such as advertising and websites (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). According to Lemon and Verhoef (2016) partner-owned touchpoints are customer interactions during the experience that are jointly designed, managed, or controlled by the firm and one or more of its partners, whereas customer-owned touchpoints are customer actions that are part of the overall customer experience but cannot be influenced or controlled by others. Social, and external touchpoints represent the critical roles of others in the customer experience, such as other customers, peer influences, and social media, all of which can influence the process (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Given that

the customer journeys today are multitouch and multichannel in nature, and new types of stimuli emerging every day, it is important that firm understand the broad range of touchpoints within and outside firm control, both in offline and online (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Becker & Jaakkola, 2020).

Witell et al. (2020) divide customer journey to four distinct but interrelated stages, that are pre-bid engagement, negotiation, implementation, and operations stages, each stage embodying different types of touchpoints involving the firm, customer, partner firms, or other actors from the wider ecosystem (Witell et al., 2020). Lemon and Verhoef (2016), however, divide customer journey into two stages, that are prepurchase and purchase. Prepurchase refers to all aspects of the customer's interaction with the brand, category, and environment prior to the actual purchase transaction. Traditionally, prepurchase has been characterized as behaviours like need recognition, search, and consideration. (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016) Furthermore, the second stage, according to Lemon and Verhoef (2016), is purchase, which includes all customer interactions with the brand and its environment during the purchase event itself and is characterized by behaviours such as choice, ordering, and payment. They also suggest that, given the current omnichannel environment and myriad touchpoints and information overload, concepts such as choice overload, purchase confidence, and decision satisfaction be considered as well (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

In today’s digital world, data collection about buyers, competitors, and industries is easier than ever, and thus helping to make strategic decisions to create buyer-centric experiences (Schermer 2019, 3). However, despite the increasing availability of data, half of B2B marketing and sales decisions are made without data, stemming from both the lack of time and budget (Schermer 2019, 3, 5). Presumably, marketers value knowing their customers, but few have this information (Schermer 2019, 5).

Given the proliferation of online channels and the complexity of customer journeys, Anderl et al. (2016) see measuring the degree of each channels contribution to company’s success demanding. Organisations can use a B2B customer journey map to visually communicate which touchpoints a customer passes through when they interact with a company.

Rosenbaum et al. (2017) define customer journey mapping as a visual representation of the sequence of events that customers may encounter when interacting with a company during the purchase process. Customer journey mapping assists businesses in understanding how customers use and perceive various channels and touchpoints, as well as how they ultimately envision that experience (Pokorni & Constantinescu, 2021).

Furthermore, customer journey mapping identifies all possible organisational touchpoints that customers may encounter during the purchasing process, and by clearly understanding these customer touchpoints, organisations can work toward employing tactics that promote service innovation (Rosenbaum, Otalora & Ramírez, 2017). Rosenbaum et al. (2017) argue that the goal is to enhance customer service provider interactions by improving the customer experience associated with each touchpoint. Respectively, organisations seek to contribute to the reduction of purchasing barriers by improving the customer experience at each touchpoint. Furthermore, it is critical to learn from data and research, validate the insights, execute on the validated plan, measure success, and optimize the results, and then repeat the process (Schermer 2019, 14).

Lemon and Verhoef (2016) trace the roots of customer experience all the way to the 1960s. Understanding the customer experience and the customer journey is critical for firms. With the myriad touchpoints in multiple channels customers now interact, customer experiences have become more social in nature, requiring firms to take multiple actions to deliver positive customer experiences. (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016)

Customer experience can be defined as encompassing all aspects of a company's offering, including the quality of customer care, as well as packaging, advertising, product and service features, ease of use, and reliability (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Witell et al. (2020) define customer experience as customers' nondeliberate, spontaneous responses and reactions to offering-related stimuli residing in various touchpoints along the customer journey, whereas Gentile, Spiller and Noci (2007) define it as an evolution of the concept of relationship between the company and the customer.

Becker and Jaakkola (2020) define customer experience as non-deliberate, spontaneous responses and reactions to specific stimuli. Their perspective expands on the most common definition but separates customer experience from the stimuli to which customers respond, as well as the conscious evaluation that results from it (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020). Consistently, Lemon and Verhoef (2016) conceptualize customer experience as customer's journey with a firm over time during the purchase cycle across multiple touchpoints. The process is dynamic, moving from prepurchase to purchase to post-purchase, considering previous experiences and external factors (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Moreover, customer experience can be described as a multidimensional construct that focuses on a customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioural, sensorial, and social responses to a firm's offerings and actions (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Witell et al., 2020). Presumably, digital customer experience includes only experiences experienced through digital interface (Borowski, 2015).

Customer experience can be viewed from the firm's point of view, from the customer's point of view or from a cocreation perspective (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). According to Becker and Jaakkola (2020) firms cannot create the customer experience, but they can design, monitor and manage a variety of stimuli that influence such experiences. Witell et al. (2020) see customer experience management increasingly as a key source of competitive advantage, thus firms actively seek to design memorable customer experiences to better meet customers' specific needs. However, as Becker and Jaakkola (2020) point out, that rather than simply designing memorable customer experiences, businesses should define their intended customer experience with finer nuances, such as which customer responses and reactions they hope to elicit.

Firms must understand how and why customers make purchase decisions for high-technology products like SaaS (Mohr, Sengupta and Slater 2014, 234). In the next chapter, organisational buying behaviour is discussed more carefully.

2.3. Organisational buying behaviour

Mohr et al. (2014, 240) have recognized six factors that affect customers' adoption of new solutions. Relative advantage refers to the benefits of adopting new technology compared to the costs and in relation to the alternatives (Mohr, Sengupta & Slater, 2014, 240), whereas compatibility refers to the extent to which adopting and using the innovation is based on existing values and existing ways of doing things (Tornatzky & Klein, 1982). Mohr et al. (2014, 240) define complexity as the difficulty involved in using or understanding the new product. According to Tornatzky and Klein (1982), complexity is thought to be negatively related to the adoption and implementation of innovations.

Trialability refers to the extent to which a new product can be tried on, and it is is assumed to contribute to the adoption and implementation of a new product (Mohr, Sengupta & Slater, 2014, 240; Tornatzky & Klein, 1982). Mohr et al. (2014, 240) define communicability as the capability to communicate the product benefits to prospective users. According to Tornatzky and Klein (1982), communicability is also presumed to have a positive impact on the adoption and implementation of the innovation. The last factor is called observability, which refers to the benefits of the new product, that are visible to others (Mohr, Sengupta & Slater, 240; Tornatzky & Klein, 1982).

Customers willingness to adopt new technology varies, hence customers can be characterized based on their willingness to adopt new solutions. Customers are classified as innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards by Mohr et al. (2014, 243). Prior to the average time of adoption, innovators, early adopters, and the early majority adopt new technologies, while the late majority and laggards adopt after the average time of adoption (Mohr, Sengupta & Slater, 2014, 243) Summary of the different high-technology customers is illustrated below in Figure 4.

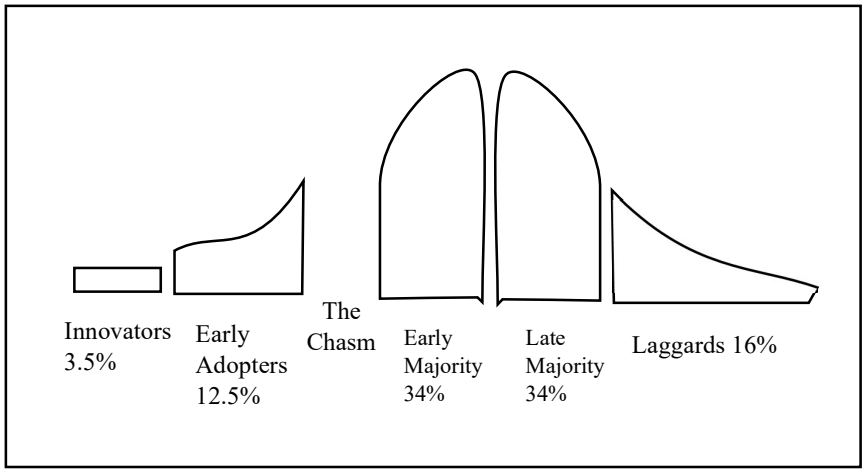

Figure 4. The Categories of Adopters and their share's among customers. Derived after Geoffrey A. Moore (1991). (Mohr, Sengupta & Slater, 2014, 244)

Mohr et al. (2014, 245) define innovators, the technology enthusiasts, as customer who appreciate technology for its own sake and who are willing to tolerate the risk and problems that may accompany innovations that have just came to market and to develop makeshift solutions to such problems. Furthermore, innovators are said to be gatekeepers for the next adopter group (Kaminski, 2011). Early adopters are defined as market visionaries who seek to adopt new technology to achieve a revolutionary breakthrough and gain a competitive advantage in their industries (Mohr, Sengupta & Slater, 2014, 245; Kaminski, 2011). The early majority represents pragmatists, customers who are motivated by evolutionary changes to improve productivity in their businesses (Mohr, Sengupta & Slater, 2014, 245). Furthermore, the early majority wishes to minimize risk in the adoption of new technologies and requires proven applications, dependable service, and results (Mohr, Sengupta & Slater, 2014, 245; Kaminski, 2011).

Late majority represents the conservatives, who are risk averse and technology shy, thus very price sensitive and accepting only bulletproof solutions. (Mohr, Sengupta & Slater, 2014, 245; Kaminski, 2011) According to Kaminski (2011), late majority is sceptical and only responds to peer pressure and economic necessity. The final group is the laggards, or technology sceptics, who do not believe that technology can improve productivity and are likely to oppose new technology purchases. Laggards cling to outdated technologies out of

loyalty, satisfaction, aversion to time-consuming upgrades, and inertia. (Mohr, Sengupta & Slater, 2014, 246)

As shown in the figure 3, the chasm divides the visionaries and the pragmatists, stemming from the critical differences between the two (Mohr, Sengupta & Slater, 2014, 246). Mohr et al. (2014, 246) find that while visionaries want to be the first in adopting new ideas, pragmatists want to go slow and steady. Thus, the chasm arises because early market is saturated, but the mainstream market is not ready to adopt yet. These two segments have very different needs, and many firms fail to understand these differences, ending up being unable to make the necessary shift in strategies to be successful. (Mohr, Sengupta & Slater, 2014, 246) As there are large differences between these customer groups, it is logical that their experiences of perceived risks and barriers to purchase also differ and need to be addressed accordingly. Barriers to purchase are introduced more closely in chapter 2.4.

It is not just the customers' willingness to adopt new solutions that's shaping the buying processes, but it is about completing a set of jobs, too. However, even though the jobs may have stayed the same, fulfilling of those jobs has changed. As customers have taken a bigger role in their experiences, B2B selling has become less linear and the path to closed sales more complicated (Lingqvist, Plotkin, and Stanley, 2015). Thus, purchasing patterns are increasingly becoming more complex (Lingqvist, Plotkin, & Stanley, 2015; Maechler, Sahni & Van Oostrum, 2016).

Business buyers do a lot of research, pay attention to specifications, follow either formal or procurement process, can experience high switching costs and worry about functionality. But as many influencers and decision makers are now involved in the business purchasing processes, business buyers have been influenced by their consumer shopping experience, and their behaviour has become more consumer-like: fluid, social, real-time, and modular. (Lingqvist, Plotkin, and Stanley, 2015) Moreover, organisational buyer differs from a consumer by the information they perceive to be important and the decision process they follow (Mudambi, 2002). Survey conducted by Gartner, 77% of B2B buyers described their latest purchase as "very complex" or "challenging" (Gartner, 2019). Well-established

models of organisational buyer behaviour emphasize the importance of buyer characteristics, purchase characteristics, and decision process characteristics in purchase the decision making. (Mudambi, 2002) Thus, B2B buyers complete a set of jobs to make a purchase (Gartner, 2019).

Gartner (2019) has identified six B2B buying jobs that customers need to complete to finalize a purchase: problem identification, solution exploration, requirements building, supplier selection, validation, and consensus creation. During requirements building, company aims to answer question "What exactly do we need the purchase to do?" (Gartner, 2019). Validation refers to seeking confirmation for the independent learning and supplier's claims from various of sources such as customer references and third-party expert analysis, whereas consensus creation refers to convincing others in the organisation and securing budget for the purchase (Gartner, 2019).

It is also noteworthy that buyers don't place equal emphasis on all attributes in the purchase decision and the B2B buying doesn't play out in linear order (Mudambi, 2002; Gartner, 2019). Instead, customers engage in looping across a typical B2B purchase, revisiting each of the buying jobs at least once. Thus, buying jobs don't happen sequentially, but simultaneously. (Gartner, 2019) Furthermore, studies have concluded that intangible attributes such as reputation can be as important as or more important than tangible attributes (Mudambi, 2002). Consistently, Mudambi (2002) discovered that branding appears to play a larger role in B2B decision making than has previously been recognized.

Moreover, as millennials make up half of the B2B buyers, their preference for digital interactions is reshaping the customer journey and how buyers communicate with suppliers (Schrümann et al., 2017). According to Schrümann et al. (2017), companies with the most sophisticated digital B2B sales organisations profit significantly more than companies with less developed digital capabilities. Thus, they are better at understanding the customer journey (Schrümann et al., 2017).

Since customers increasingly have access to technical product information that is adequate from their point of view, and the wider experience of other customers, customers and buyers are increasingly taking contact to sellers only after they already know what they need to solve their problems (Jaakkola et al., 2018). The Boston Consulting Group's survey of 723 European and global companies revealed that a significant and increasing number of decisive moments in customer journeys are taking place before the first personal contact between buyer and seller (Schrümann et al., 2017).

Marvasti et al. (2021) discovered that B2B buyers complete half of the buying process through digital touchpoints before making any important contact with the B2B seller. The findings are consistent with a Corporate Executive Board study of over 1400 B2B customers. According to the study, these customers completed nearly 60% of a typical purchasing decision before even speaking with a supplier. (Adamson, Dixon & Toman, 2017)

According to a McKinsey B2B customer decision journey survey from 2016, 76 percent of B2B buyers find it helpful to speak with a salesperson when researching a new product or service. When it comes to making a purchase, however, 46 percent of buyers said they would be willing to buy from a supplier's website if the option was available and the service was efficient. (Angevine, Plotkin & Stanley, 2017) Consequently, when customers are frequently far ahead of the salespeople, sales representative can be more of an annoyance than an asset and thus has changed the role from a product or service specialist to some extent, more of an order taker (Adamson, Dixon & Toman, 2017; Jaakkola et al., 2018).

According to a survey by Schwartz & Kim in 2012, more than 70% of buyers kickstart their buying journey digitally with a Google search to improve their understanding of the market and products (Marvasti et al., 2021). As a result, Marvasti et al. (2021) discover that digitally available information has reduced buyers' reliance on sellers by allowing them to access a wide range of information without involving sellers in the process. However, potential customers leave digital traces of their information-seeking behaviour, providing B2B sellers with a massive amount of behavioural customer data to use and allowing them to improve their understanding of the B2B buying journey and decision making (Marvasti et al., 2021).

In accordance with Marvasti et al. (2021), the aim of digital information search is to collect the necessary information at various stages of the purchasing process. To succeed in a complex digital environment, Andersen, Wenstrup and Taneja (2016) argue that companies need to design low-friction customer journeys and fine-tune how each marketing and sales activity contributes to the overall experience. Like individual consumers, B2B buyers follow an information search trajectory driven by cues and signals to gather relevant information (Marvasti et al., 2021). Marvasti et al. al. (2021) found that the B2B buyer's search for information narrows and deepens as the purchase progresses from the initial to later stages and suggest, that the stages of the purchase process could be evaluated based on online browsing behaviour to provide tailored content according to their industry and needs (Andersen, Wenstrup & Taneja, 2016). Furthermore, companies need to understand the type of step-by-step experiences they want to offer, which functions they offer and what kind of messaging makes them effective (Andersen, Wenstrup & Taneja, 2016).

Digital environment enables to track potential customers' online activity and to offer them targeted offers, trying to convert them by using knowledge of customer's activities and needs (Andersen, Wenstrup & Taneja, 2016). Browsing activity especially can generate valuable information cues that B2B sellers can use to inform their actions (Marvasti et al., 2021). Thus, Marvasti et al. (2021) argue it is important to understand the online information seeking behaviour of B2B buyers. However, many companies fail to capture even basic data about customers because data is stored in silos or lost in the transfer from one function to another, which cause companies lost opportunities to develop data-driven understanding of where they are winning and losing customers (Andersen, Wenstrup &Taneja, 2016).

Today, sellers can create a 360-degree view of their customers by using techniques such as internet protocol lookups to identify details, and then using each subsequent interaction to build a constantly evolving, data-informed view of individual customers and guide them through their purchasing journey (Andersen, Wenstrup &Taneja, 2016). Thus, Andersen et al. (2016) argue today's digital sales' efforts are much more targeted, inbound-based and digitally qualified leads. According to a HubSpot survey, more than three-quarters of B2B customers leads are provided by search-engine optimization, social media, e-mail marketing

and blogs. Furthermore, these leads are half the price of outbound leads and provide valuable information about customers' needs and interests, that companies can exploit when designing marketing activities. (Andersen, Wenstrup &Taneja, 2016)

According to Virtanen (2021c) there are three different parties to insure in B2B sales: the end user, the buyer of the service and the payer of the service, from which the end user is the most important target group in the subscription economy. Thus, efforts should be placed into the end-user's service experience, as they will convince others in the organisation to do the same (Virtanen, 2021c). Moreover, since customer's willingness to adopt new solutions like SaaS is influenced by several factors and concerns (Mohr, Sengupta & Slater, 2014, 240), companies can make use of the data collected on customers' online behaviour to address and remove them.

2.4. Barriers to purchase

There are many factors influencing customer's willingness or ability to proceed to purchase decision. To begin with, customer's decision to modify, postpone or avoid a purchase decision is influenced by one or more perceived risks (Kotler and Keller, 2016, 200; Munnukka and Järvi, 2008). Kotler and Keller (2016, 200) define functional risk as the risk that the product does not perform as it is expected, and financial risk represents the doubt that product is not worth the price paid. Time risk refers to the failure of the product that results in an opportunity cost of finding another satisfactory product. (Kotler & Keller, 2016, 200) Additionally, attitudes of others and unanticipated situational factors may cause buyer journey to change or end (Kotler & Keller, 2016, 199). Hence, understanding how customers view the risks associated with the buying process and how they prefer to mitigate those risks could give suppliers a significant competitive advantage (Munnukka and Järvi, 2008).

Moreover, Chiu et al. (2014) add performance risk to the perceived risks, which refers to the probability that a product may result in a failure to function as expected, and a product delivery risk, which refers to the possibility of suffering a loss due to the online seller's

failure to deliver the product or late delivery. Ultimately barriers to purchase are anything that stops or slows customers' purchase of a solution (Cromulent Marketing, 2018). There are, however, theories that seek to explain customers' resistance towards buying.

2.4.1. Innovation resistance theory and inertia

A phenomenon related to SaaS software applications and adoption is innovation resistance theory (IRT), referring to the resistance to innovations and the lack of willingness to accept innovation (Seth et al., 2020; Kaur et al., 2020). In the early phase, consumer resistance was described as the resistance toward innovation stemming from a perceived threat to the status quo. Additionally, the IRT suggests that functional and psychological barriers cause resistance to innovation. (Seth et al., 2020)

Lian and Yen (2013) classify usage barrier, value barrier and risk barrier as functional barrier, and image barrier and tradition barrier as psychological barrier. According to Talwar et al. (2020), usage barrier is one of the leading causes of resistance to new products, emerging when new offering challenges customers' status quo. The uncertainty and unpredictability, that is associated with the product or service, is referred to as risk barrier (Talwar et al. 2020). Lian and Yen (2013) have found, that if customer does not adequately understand the innovative product, they cannot assess the associated risks and uncertainties that will arise after its use, ultimately leading to the refusal to accept. Vulnerability risk and privacy and security concerns are examples of risk barrier (Talwar et al. 2020).

Value barrier is linked to the performance and monetary value that new product may offer over its alternative, and consistently, Talwar et al. (2020) define it as the perceived value offered by a new product as against alternatives. In order customer to adopt the new product or service, it has to provide higher value than the existing product (Lian & Yen, 2013). According to Lian and Yen (2013), image barrier occurs when customer has an unfavourable impression of the brand or other side effects of the product or service, whereas tradition barrier occurs when new product or service conflicts with user's traditional culture.

Resistance can still be classified as active or passive, with active resistance representing consumers' negative attitudes toward new products during the evaluation stage and being caused by psychological and functional barriers to innovation that emerge from the characteristics of innovations (Seth et al., 2020; Kaur et al., 2020). Passive resistance, on the other hand, is the tendency to resist change and maintain the status quo and represents a predisposition to resist a product even before evaluating it (Seth et al., 2020).

Another concept related to customer's resistance towards buying is inertia, referring to the tendency of consumers to hold on to their existing habits or actions even when presented with a superior alternative (Seth et al., 2020). According to Seth et al. (2020), inertia can be caused by a variety of factors, including uncertainty, convenience, and habitual decision making, and it can be classified as cognitive or affective inertia. Cognitive inertia represents conscious adherence to the status quo despite knowing that it may not be the best option, whereas affective inertia represents adherence to the status quo because change is perceived to be stressful (Seth et al., 2020).

2.4.2. Barriers to purchase in practice

Buying barriers can be divided into categories. Informational buying barriers are questions, misconceptions, and knowledge gaps, whereas procedural buying barriers are barriers resulting from obstacles within the prospect's buying process. Commercial buying barriers refer to barriers which arise from pricing, licensing, and ROI, among others, whereas buying barriers related to solution refer to mismatches between prospect's problem and service provider's solution. (Cromulent Marketing, 2018)

A poor-quality website, low download speed, insufficient information and security and privacy issues affect adoption of online shopping negatively in B2B market (Jain & Kulhar, 2019). As B2B buyer journeys typically involve purchase decisions that require the involvement and influence of multiple decisionmakers and approvers, involve lengthy buying cycles and occur through internal and external parties, the complexity of the B2B buying journey can also become a barrier (Schermer, 2019, 12). Other internal barriers are

internal purchase processes, misconceptions and misunderstandings, budget cycles, lack of internal support, doubts about business case and value, and existing or planned projects (Cromulent Marketing, 2018).

Customers are given the option of staying where they are in their purchasing decision process, moving on to the next phase, or abandoning the journey entirely at each stage. (Apollo, 2010). It is evident, that a barrier that stops a prospect from buying is something to avoid, but barriers that slow prospect's flow in the sales funnel are also damaging (Cromulent Marketing. 2018). Thus, examining the sales pipeline can facilitate identifying the barriers to purchase. Slow flow within the pipeline, for instance, can indicate a lack of urgency or a failure to provide prospects with timely information before moving forward to the next phase. High leakage rates especially towards the end of the process, on the other hand, can indicate a failure to elevate important needs to urgent. Identifying where the customer is in the buying journey and what information they need to move forward is therefore particularly important. (Apollo, 2010)

Once the underlying causes have been identified, they can be addressed and eliminated (Apollo, 2010). Companies that use an evidence-based approach are said to eliminate much of the guesswork and wishful thinking associated with many sales acceleration initiatives. Furthermore, companies that can reliably determine where a prospect is in their decision-making process and how they can be helped forward are better positioned to focus sales and marketing resources on the things that will facilitate the buying process and move sales forward. (Apollo, 2010).

Typical barriers to purchase in the digital environment according to Ryan (2018) are invisibility and poor branding. It is not that the most visible company that wins is better, but it is because it is discovered. Thus, attention should be paid to efforts to make company highly visible in the chosen marketplace. (Ryan, 2018) Talwar et al. (2020) have found that visibility shares a significant positive association with adoption, intentions, and actual user behaviour and has, for instance, been positively linked to intentions to use e-commerce type of innovations.

Confusion and complexity stop customers from buying. Hence, to avoid confusion, organisation must communicate clearly what it offers and how it benefits the customer (Rayan, 2018) Missing information and too much information are also common barriers to purchase (Ryan, 2018; Jain & Kulhar, 2019). Thus, customers must be provided with whatever information they need to keep them moving along the purchase path. However, as prospects are getting closer to the deal, they should not be burdened with too much information, as they might get too distracted to purchase. (Ryan, 2018)

Too many options can also become a barrier to purchase (Ryan, 2018; Jain & Kulhar, 2019). As a result, Ryan (2018) suggests having three purchase options for a cloud-based software solution, arguing that every additional choice will decrease sales. In the anatomy of the purchase, customers must be guided in their choice, but still be given the opportunity to make their own decision. By understanding who, how and for what problem the service is used, product versions can be built to support that. (Virtanen, 2021c) Moreover, threshold for a customer to try and use a service should be as low as possible (Virtanen, 2021b). Next, suggestions on how to tackle purchasing barriers in different scenarios are being discussed.

2.4.3. How to remove purchasing barriers?

An effective way to tackle purchasing barriers within company's website is to ensure a website is buyer-centric rather than reflecting an internal view of an organisation. For instance, designing a win-win experience that aligns company objectives with buyer needs and simplifying portfolio of solutions are examples of a byer-centric design. Moreover, company should offer value in return for the behaviours it asks of its visitors. (Schermer, 2019, 11) Also, by allocating resources toward performing buyer-driven research and toward buyer-centric campaigns and experiences will help organisations achieve important improvements in their buyer relevance (Schermer, 2019, 12).

Content on the website should attract, engage, and educate prospects (Schermer, 2019, 11) and thus strengthen the company's professionalism and build trust. Therefore, some of the

buying barriers can be addressed with revisions to messaging and clarifying the content. Blog posts, whitepapers, showcases, and case studies are useful ways to address a specific buying barrier. To overcome barriers about qualifications and real-life value and results, success stories are an effective way to provide evidence of the ability to help and solve problems in real-world. Barriers relating to concerns about company legitimacy and lack of market awareness can be addressed with material on corporate overview. (Cromulent Marketing, 2018)

Platform overviews and guides provide more technical approach to address barriers like concerns about standards, interoperability, and deployment models. (Cromulent Marketing, 2018) Additionally companies can tackle barriers by ensuring intuitive and satisfying user experiences, flawless technical performance and accommodating the need for mobile access (Schermer, 2019, 11).

To help overcome misconceptions about how one's solution compares to the competition or how it solves a particular problem, technology briefs can be used to present an important piece of that solution to tackle these barriers (Cromulent Marketing, 2018). Moreover, company must clearly demonstrate how its solutions uniquely benefit buyers (Schermer, 2019, 11). Otherwise, it can cause misunderstandings and confusion. Solution overviews and use case guides can help overcome misunderstandings on what problems solution solves, and product overviews provide detailed information on what the products are, how they work and what features they contain (Cromulent Marketing, 2018).

Discussing with people who experience buying barriers is pivotal in the process of identifying the buying barriers. Understanding buying barriers can help increase demand, enable self-service research, and improve sales enablement and sales efficiency. As company's job is to help prospect solve a problem, it is crucial to develop an outside-in understanding of the things that hamper prospects' attempts to find a solution to their problem. (Cromulent marketing, 2018). Selling, whether online or in-store, is a combination of ease and eliminating the fear of purchase for the customer. These combine to create a

positive overall purchasing experience. To overcome the fear of buying, the customer needs to be reassured that they are making the right decision. (Virtanen, 2021c)

In summary, SaaS is characterised by low start-up costs, ease of use and automated updates (Gonzalez & Zainuddin, 2011; Mero et al. 2022). Subscription business model is typical for SaaS and vendor's success is inextricably linked to the success of the customer in the SaaS model because unsatisfied SaaS users can easily unsubscribe and switch to a competing provider, unlike traditional software models (Satyanarayana, 2012).

Organisational buying process is described through a five-stage model, which includes the stages problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase behaviour (Kotler & Keller, 2016, 195; Mohr, Sengupta & Slater, 2014, 236). During the buying process and customer journey, customers encounter different stimuli and touchpoints, that aim to influence them to move further along the buying process (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Witell et al., 2020). B2B buyers have taken a bigger role in their experiences, and complete over half of the buying process through digital touchpoints before taking any contact with the B2B seller (Marvasti et al. 2021; Lingqvist, Plotkin, & Stanley, 2015; Maechler, Sahni & Van Oostrum, 2016). As a result, capturing what customers really experience has become increasingly challenging (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020).

Organisational buying process includes several participants from different functions and levels in an organisation and there are different roles in the process (Kotler & Keller, 2016, 216; Inoni, Salami, and Olannye, 2019). Today, the SaaS buyer is more often a business director than a technical buyer (Tyrväinen and Selin, 2011). Moreover, customer's willingness to adopt new solutions and customer's decision to modify, postpone or avoid a purchase decision is influenced by perceived risks (Kotler and Keller, 2016, 200), inertia and innovation resistance (Seth et al., 2020; Kaur et al., 2020), as well as other factors. Relative advantage, compatibility, complexity and trialability are some of these factors (Tornatzky & Klein, 1982; Mohr, Sengupta & Slater, 2014, 240).

To overcome customer’s fear of buying, seller must both identify customer's perceived risks and aim to remove them and reassure customers that they are making the right decision (Virtanen, 2021c). Since the aim of this research is to find out what factors prevent customers from buying SaaS online and how, the next chapter presents the main features of the research design and the means by which the research aims to answer this question.

3. Research design and methods

In the previous chapters, research problem and literature and previous research related to it were presented. The final part of the paper deals with the research process phases, that are strategy of inquiry, data collection, data analysis and inference and conclusions (see Figure 5). This chapter describes how the empirical part of the research is carried out and how the data is gathered and analysed.

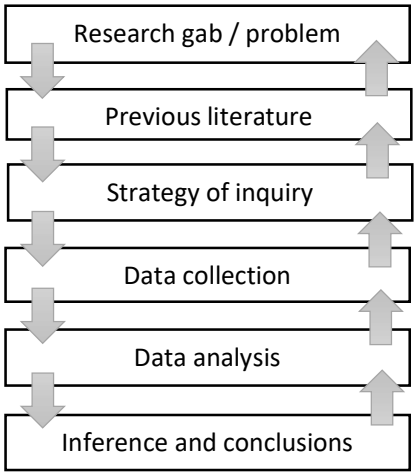

Figure 5. Research process (Almpanopoulou, 2020).

The aim of this study is to thoroughly understand the process that B2B customers go through during their purchasing process, as well as the underlying motives, pain points, and barriers to purchase they encounter. The study is qualitative in nature, which is interpretative and a useful approach for analysing meanings and relationships between different participants in order to build a conceptual framework and theoretical contribution (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016, 168). Moreover, inductive qualitative research is interested in multiple factors influencing the outcome and is context specific, including theories and patterns (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2015, 25).

Case study was selected as the strategy for inquiry with multiple-case design. According to Yin (2003), a case study is an empirical investigation that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are unclear. It is also assumed, that the results of multiple case study include similarities (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016, 187).

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with total of 6 interviewees. The questions of the interview were derived from the literature and thematised according to the five-stage buying process that acts as the core of the interviews. Five-stage buying process was introduced in chapter 2.2.

3.1. Research context & case description

The commissioner company of this research is a Finnish software start-up operating in B2B market. Company offers a quality assurance and coaching software for companies operating in B2C settings. Thus, its customers don't fall into a particular category, but company's software fits in any company's sales and customer service units. Software was initially designed for contact centres, stemming from owners' own work experience in contact center world.

Company operates is Finland and Sweden and has expanded to Spain in early 2022. However, the software is used in two continents by some of the biggest Finnish companies. Company is constantly seeking for growth and its mission is to provide excellent leadership world-wide.

Enabling online sales is a significant opportunity for the commissioner company. Compared to traditional sales, online sales allow company to target new customer segments more rapidly. As already noted, the B2B buying has become more independent and moved more online, meaning that the commissioner company must regenerate itself and its selling habits in order not to miss emerging new opportunities. This thesis and its results aim to provide

the firm with timely market insights from the business buyer's perspective towards SaaS subscription products, thus providing important information for building a self-serve subscription model and consistent customer journeys.

3.2. Data collection methods

As presented, the nature of this research is qualitative. Multiple-case design was selected as the strategy for inquire and interviews were deemed to serve the purpose of the research the most. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as a method for gathering primary data because of the complex nature of B2B buying, allowing to gather more diverse range of data from free form interviews and thus giving deeper insights compared to fixed surveys. Moreover, given the fact that research topic is relatively little studied, interviews were deemed to serve the purpose to deepen the knowledge and gain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena.

The flexibility of the interview makes it suitable for a wide range of research purposes. The interview is a linguistic interaction with the respondent, creating the opportunity to direct the information gathering in the situation itself and to highlight the motives behind the answers (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015, 34). Thus, researcher aims to convey a realistic picture of the interviewee's thoughts, experiences, and perceptions (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2015, 41). Moreover, interviews are an appropriate method for information gathering, particularly when there is a desire to place the answers in a broader context, or when it is known in advance that the subject will produce answers that are complex and refer in many directions, or when there is a desire to clarify or deepen the answers (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015, 35).

Due to the global pandemic, the interviews were conducted online via Microsoft Teams. As the interviewees were Finnish, most of the interviews were conducted in Finnish. The typology of the interviews is semi-structured. An intermediate form of questionnaire interview and unstructured interview is commonly referred to as a semi-structured interview, and it is characterised by the fact that the format of the questions is the same for the

interviewees, but the order may vary (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015, 47). It is also characteristic that some aspects of the interview, such as the topic and themes, are closed, but not all (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015, 47-48; Sanders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016, 391). The interviewees who participated in the data collection are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Summary of participants and interviews.

Participant	Title	Duration of the interview
1	Senior lecturer & company founder	58 min
2	IT Service manager	59 min
3	Business director – contact center	40 min
4	Board expert	57 min
5	CEO	41 min
6	Head of R&D	45 min

Interviewees were selected from the commissioner company's stakeholders, such as customers, communities, and other stakeholders. All interviewees were selected from different backgrounds to obtain a wide range of information on the subject from different perspectives. Industries interviewees operate in are telecommunications, energy, and computer programming, among others. It was also important for the commissioner company to collect data from customers, as it was assumed that their customership would to some extent guide them to think the questions through the commissioner company's offering. Thus, their answers could provide valuable information on how they perceive commissioner company's offering. Answers were not intended to be limited to only customers, but insights were also wanted from individuals who were known to have a major knowledge on SaaS and/or organisational buying behaviour.

3.3. Data analysis methods

The aim with the interviews was to uncover the struggles customers would undergo in their buying processes, examine the critical stages within the buying process and purchasing barriers as well as to reveal ways to remove them. This study takes an inductive approach, which means that existing theories are used to shape the research and data analysis process (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016, 569). The theoretical framework of this study served

as the foundation for data collection and the development of interview questions, which included aspects of the organisational purchasing process, purchasing barriers and decision making.

With the permission of the interviewees, interviews were audio-recorded and transcripted. Because there were multiple interviewees and the interviews were relatively long, transcription was used (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2015, 138). Transcription was used as part of the data analysis because it allowed for familiarization with the data. The average duration of the interview was 50 minutes.

The data was analysed by using thematic analysis which is a systematic and flexible method for identifying patterns and key themes in data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016, 579). The thematization of the data refers to the analysis phase, which examines features of the data that are common to several interviewees. The themes that emerge from the analysis are based on the researcher's interpretations, i.e., the researcher has coded them into the same category, even though the interviewees may have expressed the issue differently. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015, 173) Furthermore, the goal of thematic analysis is to identify themes or patterns for further investigation in relation to the research question (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016, 579).

The interpretation of the material was another data analysis method employed (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2015, 151). To better interpret the data, each interview was treated as a separate case and analysed, considering all the issues raised by the interviewee. The cases were then compared using cross-case analysis to look for similarities and patterns. Finally, material was described, classified, and combined using the analysis (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2015, 145).

Describing the data is the basis of analysis and aims to identify the characteristics or features of people, events, or objects (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015, 145). This study aims to provide a comprehensive description of the phenomenon under study. To compare different parts of the data, Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2015, 147) suggest classifying the data. The classification of

the data can be based on the research problem and sub-problems, the classification of previous studies, or theory and theoretical models, among others (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015, 148). Data combination refers to an attempt to find some regularities or similarities between the occurrences of categories (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015, 149). Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2015, 149) point out that in addition to regularities, outliers are often found, too.

3.4. Reliability and validity

The reliability of interview data depends on its quality (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015, 185). According to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2015, 185), concepts of reliability and validity are based on the idea that the researcher can gain access to objective reality and objective truth. Furthermore, Saunders et al. (2016, 202) state that reliability and validity refer to how well research findings can be generalized and how consistent the research is. To improve these issues, the aim was to select as qualified respondents as possible from different organisations with a profound knowledge of the research topic.

The quality of data collection was improved by creating a good interview framework and considering alternative forms of supplementary questions (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015, 184). In addition, interviews were carefully reviewed and transcribed soon after the interview, which is said to contribute to quality (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015, 184-185). Another factor contributing to the reliability and validity of this study can be considered to be the researcher's work experience in the commissioner company, which can be seen as contributing to a better understanding of the context.

Moreover, participants were given a brief description of the study and its objectives when they were asked to participate to the study, and interview questions were sent to them beforehand. These actions sought to contribute to the reliability and validity of this research.

One characteristic of research’s reliability is its repeatability (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015, 186). However, as a characteristic of a semi-structured interview is that it seeks to reflect an

issue or phenomenon in reality at the time, and therefore it is not necessarily intended to be repeatable, since the situation may be subject to change (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016, 398).

Given the fact that semi-structured interviews allow more flexible conversation, it was important to focus on not leading the interviewees to a specific answer but allowing them to describe issues with their own words and expressions. Even so, it is possible that some answers were left unsaid. However, it can be assumed that the most significant and critical factors were the first expressed and emphasized. To improve reliability and validity, the results were analysed objectively as much as possible, avoiding the researcher's own expectations or prejudices from influencing the aspects and findings that emerged from the transcribed text.

4. Findings

This chapter presents the empirical findings of the study. To better interpret the results, the collected data is further classified into themes based on the sub-questions of the study and further into sub-themes based on the different topics within the overarching theme. The following sections depicts the results related to the special characteristics of SaaS and how SaaS are perceived. Next section depicts the buying process, followed by the issues affecting the purchasing decision. Some of the responses have been used as quotes to give a more in-depth picture of the results.

4.1. Special characteristics of SaaS

This section represents the findings related to the perceptions of SaaS and why organisations acquire SaaS solutions, thus answering to the first sub-question: "What are the specific features of SaaS?" The emerged features are presented in the Table 3 below. In general, majority of the respondents agreed on the easiness related to SaaS. Easiness refers to multiple things: the threshold to try and start is seen fairly low due to the trial versions and monthly subscriptions, among others. Easiness interlinks with inexpensiveness, another characteristic connected to SaaS. This shows up by far with the low up-front costs, compared to the traditional software acquisitions. With SaaS, up-dates, development, maintenance, and security-issues are handled by the supplier. Cost-effectiveness is associated with SaaS for the same reasons. In addition, adaptability and scalability were considered to advocate for acquiring SaaS.

> "I would say it is the easiness and the kind of cheap way to start. -- This wasn't possible before when you had to buy a software in a box, install it and then understand that this doesn't solve our problem. Nowadays you can try one software today and another tomorrow and then one of those software either solves the problem or you try the third one day after." – Participant 1

Table 3. Characteristics of SaaS.

Characteristics of SaaS	1	2	3	4	5	6
Easiness	x	x		x	x	x
Inexpensiveness	x	x	x		x	
Cost-efficiency		x				
Adaptability			x			
Scalability			x			

Some respondents also denoted that SaaS is one of the results of technology development, a trend that is currently prevailing.

> "SaaS solutions are flexible and scalable solutions, typically also cheaper solutions, however they don't lower the switching threshold -- it's a trend that has to be accepted." – Participant 3

> "SaaS is really the present day and an easy way for a company to use some services themselves, so you don't have to think about all kinds of IT solutions and servers and equipment you need and who is going to maintain and use it and so on. It's a really easy way for a company to increase its own profitability and success by using a service." – Participant 4

4.2. Buying process

This chapter represents the results related to the second and third sub-question: "What is the buying process of SaaS like?" and "What factors affect B2B customer's purchase decision and how?" Findings are presented by adapting the B2B buying process model starting from problem or need recognition to information search to evaluation and selection. Post-purchase behaviour has been addressed to the extent that it was raised in the discussions. Section 4.2.2. concludes the factors influencing the journey ending, which have been referred as purchasing barriers throughout this study.

The results show that respondents typically play the roles of initiator, influencer, and approver in their purchasing processes. Initiators and influencers play an active role and can influence the progress and success of the acquisition through their actions. Many respondents are also members of the board of directors or have the right to make purchasing decisions independently. However, respondents consistently indicated that even if they could make decisions on their own, decisions are made together with the individuals involved in the process.

4.2.1. Problem or need recognition

Findings indicate that change plays a key role in triggering the need or problem emergence. Change itself could appear on both within the organisation or in the business environment. As participant 4 denoted, change can mean a concrete change in the organisation or the change occurs, when company is pursuing a new direction or business. Problem is often recognized by the end user, who is struggling with something and therefore seeking for change.

Problems or needs may as well be recognized in different units; finance department may aim to reduce costs whereas production department may seek to streamline operations and processes. In general, the emergence of a problem or need can be seen as stemming from the company itself. Sometimes, however, external factor can trigger the need. For instance, the need may come from a customer, who may have specific requirements for the vendor organisation, or external factors such as trends or changes in the business environment may cause the emergence of the need. Triggers for problem or need recognition arisen in the interviews are presented in the Table 4.

> "The need to buy often arises either in the production of the service itself or in support functions. Sometimes it can arise in sales or marketing, depending on the type of things being purchased. -- Reporting and monitoring or process streamlining issues come from management." – Participant 3

> "The drive is more towards the end user so there's an individual in a company that understands that there is a need, I need something to do my work, or I could use something to improve my work." – Participant 1

Table 4. Triggers for problem/need recognition.

Trigger	1	2	3	4	5	6
End-user	X	X	X			x
Specific business unit		X	X			
Business management	X	X	X	x		x
Customer			X			
Change		X		x	x	
External factor						x

The results also suggest that buyers are far from always knowing exactly what their problem is and what they are looking for a solution to. Many of the respondents highlighted the importance of clarifying what the problem is they are trying to solve, what do they need the solution to do, and what do they want to achieve with it. Based on the findings, careful problem definition and requirements building seem to contribute to the success of the purchase.

Results indicate that after the problem or need is identified, people struggling with the issue are heard to find out what it is that they think would solve the problem. Similarly, the purchasing team is formed in a way it includes people from different functions, including end-users and managers adequately. Additionally, it seems common to appoint a project manager to lead the project. Project manager is considered to be the key person who is also going to present the procurement to the decision makers.

4.2.2. Information search

Often the solution is not actively sought, as there are several problems or needs within organisation that should be solved. Hence, buying services is an ongoing process, as highlighted by both respondents 2 and 5.

> "There are so many problems in companies, and they're being solved all the time so you don't necessarily have time to start looking for a solution but then when you're on social media, Facebook, LinkedIn, wherever, or you go to an event and you come across something and suddenly you realise that hey, this would solve our problem." – Participant 5

Even though the monopoly of Google is acknowledged, findings show information gathering starting from Google. In some cases, this can lead to some potential solutions being excluded at this stage because they do not appear in the search results. Results also indicate that networks play a significant role in searching information on potential solutions. Especially different industry groups are seen as useful sources to ask for help and recommendations.

Findings show that most popular social media platform to look for information is LinkedIn. In cases where you already have a solution in mind, search may start that brand or product. For certain types of acquisitions, information can be obtained through market research or by visiting competitors' websites. The higher the business criticality and the scope of the acquisition, the heavier the process. Based on the interviews, it seems to be quite common to use consultants for larger acquisitions. Moreover, peer experiences and references are considered appropriate and useful sources of information. Some of the respondents even told that they would call to a reference to get more information. Summary of channels used for information search are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Channels for information search.

Source	1	2	3	4	5	6
Google	X	x	x	x	X	X
Network	X	x	x			X
LinkedIn	X	x		x	X	X
Twitter	x					
Facebook					X	X
Email	x					
Brand		x		x	X	
Market data		x				
Competitors		x				
Consultants		x	x			
Company webpage				x		
References			x	x		

> "I feel that both social media channels and peer experiences shared there really have quite an important role. I often find myself on social media asking peers how could my need or challenge be solved." – Participant 5

> "I strongly believe in the importance of the online world and the personal brands that are born when people share their expertise to others – those personal brands are also strongly linked to companies. I equally believe in companies' case studies and references where someone genuinely shares their experiences, telling how their problem has been solved." – Participant 4

4.2.3. Evaluation

Findings indicate that the bigger the acquisition, the heavier the process. Accordingly, depending on the use of the acquisition, several factors influence on the evaluation. Results show that organisations aim to identify two or more potential candidates, to look at more closely. Additionally, it seems discussions within the organisation take place throughout the purchasing process, and some degree of evaluation of the supplier has already taken place before moving on to more serious consideration. Some respondents felt that the most critical step in the buying process for supplier, is to get into the customer's shortlist. Moreover, after

getting to the shortlist, supplier should be able to differentiate from the competitors and convince the buyer to choose their product.

According to Participant 1, evaluation is influenced by how close you can get to the product, e.g., being able to see how it works and trying it out. Thus, trials and demos play a significant role in familiarizing yourself with the product and whether the product fits to your ecosystem, before making the decision. Through the trial customer can try and see how the product works and thus to evaluate the suitability and ability to solve the problem. Similarly, if something negative occurs during the trial, for example, if product is perceived as difficult to use or deploy, the purchase process is at risk of being terminated. Noteworthy is also how the complexity of buying can affect the process, stemming from organisation's own environment and requirements.

> "Buying has become more difficult. What has changed is that more and more people are buying a solution to fit their own puzzle. So, you've got your ecosystem that entails your existing puzzle pieces. When you're looking for a solution to your problem, you want to add new pieces to your ecosystem. Not do you only have to think how to solve the issue, but also how to integrate the solution – puzzle piece – into your ecosystem." – Participant 5

> "The trial period helps to test the product before the actual purchase decision, which makes a big difference. It makes it concrete what the service is really like and what it is like to use it. Also, the success of self-service is emphasized in deployment, so it does matter a lot how it (deployment) plays out." – Participant 6

Results also indicate that during evaluation, supplier's reliability, and deliverability are under discussion, including its ability to support business development. Unsurprisingly, product features and integrability are considered important. These findings indicate that not only are organisations looking for a solution to their problem, but they are also looking a partner who can help them grow and evolve. Hence, supplier should be able to convince the customer of their abilities without personal contact.

> "Both capacity and modularity – which means being able to use individually distinct functionalities per unit – affect the choice. Also, partner's size, i.e., profitability, and whether the partner is able to deliver, i.e., reliability, affect the decision making. Personal chemistry and whether we are on the same wavelength can also affect decision making because we're really not looking for a supplier, but partner." – Participant 2

As shown in the Table 6, all respondents take references into account when considering a purchase. The existence of a sufficient number of reliable references is considered to have a positive impact on the assessment, as noted by the Participant 3. Moreover, the possibility to ask for help if needed was seen as positive and confidence-building. Congruently, if there is no contact information on the provider's website or it is made impossible to contact them, this was considered to reduce trust.

> "The fact that you can get in touch is a positive thing and there are products and services that I would never have used if I didn't have that option -- in the purchasing decision situation it has to do with the fact that if I get help in the purchasing situation I can expect to get help later." – Participant 5

Table 6. Factors influencing decision-making.

Factor	1	2	3	4	5	6
References	x	x	x	x	x	x
Demo	x					
Trial	x				x	x
Modularity		x				
Integrability			x		x	x
Features			x		x	
Operational reliability		x		x		x
Price			x		x	x
Support			x	x	x	
Ease of deployment			x			x
Competitor comparison						x
Deliverability		x	x			
ROI calculations				x		x

Suppliers' ROI calculations are not blindly trusted, but they are considered to be useful to some extent. Participant 6 denoted that in some situation, they can provide a basis for your own calculations, as the supplier can bring up aspects that the customer hasn't considered. For instance, buyer might not have realized some costs that are saved or other benefits, thus such things are seen to complement customer's own evaluation.

Findings also suggest that price plays some role in the assessment but is not considered to be the most important factor. More weight is given to how the price is aligned with the perceived value of the problem. Consequently, different plans for different types of values must be well aligned with the price so that the price is aligned with the value of the service.

4.2.4. Purchasing barriers

Results indicate that as well as the external factors, organisation's internal factors can prevent a purchase. As noted earlier, organisations seek to solve problems continuously and procurement is an ongoing process. As a result, company's resources are simply not enough for everything. Therefore, companies must prioritize purchases internally. Business criticality is one of the major factors, meaning that acquisitions that are considered as "nice to have", are bypassed by "must haves". Moreover, the way the purchase is presented and justified can have a major impact whether the procurement succeeds or not. If the acquisition is poorly justified and management does not understand the value it brings, it is likely that the acquisition will not be accepted. Thus, the importance of profound justification should not be overlooked.

> "If the matter has not been adequately addressed by the decision-makers in the management team, for example, and the decision is not reached because there is not enough information or if the person in charge is unable to argue why it (product or service) should be obtained -- or if the investment is considered too large, it makes it easy to say no." – Participant 4

> ”One slowing factor is business management’s lack of understanding over the benefits of the procurement. One should not go and try to push some new system in with poor arguments -- if the management doesn’t understand the benefits and the end-users are little reluctant, it (purchase) will never succeed.” – Participant 2

> “I need to be able to explain why we should buy this and why we need to spend X amount of money for this solution. If I’m not able to do that it is difficult to get the money.” – Participant 1

Equally, the budget, or rather the lack of it, can become a barrier to purchase, although respondents said that they could find the money if needed during the budget period, if the purchase is well justified. In some cases, purchases are stalled at the beginning due to organisation's code of conduct and bureaucracy. When organisation is big enough, purchases are handled in purchasing department and they have their own competitive tendering system whereto candidates deliver their tendering. The complexity of one’s own business environment can also prevent the purchase, as organisation does not believe a fixed product alone could meet their requirements.

Another important factor arisen from the interviews, is timing. Organisations may come across with a better product during current contract period or they feel that the current product they are using solves the problem sufficiently at this point. The maturity of the company can also influence the completion of the purchase process. As Participant 6 denoted, the need for the purchase can be assessed by evaluating the current situation, whether the current models can still be used or whether the product is needed immediately.

In some cases, organisations have no intention of buying even though they are willing to test different products. Thus, the state of mind and stage the organisation is in the customer journey, are considered to affect the behaviour. Another interesting observation was that respondent 5 did not identify any situation where they had a problem in their organisation that needed to be solved and a solution was found but not implemented. It is more a question of what kind of solution is available. If the solution is almost right, then the process is most

likely to stop because the almost right solution is not enough. Internal purchasing barriers are presented in the Table 7 below.

Table 7. Internal purchasing barriers.

Barrier	1	2	3	4	5	6
Budget	x	X	x	x		x
Code of conduct	x	X				
Timing	x				x	
Resources		X	x			x
Complexity of business environment			x			
Company maturity						x
Poor presentation		X		x		
Added value or benefit of the product unclear				x		x

Table 8 presents the findings related to external purchasing barriers. In summary, there was some variation in the responses, indicating that the purchase decision - or the end of the customer journey - is a sum of many things. As the needs and customer journeys vary, it cannot be said that these factors are exclusively the barriers to purchasing. However, results show that the price can, after all, become a purchasing barrier. If the price is simply too high or it is not aligned with the value, process is likely to stop. Moreover, if the pricing is confusing and buyer does not understand what they are getting with their money, going forward is rather difficult. Similarly, if prices are not displayed at all, it was considered as a red flag to some respondents.

> "I've been building online sales for 10ish years already. If I can't find any information on pricing or plan details from the website, but there's a contact form that says "request pricing information" – that's a huge red flag for me. It's super difficult to align the value you are getting from the service provider to what you're paying if you don't see how much you should pay for it." – Participant 1

Table 8. External purchasing barriers.

Barrier	1	2	3	4	5	6
Price	x	x	x	x	x	x
No plan details	x					
Confusion	x	x		x		x
Too difficult to use	x					
Not getting what promised	x			x		
Data storage outside EU			x			
Poor webpage				x		
Bad reviews				x		x
Does not solve the problem			x		x	
No contact info			x	x		

Findings indicate confusion being one of the factors that might cause journey ending. Again, answers show that if buyer is not able to understand the product, the plan, the price or the value, project stops. Equally, bad websites and bad reviews result in the customer not wanting to proceed. As already mentioned in section 4.2.3, lack of support at the evaluation stage was considered as a red flag and, equally, its absence at the purchase stage is equally critical. As a result, the customer feels reluctant to proceed with such a supplier.

A failed trial period can be attributed to more than one barrier to purchase. Failure can be related to difficulty of use, confusion or the product not working as intended. Moreover, results indicate that if the product fails to fully solve the problem, customers are most likely to stop usage after the trial period.

> "Demos and pilot periods have their characteristic dangers. If the product doesn't meet the buyer's expectations or wishes, it is very difficult to go forward." – Participant 4

> "The trial phase is hugely critical. If we as consumers don't know how to use the product or the product value doesn't match our expectations, we then end the trial and look into other solutions." – Participant 1

Moreover, results indicate that trial period is seen as fundamental part of SaaS customer journey. Thus, in this stage, organisation is only deciding to try the product. It is only after organisation understands that the product fulfils their need and is aligned with budget, that the real decision is made.

As denoted by some of the respondents, dissatisfaction with the product can be due to poor problem definition and requirements building. Too often organisations fail to deeply understand, what their actual problem is. This may lead to purchasing a product, that is great in many ways, but lacks to solve the initial problem. Thus, many respondents highlighted the importance of really understanding the problem; what it is that they need and suggested allocating more time to defining the problem and requirements building.

> “At the purchase decision stage, you should once again clarify and remind yourself what problem you are solving: does this solution really resolve it or is it just another add-on to something. In a sense, it is about understanding how the product solves our problem and what benefits it concretely arises. Understanding these things is really important, because only then can we consider the investment perspective to see if this is a decision that we should make.” – Participant 4

> "We should really focus on determining if the product really fixes our problem and secondly if it gives us any additional benefit. Of course, fixing the problem can be a big benefit, but often there are other benefits as well. For example, choosing the cheapest solution could lead to unmet requirements and dissatisfaction, as well as criticizing the service for nothing. The service itself may be good but it just didn't solve our initial problem in the best possible way." – Participant 4

At its simplest, the success of the buying process is about whether the product can solve the customer's problem. Everything else is considered secondary. The customer journey consists of different touchpoints, images, and emotions that guide the customer towards the end of the purchase path. The next chapter presents the conclusions, theoretical contributions, and managerial implications, followed by suggestions for future research.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The objective of this study is to advance the understanding of factors that prevent organisations from buying SaaS online. In previous chapters, previous literature was presented to form a picture of the current situation research-wise, followed by the empirical part where the research method and findings were presented. This chapter discusses the findings in relation to the research questions. The findings of the study will be connected to the literature that was presented in chapter 2 by using theory driven content analysis, aiming to answer the research questions as comprehensively as possible. After this, managerial contributions are presented, followed by limitations and further research suggestions.

5.1. Theoretical contributions

SQ1: What are the specific features of SaaS?

As Mero et al. (2022) denoted, the cost of acquiring SaaS is often marginal and the installation and deployment is considered technically quick and easy. Results of the study support this view, as all the respondents associated easiness with SaaS. When the software maintenance, development and security are the responsibility of the supplier, the customer can focus on developing their own core business. This, and the low upfront costs (Mero et al. 2022; Gonzalez & Zainuddin, 2011) are also related to the cost-efficiency and inexpensiveness of SaaS.

According to the interpretation of Mero et al. (2022) in the case of SaaS, the perceived risk is transformed from a potential loss of investment to a loss of opportunity associated with SaaS, which is why organisations are encouraged to bypass cautious evaluations. However, results indicate that cloud computing and SaaS are considered common ways of doing things today. Although SaaS can bring benefits to the company, which may lead to new opportunities. With technology constantly evolving, there is nothing constant but change.

Findings also show anything but bypassing cautious evaluation. The decision to try a product does not require robust judgement but is seen as an integral part of the process, yet the actual purchase decision is only made after trial and consideration. Thus, results show that the decision to try a product is not yet a decision to buy. Hence, there is no doubt suppliers want to fasten the buying process and encourage customers to buy to avoid losing opportunities associated with SaaS (Mero et al. 2022), but this claim does not reflect customers behaviour. Moreover, some respondents felt that even though SaaS are considered affordable and easy to buy and deploy, they don't, however, lower the switching threshold.

Another integral characteristic of SaaS is configurability (Hudli et al. 2009; Arya et al. 2010). However, it did not directly rise upon the results. Instead, modularity and scalability were mentioned. To conclude, the main characteristics of SaaS are easiness of deployment and inexpensiveness, which are stemming from the subscription revenue model and negligible upfront capital costs.

SQ2: What is the buying process of SaaS like?

Buying process is typically described through a five-stage model, in which the five different stages are problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase behaviour (Kotler & Keller, 2016, 195; Mohr, Sengupta & Slater, 2014, 236). Research findings however indicate that this model does not fully describe the SaaS purchasing process since trial was considered to be an integral part of the SaaS buying process. Thus, customers' decision to try is not a purchasing decision, but more of an indicator that customer is willing to go forward with the product. During the trial, customer evaluates the product and how it works, aiming to find an answer to the question, is this the right product for us and does this solve our problem.

Findings show that the problem or need emergence is typically triggered by internal factors. In most cases, the problem owner, the end-user, is struggling with something and begins to look for solutions to facilitate their job. A change in the company's operations or the pursuit

of cost savings may also trigger the need. Sometimes an external factor can be the trigger, stemming from customer requirements or a prevailing market trend, for instance.

After recognizing the problem or need, buying process continues with information search on possible solutions. Results show that information search starts from Google and customers are expecting to come across with most potential options in the search results. The use of social media is part of the purchasing process and can support the purchasing decision to some extent, but it was not considered to play such a significant role that it could directly influence the purchasing decision. Rather, social media channels were seen as providing a platform for discussions with the networks, which are considered an important source of information. Results show that the most important social media platform during information search is LinkedIn. Other sources of information were also mentioned, but it can be deduced that the two most important sources of information are Google and networks. From this, it can be further concluded that peer experiences and opinions expressed in the network have a significant influence on which products are considered further.

Aforementioned findings support the study of Marvasti et al. (2021), which found that digitally driven information search constitutes a major portion of the B2B buying journey. As the responses show, the search for information takes place online. Moreover, findings support the argument that the digitally available information has reduced buyer's dependency on sellers, as they can access a wide variety of information without involving the sellers in the process (Marvasti et al., 2021; Jaakkola et al. 2018). Thus, organisational buyers are expecting consumer-like experiences, including to find relevant and accurate information effortlessly wherever they are on the customer journey, and having answers to their questions without asking.

Results show requirements building takes place during the information search and evaluation stages. Results also indicate that there is some neglect in requirements building and often companies spend too little time determining the problem they are aiming to solve, and what is required from the product or service, to solve that problem. Moreover, findings show that often solutions are not actively sought, as there are several problems or needs within

organisation that should be solved. Hence, buying services is an ongoing process and the solution to one of your problems may come to you by chance.

Before moving forward to the evaluation in the buying process, company aims to identify two or more alternatives to take a closer look at. Some results indicated that the utmost critical phase in the process from supplier's perspective, is to get to this shortlist. During evaluation, products and their features are screened and compared to each other, as company aims to identify the differences between them. Additionally, company seeks to examine how products fit to their ecosystem and how they meet the requirements.

Results support Kotler and Keller's view, that at the evaluation stage, few options are being evaluated and compared to one another (2016, 197) as buyer seeks to determine the general characteristics and requirements for the acquisition and tries to identify the most appropriate suppliers (2016, 221). Moreover, confirmation for the product's functionality and features is sought from references and user experiences. Based on the results, typical factors that are considered during evaluation are references, integrability, supplier's operational reliability, price, access to support and trial period. Findings support the argument of Jaakkola et al. (2018), arguing that buyers take contact to sellers only after they already know what they need to solve their problems.

Even though trial is not part of the traditional B2B buying process stages, results show that when it comes to SaaS, trial period is perceived as part of the purchasing process, and it has a significant impact on how the purchasing process continues thereafter. If the trial fails, customer is most likely to abandon that option and continue with another one.

There are many factors that influence the purchase decision, and the subject is multidimensional. If the trial period is successful, company may decide to continue using the product, but the decision to buy is more complex and is linked to product loyalty and commitment, among others. Thus, customers make constant evaluation and are choosing to buy, i.e., subscribe, repeatedly. Consistently, as the results show that companies are looking

for a partner rather than just a product, suppliers must be able to constantly meet customer expectations and requirements. If customers' requirements change and the product is no longer able to fully answer them, risk to unsubscribe increases.

Although this study focused on the stages before the post-purchase, results pointed out some factors after the purchase decision, that must be successful for a customer to continue to use the product. Most importantly, onboarding and the easiness of deployment were said to play an important role in customer's willingness to continue with the product. The success of the product's implementation within the organisation was also considered important, as results indicated post-purchase behaviour having a significant importance on the process, particularly in relation to customer loyalty and engagement. If the implementation is insufficient, the product may be more easily abandoned because it may not be perceived to be sufficiently useful. These observations are important and provide some indication of the factors influencing post-purchase behaviour for further research.

To conclude, the results indicate that given the nature of the subscription economy, the traditional way of describing the organisational buying process fails to fully describe the process of subscription business model-based products. Although there are many similarities in the processes, the subscription products have their special characteristics, such as the trial periods. In addition, as independent deployment is also a feature of SaaS, and the success of onboarding and implementation is critical for the continued use of the product. Further research is therefore needed to investigate post-purchase behaviour.

SQ3: What factors affect B2B customer's purchase decision and how?

Theory has recognised different types of innovation adopters who differ by their willingness to adopt new technology. However, results did not show distribution in the adoption of SaaS solutions. This can be seen as an indication that, firstly, SaaS solutions are already widely used and, secondly, the continuous evolution of technology has forced companies to adapt to constant change. The results however highlighted some of the risks associated with technology adoption. Findings indicate that relative advantage, which meant the benefits of

adopting new technology compared to the costs and in relation to the alternatives (Mohr et al., 2014, 240), was considered during evaluation, as customers were trying to identify both the sought-after benefits and add-on benefits.

Compatibility, which refers to the extent to which the adoption and use of a new solution build on existing practices (Mohr, Sengupta & Slater, 2014, 240), did not feature strongly in the results. This may partly be explained by the fact that new products are expected to change practices, which again, is one of the reasons why successful implementation was considered so important.

Kotler and Keller (2016, 200) argue customer's decision to modify, postpone or avoid a purchase decision is influenced by one or more perceived risks. Results indicate that especially financial risk and functional risks are associated with SaaS. Functionality of a product is evaluated carefully during evaluation stage and customers aim to define how well product fits to their ecosystem and how it solves their problem. Moreover, during trial customers can see the product in practice and thus evaluate, if it works the way they expected. Thus, trialability is considered significantly important. Similarly, the complexity of the product was directly linked to the rejection of the purchase.

Findings show that understandable pricing plays a key role in the decision process, and customers must be able to understand the pricing and how it correlates with the perceived value. Thus, price must be aligned with the value of the problem that customer is trying to solve. Results therefore indicate that the capability to communicate the product benefits and equally the observability of those benefits, were considered important.

Results indicate that time risk, which referred to the failure of the product that results in an opportunity cost of finding another satisfactory product (Kotler & Keller, 2016, 200), plays no significant role when purchasing SaaS. This might be because testing is considered as integral part of the buying process and it is expected that not all products customer tests, are equal or able to fulfil requirements. Hence, evaluation and testing aim to ensure that

customer finds the most suitable product for their need. Attitudes of others are considered important during evaluation and especially negative customer reviews may cause customer to abandon product. Fear of not getting the help you need can also cause a supplier to drop out of the selection process.

Results indicate that most critical internal factors that affect the buying process are budget and resources. In addition, organisation's code of conduct may prevent online purchasing, which can be categorized to belong to procedural buying barriers. Case presentation and understandable benefits or added value of the acquisition were also considered important. If the presentation fails to demonstrate why the product should be purchased and what the concrete benefits are, the purchase is likely to be rejected. Rejecting a purchase because of a failure of internal presentation was considered somewhat unfortunate because it may have nothing to do with the product. Of course, if the customer cannot find the additional benefits of the product, it may indicate that the product is simply not the best solution.

Findings show innovation resistance theory and especially functional barriers impacting purchasing decision of SaaS. Functional barriers are usage barrier, value barrier and risk barrier (Lian & Yen, 2013). Usage barrier, which referred to resistance to new products when new offering challenges customer's status quo (Talwar et al. 2020), did not emerge in research answers. As technology continues to evolve, companies have come to accept that their environment is constantly changing and that new innovations must be adopted if they are to keep pace with developments and competition.

The uncertainty and unpredictability, that is associated with the product or service (Talwar et al. 2020), were denoted in the responses. Consistently with Lian and Yen, if customer does not adequately understand the product, they cannot assess the associated risks and uncertainties that will arise after its use, which will ultimately lead to the refusal (2013). Privacy and security concerns, which are also referred to as risk barrier (Talwar et al. 2020), were raised to some extent in the responses, but were accepted as part of products that the company is not responsible for maintaining.

Results also indicate that value barrier and concerns related to it were one of the most critical factors influencing the purchase decision. Responses indicate that product performance and the perceived value product offers against alternatives are considered important factors that affect evaluation. Respectively, the new product or service, has to provide higher value than the existing product (Lian & Yen, 2013).

Findings indicate that sometimes image barrier can affect buying process. References and user experience of others influence the image customers have over a product. The results also show that resistance is active, rather than passive. Moreover, respondents' purchasing processes did not seem to be affected by inertia either, which can be attributed to the acceptance of constant change and the need to adapt to it.

What factors prevent organisations from buying SaaS products online and how?

The results of the survey concluded that the barriers to purchase are manifold. Moreover, barriers to purchase differ at different stages of the purchasing process. At the beginning of the buying process, invisibility in the search engine's search results can become a barrier and rule option out at the very beginning. References and user experiences are seen as valuable sources of information that can have both a positive and negative impact on whether a product makes it into a customer's shortlist. Moreover, supplier should provide understandable pricing and plans, possibility to try the product and possibility to get support. Even one missing element can make a customer hesitate and turn to another supplier. To ensure customer completes the independent deployment, usage and deployment of the product should be designed as effortless as possible. To conclude, confusion with both pricing and the product are likely to lead to rejection.

Both external and internal factors influence the decision, but what matters most is the entity and how well the product solves customer's problem. Therefore, it is not enough to provide a solution to a problem, but the product must also integrate into the customer's ecosystem, be configurable to the customer's specific needs and provide added value to the customer. Even one missing element can lead to the customer feeling that the product does not

adequately meet their needs. Hence, it can be argued that better understanding of customer resistance can support the development of customer journeys and designing features that support the adoption of SaaS and facilitate purchase decision.

5.2. Managerial implications

Johnston et al., (1999) have found that in-depth case studies often provide highly useful information from a managerial perspective. This study provides important implications for managers who are either building or developing customer journeys for SaaS. Moreover, this study provides useful information for managers who are responsible for user experience, customer experience, or purchasing process development, among others.

The results suggest that B2B customers are open to new SaaS technologies and have a low threshold to acquire them for trial periods. Before companies are willing to devote more resources to software deployment, they focus on exploring the features of the SaaS in question and assessing its relevance to their business and needs. Thus, managers should focus on building straightforward customer journeys aiming for trial period, and from there to further convince customer on product's capabilities and benefits. If the implementation of the product is easy and product is considered easy to use and it ticks all the customer's boxes, it is likely that customer will continue to use the product. Moreover, customer experience should aim to exceed customer expectations and provide added value throughout the customer journey.

As the research results show, it is important that product appears on search results, is appealing to the customer and there is a possibility for trial period to concretely see and try the product before making the purchasing decision. Moreover, references and networks play an important role during information search. Additionally, clear pricing and possibility to get help were considered important. To address these issues that might occur during buying process, company should systematically collect information on why buying process ended to rejection of a purchase. Managerial implications are presented on Table 9 below.

Table 9. Managerial implications.

Conclusion	Suggestion
Visibility in search results is crucial.	Ensure visibility in the chosen market segment in both paid and organic search results.
Clear pricing and plans reduce confusion.	Design plans in a way they are easy to understand, and prices are aligned with perceived value. Utilize a buyer-centric approach.
Possibility to ask help during purchase decision increases trust.	Be contactable and keep a record of what customers are contacting you about to improve the process.
Trial period helps customer to assure product is a right fit and can increase loyalty and engagement.	Offer a free trial and track their success rate. Collect data on why usage did not continue after the trial.
References and networks are valuable sources of information.	Actively collect references from your customers and encourage your staff to speak up for your company.
Knowing your ICP helps to improve customer journeys.	Actively speak to your customers and collect data on their problems and how your product responds to them and what added value it brings. By knowing customers pain points and goals you can identify reasons, why customers refuse to buy your offering. A process should also be put in place for salespeople to actively identify the reasons why customer rejected the purchase.
Timing is important.	Consider acquiring a lead generation software or similar, for analysing customer behaviour. When you know where your customers are in the buying journey, you can provide them with relevant content.
Product must fit into customer's ecosystem.	Ensure the product's integrability and interoperability with other programs.

To conclude, key is understanding the customers' needs and responding to them in a way that clearly demonstrates the value proposition and how offering differentiates from competitors. Furthermore, it is recommended to offer appealing and timely content that speaks directly to the targeted customers in channels, that are important to your business.

5.3. Limitations and further research

An integral part of any research is a critical assessment of its quality and reliability (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015, 185; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016, 202). Limitation in terms of statistical generalization is typical for qualitative inquires and this study is no exception. This study was also limited by the size of the sample, which may limit the generalisability of the findings. A larger sample would have made it possible both to identify more barriers to purchase and to reach a saturation point where new views would no longer emerge and conclusions could be drawn more confidently.

This study aimed to achieve a deeper understanding on organisational buying behaviour and buying process related to SaaS and thus to identify buying barriers. Because analysis of qualitative data requires interpretation, it can to some extent lead to subjective biases and the omission of some important elements. Given the nature of the research and its attempt to reflect beliefs and experiences at the time the research was conducted, it may not even be appropriate for this research to be replicated. However, the ability of a product to solve a customer's problem will certainly remain one of the utmost important factors in the success of purchase, even if times change.

Focus on this study was on the stages in the buying process before the purchase, leaving room for future research in respect of the full process. Therefore, more research is needed to examine the extended buying process and the conceptualization of barriers to purchase a SaaS product online at large. Given the importance of onboarding, an interesting topic for future research would be to examine how successful onboarding correlates with increasing customer loyalty and revenue. In broader perspective, influence of subscription economy to the B2B environment and competition is a timely topic and requires more research.

References

Almpanopoulou, A. (2020). Lecture 1: Introduction to qualitative research, lecture notes, Business Research Methods A350A0050, LUT University, delivered 7th August 2020.

Anderl, E., Becker, I., von Wangenheim, F. & Schumann J.H. (2016). Mapping the customer journey: Lessons learned from graph-based online attribution modelling. International Journal of Research in Marketing, 33 (3), p. 457-474.

Angevine, C., Plotkin, C., & Stanley, J. (2017). When b2b buyers want to go digital—and when they don't. McKinsey Quarterly [online]. Available at:

https://www.mckinsey.de/~/media/McKinsey/Business%20Functions/McKinsey%20Digital/Our%20Insights/When%20B2B%20buyers%20want%20to%20go%20digital%20and%20when%20they%20dont/When-B2B-buyers-want-to-go-digital-and-when-they-dont.pdf [Accessed 10 Feb. 2022].

Andersen, P., Wenstrup, J., & Taneja, V. (2016). Five Selling Secrets of Today's Digital B2B Leaders. The Boston Consulting Group. [online] Available at: https://www.bcg.com/publications/2016/sales-channels-marketing-sales-five-selling-secrets-todays-digital-B2B-leaders [Accessed 10 Feb. 2022].

Adamson, B., Dixon, M., & Toman, N. (2017). The End of Solution Sales. Harvard Business Review. [online] Available at: https://hbr.org/2012/07/the-end-of-solution-sales [Accessed 10 Feb. 2022].

Apollo, B. (2010). B2B Sales: Eliminating the barriers to the buying decision journey. [online] Available at: https://www.inflexion-point.com/Blog/bid/31299/B2B-Sales-Eliminating-the-barriers-to-the-buying-decision-journey [Accessed 19 Mar. 2022].

Arya, P.D., Venkatesakumar, V. and Palaniswami, S. (2010). Configurability in SaaS for an electronic contract management application. Recent Advances in Networking, VLSI and Signal Processng, p. 210-216.

Becker, L. & Jaakkola E. (2020). Customer experience: fundamental premises and implications for research. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 48, p. 630-648.

Berman, B. (2020). Paths to Purchase: The Seven Steps of Customer Purchase Journey Mapping. Rutgers Business Review, 5(1), pp.84-100.

Bianchi, M., Marzi, G., & Guerini, M. (2020). Agile, Stage-Gate and their combination:

Exploring how they relate to performance in software development. Journal of Business Research, 110, 538–553.

Borowski, C. (2015). What a Great Digital Customer Experience Actually Looks Like. [online] Harvard Business Review. [online] Available at: https://hbr.org/2015/11/what-a-great-digital-customer-experienceactually-looks-like [Accessed 10 Feb. 2022].

Burns, R. (2021). Overcoming barriers to B2B eCommerce. [online] Available at: https://www.themanufacturer.com/articles/overcoming-barriers-to-B2B-ecommerce/ [Accessed 19 Mar. 2022].

Chiu, C.M., Wang, E.T., Fang, Y.H. & Huang, H.Y. (2014). Understanding customers' repeat purchase intentions in B2C e-commerce: the roles of utilitarian value, hedonic value, and perceived risk. Information Systems Journal, 24(1). p.85–114.

Cho, V., & Chan, A. (2015). An integrative framework of comparing SaaS adoption for core and non-core business operations: An empirical study on Hong Kong industries. Information Systems Frontiers, 17(3), p. 629-644.

Clearbit, (2021). The Anatomy of PLG SaaS. Explore the elements that make up the 300 best product-led growth SaaS companies. [online] Available at: https://clearbit.com/resources/reports/product-led-growth-companies [Accessed 22 Mar 2022].

Cromulent Marketing. (2018). How to Boost Your Business by Overcoming Buying Barriers. [online] Available at: https://www.cromulentmarketing.com/marketing/how-to-boost-your-business-by-overcoming-buying-barriers/#:~:text=A%20buying%20barrier%20is%20anything,their%20purchase%20of%20a%20solution [Accessed 19 Mar. 2022].

Edelman, D. and Singer, M. (2017). Competing on customer journeys: you have to create new value at every step. Harvard Business Review, 93(11), p. 88-98.

Gartner. (2019). New B2B Buying Journey & its Implication for Sales. [online] Available at: https://www.gartner.com/en/sales/insights/B2B-buying-journey [Accessed 3 Feb. 2022].

Gentile, C., Spiller, N. and Noci, G. (2007). How to Sustain the Customer Experience: European Management Journal, 25(5), p. 395-410.

Gonzalez, P., & Zainuddin, E. (2011) Configurability, maturity, and value co-creation in saas: an exploratory case study. Conference: Proceedings of the International Conference on Information Systems, ICIS 2011, Shanghai. Available at:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/221599702_Configurability_Maturity_and_Value_Co-creation_in_SaaS_An_Exploratory_Case_Study [Accessed 10 Feb. 2022].

Graf, A., Maas, P. (2008). Customer value from a customer perspective: a comprehensive review. Journal für Betriebswirtschaft, 58. p. 1–20.

Hirsjärvi, S., & Hurme, H. (2015) Tutkimushaastattelu: teemahaastattelun teoria ja käytäntö. Gaudeamus Helsinki University Press.

Hudli, A.V., Shivaradhya, B. and Hudli, R.V. (2009) January. Level-4 SaaS applications for healthcare industry. In Proceedings of the 2nd Bangalore annual compute conference, pp. 1-4.

Inoni, O.R., Salami, C.G.E. & Olannye, A.P. (2019). Effects of Internal and External Factors on Organizational Buying Behaviour: A Review of Extant Literature. Izvestiya. (3), p.216–237.

Jaakkola, E., Makkonen, H., Salonen, A., & Terho, H. (2018). B2B-markkinoinnin tutkimustrendit: Katsaus palvelujen, myynnin ja liiketoimintamallien evoluutioon. [pdf] Available at: https://research.utu.fi/converis/portal/detail/Publication/35158145 [Accessed 10 Feb. 2022].

Jain, R., & Kulhar, M. (2019). Barriers to online shopping. International Journal of Business Information Systems, 30(1), p. 31-50.

Johnston, W. J., Leach, M. P., & Liu, A. H. (1999). Theory testing using case studies in business-to-business research. Industrial Marketing Management, 28(3), p. 201–213.

Kang, S., Kang, S. & Hur, S. (2011). A design of the conceptual architecture for a multitenant saas application platform. In 2011 First ACIS/JNU International Conference on Computers, Networks, Systems and Industrial Engineering (IEEE). p. 462-467.

Kaminski, J., (2011). Diffusion of innovation theory. Canadian Journal of Nursing Informatics, 6(2), p.1-6.

Kaur, P., Dhir, A., Singh, N., Sahu, G., & Almotairi, M. (2020). An innovation resistance theory perspective on mobile payment solutions. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 55, p.102059.

Kotler, P. & Keller, K.L. (2016). Marketing Management. 15th edition, global edition. Boston: Pearson Education. Print.

Lemon, K. & Verhoef, P. (2016). Understanding Customer Experience Throughout the Customer Journey. Journal of Marketing, 80(6), p. 69-96.

Lian, J., & Yen, D.C. (2013). To buy or not to buy experience goods online: Perspective of innovation adoption barriers. Computers in Human Behaviour, 29(3), p. 665-672.

Lingqvist, O., Plotkin, C., and Stanley, J. (2015). Do you really understand how your business customers buy? McKinsey & Company. [online] Available at: https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/do-you-really-understand-how-your-business-customers-buy [Accessed 3 Feb. 2022].

Marvasti, N., Huhtala, J., Yousefi, Z.,Vaniala, I., Upreti, B., Malo, P., Kaski, S., & Tikkanen, H. (2021). Is this company a lead customer? Estimating stages of B2B buying journey. Industrial Marketing Management, 97, p. 126-133.

Maechler, N., Sahni, S., and Van Oostrum, M. (2016). Improving the business-to-business customer experience. McKinsey & Company [online] Available at: https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/McKinsey/Business%20Functions/Marketing%20and%20Sales/Our%20Insights/Improving%20the%20business%20to%20business%20customer%20experience/Improving_the_business_to_business_customer_experience.pdf [Accessed 3 Feb. 2022].

Mero, J., Leinonen, M., Makkonen, H. & Karjaluoto, H. (2022). Agile logic for SaaS implementation: Capitalizing on marketing automation software in a start-up. Journal of Business Research, 145. p. 583-594.

Mertz, S. (2009). Gartner: SaaS Revenue Within the Enterprise Application Software Market to Total $9.2B in 2010. [online] Available at: http://www.destinationcrm.com/Articles/CRM-News/Daily-News/SaaS-Will-Outpace-the-Rest-of-the-Market-41776.aspx [Accessed 10 Feb. 2022].

Mohr, J., Sengupta, S., & Slater, S. (2014) Marketing of High-Technology Products and Innovations. Third edition, Pearson new international edition. Harlow, Essex: Pearson. Print.

Mudambi, S. (2002). Branding importance in business-to-business markets. Industrial Marketing Management, 31(6), p. 525-533.

Munnukka, J., & Järvi, P. (2008). Managing risks in organizational purchasing through adaptation of buying centre structure and the buying process. Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management, 14(4), p. 253-262.

Normann, R., and R. Ramirez. (1993). “From value chain to value constellation: Designing interactive strategy.” Harvard business review (71:1), p. 65–65.

Oliveira, T., Martins, R:, Sarker, S., Thomas, M., & Popovič, A. (2019). Understanding SaaS adoption: The moderating impact of the environment context. International Journal of Information Management, 49. p, 1-12.

Payne, A., Frow, P., & Eggert, A. (2017). The Customer Value Proposition: Evolution, Development, and Application in Marketing. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 45(4). p. 467–489.

Peppard, J., and A. Rylander. (2006). "From Value Chain to Value Network: Insights for Mobile Operators." European Management Journal, 24 (2-3), p. 128–141.

Pokorni, B. & Constantinescu, C. (2021). Design and Configuration of Digital Assistance Systems in Manual Assembly of Variant-rich Products based on Customer Journey Mapping. Procedia CIRP, 104, p. 1777-1782.

Rosenbaum, M.S., Otalora, M.L., & Ramírez, G.C. (2017). How to create a realistic customer journey map. Business Horizons, 60(1), p. 143-150.

Ryan, C. (2018). Stop Making It Hard For People To Buy: Six Barriers That Prevent Revenue Growth. [online] Available at: https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2018/01/31/stop-making-it-hard-for-people-to-buy-six-barriers-that-prevent-revenue-growth/?sh=7107cd3b1ef9 [Accessed 19 Mar. 2022].

SaaS Finland (2022). SaaS Finland. [online] Available at: https://saasfinland.fi/saas-finland/ [Accessed 12 Mar. 2022].

Satyanarayana, S., 2012. Cloud computing: SAAS. Computer Sciences and Telecommunications, (4), p.76-79.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2016) Research methods for business students (Seventh edition.). Pearson Education.

Schermer (2019). Five Barriers to Effective B2B Marketing Decision Making. And How to Overcome Them. [pdf] Available at: https://www.schermer.co/5-barriers-to-effective-B2B-marketing-decision-making/ [Accessed 19 Mar. 2022].

Schuh, G., Wenger, L., Stich, V., Hicking, J. & Gailus, J. (2020). Outcome Economy: Subscription Business Models in Machinery and Plant Engineering. Procedia CIRP. 93, p. 599-604.

Schürmann, J., Taneja, V., Andersen, P., Mustaghni, B., Wieseke, J., & Schmitz, C. (2017). Bringing your digital B2B sales up to speed. The Boston Consulting Group. [online] Available at: https://image-src.bcg.com/Images/BCG-Bringing-Your-Digital-B2B-Sales-Up-to-Speed-Aug-2017_tcm81-168644.pdf [Accessed 10 Feb. 2022].

Seth, H., Talwar, S., Bhatia, A., Saxena, A., & Dhir, A. (2020). Consumer resistance and inertia of retail investors: Development of the resistance adoption inertia continuance (RAIC) framework. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services. 55, p.102071.

Talwar, S., Dhir, A., Kaur, P., & Mäntymäki, M. (2020). Barriers toward purchasing from online travel agencies. International Journal of Hospitality Management. 89, p.102593.

Tanguy, C., Harrison, L., Plotkin, C., and Stanley, J. (2016). How B2B digital leaders drive five times more revenue growth than their peers. McKinsey & Company. [online] Available at: https://www.mckinsey.com.br/~/media/McKinsey/Business%20Functions/Marketing%20and%20Sales/Our%20Insights/How%20B2B%20digital%20leaders%20drive%20five%20times%20more%20revenue%20growth%20than%20their%20peers/How-B2B-digital-leaders-drive-five-times-more-revenue-growth-than-their-peers.pdf [Accessed 3 Feb. 2022].

Tani, M., Troise, C. & O'Driscoll, A. (2022). Business model innovation in mobile apps market: Exploring the new subscription plans with a behavioural reasoning perspective. Journal of Engineering and Technology Management, 63, p.101674.

Terho, H., Haas, A., Eggert, A., & Ulaga, W. (2012). 'It's almost like taking the sales out of selling'—Towards a conceptualization of value-based selling in business markets. Industrial Marketing Management, 41, p. 174-185.

Tornatzky, L.G. & Klein, K.J. (1982). Innovation characteristics and innovation adoption-implementation: A meta-analysis of findings. IEEE Transactions on engineering management, (1), p. 28-45.

Tyrväinen, P. and Selin, J. (2011). How to sell SaaS: a model for main factors of marketing and selling software-as-a-service. In International Conference of Software Business, p. 2-16. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg.

Van der Kooij. J. (2019). Frameworks That Govern B2B Marketing and Sales and Why SaaS Needs its Own Framework. [online] Available at: https://winningbydesign.com/frameworks-that-govern-B2B-marketing-and-sales/ [Accessed 12 Mar. 2022].

Vendep Capital. (2021). State of Saas in the Nordics 2021. [pdf] Available at: https://saasfinland.fi/tutkimukset/ [Accessed 12 Mar. 2022].

Vendep Capital. (2020). State of SaaS 2020. [pdf] Available at: https://saasfinland.fi/state-of-saas-download-2020/ [Accessed 12 Mar. 2022].

Venkatachalam, N., Fielt, E., Roseman, M., & Mathews, S. (2014). Small and medium enterprises using software as a service: Exploring the different roles of intermediaries. Australasian Journal of Information Systems, 18(3), 3371–3389.

Virtanen, L. (2021a). Tilaustalous | SaaS-palvelun verkkomyynnin valmius 1/3. [online] Available at: https://www.ohjelmistoebusiness.fi/tilaustalous-saas-palvelun-verkkomyynnin-valmius-1-3/ [Accessed 12 Mar. 2022].

Virtanen, L. (2021b). Tilaustalous | SaaS-palvelun verkkomyynnin valmius 2/3. [online] Available at: https://www.ohjelmistoebusiness.fi/tilaustalous-saas-palvelun-verkkomyynnin-valmius-2-3/ [Accessed 22 Mar 2022].

Virtanen, L. (2021c). Tilaustalous | SaaS-palvelun verkkomyynnin valmius 3/3. [online] Available at: https://www.ohjelmistoebusiness.fi/tilaustalous-saas-palvelun-verkkomyynnin-valmius-3-3/ [Accessed 22 Mar 2022].

Witell, L., Kowalkowski, C., Perks, H., Raddats, C., Schwabe, M., Benedettini, O., & Burton, J. (2020). Characterizing customer experience management in business markets. Journal of Business Research, 116, p. 420-430.

Yin, R. K. (2003). Case study research: Design and methods (Applied Social Research Methods Series, 5, 3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Yoo, J. & Park, M. (2016). The effects of e-mass customization on consumer perceived value, satisfaction, and loyalty toward luxury brands. Journal of Business Research, 69 (2), p. 5775-5784.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview questions

Background information: Introduce yourself: Who are you, where do you work and what is your role in the purchase process or how you have been involved in them?

1. Recognizing the problem: Where and how does the need to buy arise? Can you name any factors influencing on need or problem emergence?

- Where does the problem come from? Is the need internal or external? If internal, does it come from the top (management) or the bottom ("the field") of the organisation? If external, what's the source?
- Why do organisations acquire SaaS solutions in general? What are the problems that these solutions aim to solve?
- When was the last SaaS product bought and from where (e-commerce/salesman)?

2. Information gathering and requirements building: After the need or problem is identified, what happens next?
   - Where do you search for information?
   - What digital channels do you use for information gathering?
   - What is your opinion on having a lot of information available online?
   - When do the internal conversations take place? Do you ask help from your colleagues?
   - What information would have helped you to decide faster or better?
   - What type of information would you need during this phase?
   - Do you search for information with the brand or product? Do you ask supplier to provide information?
   - How would you evaluate the importance of ROI calculations provided by the supplier?
   - Do you read references and how would you evaluate their importance?

3. Evaluation and purchasing: What are the most important factors influencing choosing the product?

- Which factors influence on the decision? Can brand have an impact?
- What are your thoughts on B2B e-commerce?

- Is contact to the salespeople necessary? Why would you contact sales in this phase, in what would you need help with? Would chatbot or FAQ help?
- Who makes the final decision? Who is the most important influencer affecting to the decision?
- Who do you have in your buying team? Who else is involved in the evaluation?
- What factors can crop up that slow buying process down? Why have projects stopped or stalled in the past?
- What's the budget cycle? How are acquisitions prioritized internally?
- When acquiring SaaS product, do you calculate ROI and if yes, how?

4. Factors influencing on journey ending

- Which are the reasons not to purchase? Are there any typical objections within the organisation? What are the typical internal barriers to purchase?
- What external factors usually prevent from buying?
- How could the supplier alleviate these objections?

5. Describe the typical purchasing process?

- What are the most crucial phases of the buying journey?
- How strict is the purchasing process?

6. During which stage is the purchase decision made? Can decision be made during the purchasing process?

7. Do you utilise social media during the purchasing process? What channels? Do you see one channel more reliable/valuable than others?

8. What kind of messages catch your attention and where? Can they influence the buying process? Do you appreciate a specific person's (influencer or so) opinion that might influence purchase decision?

9. Do you remember any influencers or ads that would have influenced problem/need emergence or purchase decision?

10. What kind of content do you prefer? What kind of content would help to facilitate the purchase decision?