EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF FMCG INDUSTRY'S TRENDS ON PRODUCT MANAGEMENT

How do the latest trends and changes in expectations within the FMCG industry affect product managers?

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ABSTRACT

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This research aims at exploring the impact of Fast-Moving Consumer Goods industry's trends on product management, and more specifically, how the latest trends and changes in expectations within the FMCG industry affect product managers. The theoretical part of this research consists of a literature review investigating the concept of product management within the FMCG industry, the historical evolutions of the roles since is first definition in the 1930's, as well as the five main trends impacting the FMCG industry. Based on the knowledge gathered in the theoretical part, an empirical qualitative study was held in July 2023 focusing on six French product managers working in FMCG companies, with at least three years of experience in both the position and industry. The empirical part of the thesis provides deeper insights on product management and product manager concepts while exploring their evolution within the FMCG industry and provides an assessment of the key trends in the FMCG industry.

This research aims at fulfilling four objectives. First, the research aims at providing a clearer and contemporary definition of product management and deeper knowledge about the product manager's role, missions, and responsibilities within the FMCG industry. Second, the research aims at developing a deeper understanding of the main trends affecting the FMCG industry – technological innovation and digital transformation, increasing customer expectations, need for data-driven decision-making, growing call for sustainability and social responsibility as well as relentless competition and shift of private labels – and assessing the importance of their impact on product management. Third, the research aims at reviewing the main changes in the role, missions and responsibilities of the product manager and exploring how they adapt in terms of methods, tools, and capabilities to these new trends. Finally, the research aims at exploring the potential reasons for failure or causes of drawbacks in the adaptation to changes for product managers to help avoid or prevent product's induced failure.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ESG	Environmental Social and Governance
FMCG	Fast Moving Consumer Goods
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
PM	Product Manager
RQ	Research Question
SRQ	Sub-Research Question

1. INTRODUCTION

To introduce the thesis, this chapter explains the context, presents the key findings of previous studies, and highlights a research gap in the current literature to justify the reasons for the research as well as what it aims at achieving. It also provides a brief description of the research methodology implemented, the key definitions, the research delimitations, and the structure of the study.

1.1 Background

Product management is becoming an increasingly crucial factor that influences the company's success. As it is responsible for the determination of the strategic plan and its operational execution to manage the company's new and existing products, product management contributes to successful profit-making activities (Lysonski, 1985). Indeed, product management is essential to the creation or management of the company's competitive advantages by delivering value to the customers and determining the competitiveness of the company in the market. Since its introduction in the 1930's (McElroy, 1930), product management developed quickly until being used by about 85% of consumer package goods industries in the 70's (Buell 1975).

Consequently, the product manager assumes an increasingly central role in the organization since he is responsible for successfully introducing new products and effectively managing the life cycle of existing products; a role therefore directly impacting the growth and profitability of the firm (Tyagi and Sawhney, 2010). However, despite its introduction almost a century ago, the role of product manager suffers from unclear definitions with remaining ambiguity regarding the missions and responsibilities which vary greatly depending on the product, firm and industry studied (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1995). Additionally, this role is widely dependent on the contemporary environment of the company and external factors such as societal shifts and market environment. The increasing uncertainty and changes in the environment have led to several changes since the product management system was introduced (Buell, 1975); changes according to which the product

manager needs to adapt in terms of role, missions, responsibilities, and capabilities (Lysonski et al, 1975).

In a contemporary context characterized by rapid technological development and increasing customer's expectations, product manager's roles are widely spreading in both demand and popularity. Indeed, Iyer's study (2019) on product managers roles in the US showed that the number of product management positions has increased by 32% in two years, from August 2017 to June 2019. In the meantime, the role of product managers quickly evolved, leading to several new types of sub-categories such as Technical PM, Digital PM, Software PM, Data PM, Growth PM or Design PM (Product Family, 2023), increasing the fuzziness around the concepts of product management and product manager, and the evolutions around the role's scope.

In addition, the fast-moving-consumer-goods industry is confronted to five main growing trends leading to important changes which are technological innovation and digital transformation (Schrock, 2019; Haas et al, 2022), increasing customer expectations (Davidson et al, 2014; Delberghe et al, 2022), need for data-driven decision-making (McLeod, 2022 ; Fan et al, 2014; Haynes, 2022; Leece et al, 2022), growing call for sustainability and social responsibility (Am et al, 2022; Gutterman, 2023), as well as relentless competition and shift of private labels (Kelly et al, 2018; Gielens et al, 2021). These new trends are redefining the environment of Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) companies, urging them to develop new product or to adapt their existing portfolios to the new trends, while adapting their internal processes and organizations to be able to incorporate these trends.

Hence, there is a strong need for clarifying the concept of product management and the main missions and responsibilities of the product manager, how to tackle external changes and how to integrate these changes in the processes and reality of the company and role. Particularly in the FMCG industry, the current trends have great actual impact and will pursue in redefining the industry in the following years. Thus, it appears essential to link both the evolution of product management and product manager's role in the FMCG industry to the changes and new challenges of this specific industry.

1.2 Research gap and objective of the study

For the purpose of this thesis, a research gap has been identified among the current literature available. The main issue is the insufficient amount of literature discussing product management and product managers in the recent years. Looking at older papers, the literature provides many articles attempting to clarify product management, product manager's role and the need for change either exogenous when the environment is subject to great change or endogenous when the organization structure, objectives or vision of the company evolve. However, these papers consider product management and product manager as broad concepts, leading to wider definitions and recommendations without considering the particularities of the different industries.

Furthermore, more recent studies tackling product management are primarily focusing on new product manager's types such as Software PM, Engineering PM, Digital PM, Growth PM, and others, evoking FMCG product management as historical roots for the discipline with poor analysis about the evolutions in addition to poor distinction among industries.

There are also few studies on current changes in the FMCG industry and their impact within the company. The different trends are analyzed mostly individually and there is no research on how these trends affect the company organization, the new scope of missions for its workers, the changes in processes and else.

To the writer's best knowledge, there is no recent studies focusing on the evolution of product management in the FMCG industry, and specifically about how the latest trends and changes in expectations within the industry affect product managers, impacting product management globally as well as their specific role, missions, and responsibilities.

This research aims at fulfilling four fundamental objectives regarding the evolution of product management in the FMCG industry:

1. Providing a clearer and contemporary definition of product management and deeper knowledge about the product manager's role, missions, and responsibilities in the FMCG industry.
2. Developing a deeper understanding of the main trends affecting the FMCG industry and assessing the importance of their impact on product management.

3. Reviewing the main changes in the role, missions and responsibilities of the product manager and exploring how they adapt in terms of methods, tools, and capabilities to these new trends.
4. Exploring the potential reasons for failure or causes of drawbacks in the adaptation to changes for product managers to help avoid or prevent product's induced failure.

Thus, this research can guide product managers and FMCG companies to elaborate more effective organizational structure, clarify the role, missions, responsibilities of the product managers to achieve improved performance measurement, more effective processes, lower job turnover and optimized recruiting criteria. This research will also provide product managers in the FMCG industry with more insights and clarity about the scope of their role, the boundaries of their responsibilities, and the capabilities they should look for leveraging, improving, or developing to favor a more effective development of successful products. As the research focus on the FMCG industry, it will provide a clear framework of the main trends impacting the industry, their importance and effect towards reshaping the role and position of product managers, as well as how product managers adapt or should adapt to these trends. Finally, this research aims at providing a better understanding of the concepts of product managers and product management, the role, tools, capabilities and skills required, as well as the areas of improvement regarding the adaptation to FMCG industry's changes, thus providing a structure to improve the education of product managers and reduce the gap between what universities and schools teach versus the concrete requirements of this position in this specific industry.

1.3 Research questions

Based on the objectives of the research and the literature review, the following main research question (RQ) arose: How do the latest trends and changes in expectations within the FMCG industry affect product managers? The following sub-research questions (SRQ) in Table 1 were formulated to furtherly answer the main research question while enhancing the understanding of the contemporary concepts of product management and product manager, and the evolutions induced by the current trends in the FMCG industry.

Table 1. Research questions guiding this study

Main RQ	**How do the latest trends and changes in expectations within the FMCG industry affect product managers?**
SRQ 1	What is the impact of FMCG trends on product management?
SRQ 2	How did the role and missions of the product manager evolve according to these trends?
SRQ 3	How do they adapt in terms of methods, tools and capabilities?
SRQ 4	What limits do they encounter hindering the adaptation to changes? How to overcome those limits?

1.4 Delimitations

This research needed to be delimited through scope and context. First, the study is restricted to the FMCG industry as the scope of the industry and the current challenges and evolutions have a specific impact on product management and will provide deeper insights on the role of the product manager within this specific type of products. However, this industry encompasses four categories of products: food & beverages, toiletries, household, and health products (Kenton, 2023), but this research is not restricted to a particular category. Actually, it is considering the FMCG industry as a whole.

Moreover, the study is limited to product managers that have a major focus on the marketing side due to the choice of focusing on the FMCG industry and its distinctive characteristics. Therefore, different types of product managers such as technical PM, Digital PM, Software PM, Data PM, Growth PM or Design PM (Product Family, 2023) are not specifically considered in this study.

Another key attribute to the research is the will to study evolutions among product manager in the FMCG industry and how do the latest trends and changes in expectations within the FMCG industry affect product managers? Therefore, the research is limited to product managers working for FMCG products with an experience of at least three years in the role and industry. There were no further restrictions regarding age or gender.

Finally, the definition and exploration of the trends affecting product management in the FMCG industry were limited to the five following ones: technological innovation and digital

transformation, increasing customer expectations, need for data-driven decision-making, sustainability and social responsibility, and relentless competition and private labels. This decision was carefully considered and deliberate, as these trends represent the evolutions that occurred in the last years which have the most impact on product management and product managers and will pursue shaping the industry in the years to come.

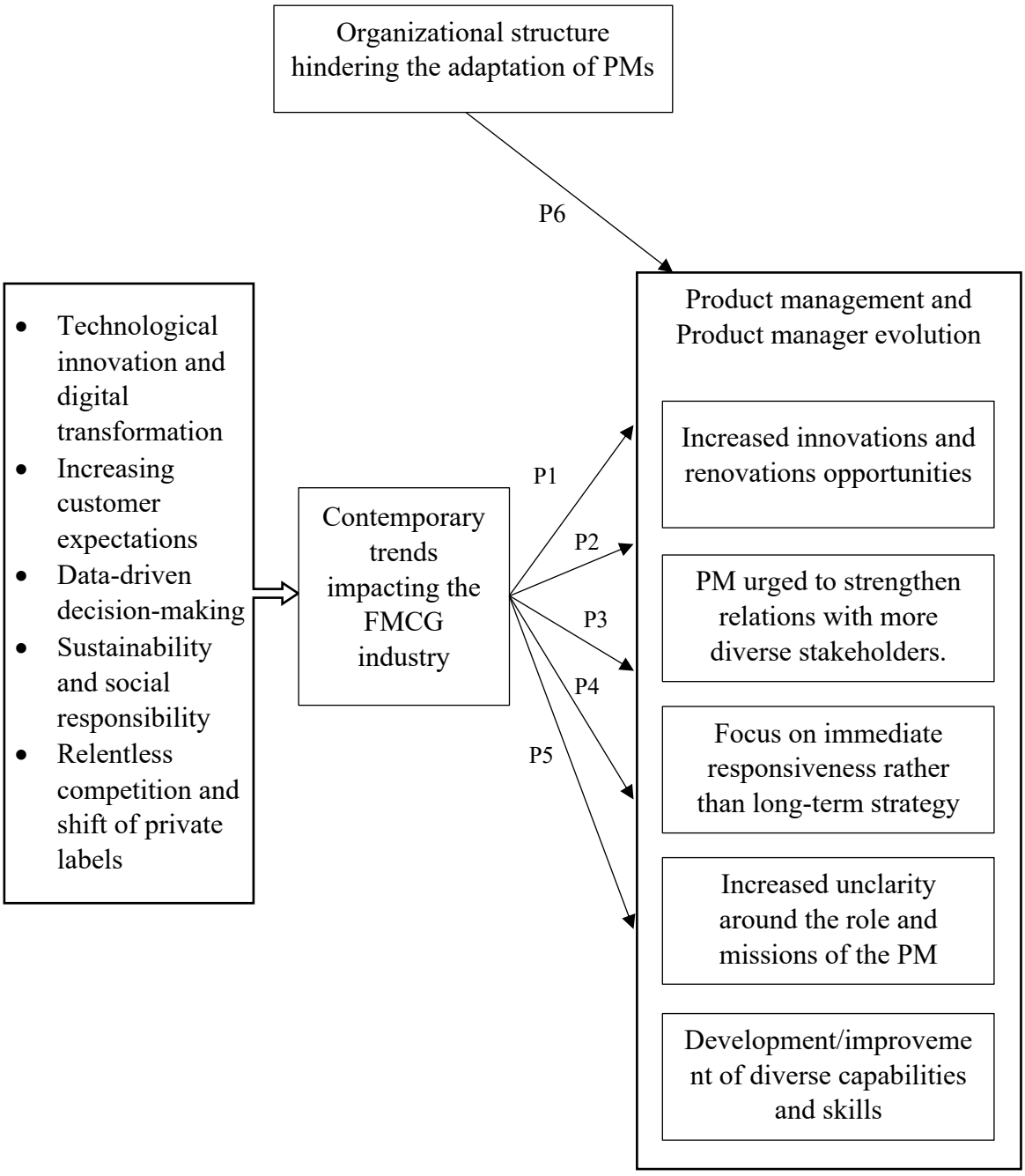
1.5 Theoretical Framework

To fulfill the objectives of this research, the following theoretical framework (Figure 1) was designed to present the key concepts of this study and how they are interconnected. The five main trends identified currently affecting the FMCG industry – technological innovation and digital transformation (Haas et al, 2022 ; Byers, 2023), increasing customer's expectations (Davidson et al, 2014), data-driven decision-making (McLeod, 2022 ; Haynes, 2022), sustainability and social responsibility (Am et al, 2022 ; Gutterman, 2023), as well as relentless competition and shift of private labels (Kelly et al, 2018 ; Gielens et al, 2021) – are represented. These trends, alongside with the organizational structure of the companies, are interlinked with product management and product manager evolution, thus highlighting the aim of the research.

Among product management and product manager evolution, five main evolutions are studied: the increased innovations and renovations opportunities, the PM urge to strengthen relations with more diverse stakeholders, the focus on immediate responsiveness rather than long-term strategy, the increased unclarity around the role and missions of the PM as well as the development or improvement of more diverse capabilities and skills.

Additionally, the six propositions of the thesis – further developed in the Summary and ground for propositions section of the literature review – provide a visual representation of the potential positive or negative effects of FMCG trends on product management. These propositions will be evaluated in the Findings and Discussions chapters which will discuss their support by the interviews in the light of the current literature.

Figure 1. Theoretical framework



1.6 Main definitions

This section presents the main definitions of the thesis, providing the reader a firm background for understanding the concept of product management, product manager and the specificities of the FMCG industry.

Product management: Mironov (2010) summarizes his interpretation of product management concept as the link between three main areas represented by Development, Marketing/Sales and Market/Customers, and Executives. Placing product management as a central role interconnected with many departments within the company while linked to the external environment represented by the market and customers, Mironov (2010) highlight the key activities of product management as cross-functional management, need for wide coordination and various missions related to the product.

Product manager: There is no universal definition, and concept of product manager remains fuzzy, with remaining ambiguity regarding the role and responsibilities of the product manager which vary greatly depending on the product, firm and industry studied (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1995). Ebert's definition (2007) focuses on the missions of the product manager, who is responsible for each stage of product management from the development of the strategy to the operational implementation, product launch, after sales service, and product retirement. Haines (2014) provides a broader concept of the product manager's role within the business, which he defines as a proactive "mini-CEO" responsible for managing a product or product line, leading teams from different departments, and optimizing the product's competitiveness and profits while committing to corporate or business unit strategies.

FMCG product: Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) refers to nondurable products – a short shelf life due either to high demand or perishability – that sell quickly, in large quantities, at relatively low cost leading to a high turnover on shelf, low profit margins and high-volume sales (Kenton, 2023).

FMCG industry: The FMCG industry can be segmented in four categories: food & beverages, toiletries, household and health products (Kenton, 2023). This industry presents the following three main characteristics: the consumer's decision process is heavily influenced by advertising and promotion (Sen, 2021), the products demand a much faster response to consumer trends and needs (Loughlin et al, 2020) and the industry is large and competitive with some of the world's largest companies such as Coca Cola and Procter & Gamble (Kenton, 2023).

1.7 Research Methodology

This thesis is organized in two parts – the theoretical ground and the empirical findings – aiming at fulfilling the research's objectives.

The theoretical part consists of a literature review which aims at examining previous articles discussing the concept of product management, the product manager's role, missions and responsibilities and their historical evolution, as well as the current challenges impacting the FMCG industry. This literature review provides a consistent theoretical background which delineates the key concepts guiding the research. It is based on secondary data, including research papers, academic journals, books, trustworthy internet websites as well as study reports. However, there is insufficient academic literature about product management in the specific field of FMCG, and none about how product managers adapt to the environment changes and new trends outside of global and theoretical recommendations.

The empirical part was carried out as a qualitative research conducted by interviewing six French product managers working in the FMCG industry. The interviews were conducted in July 2023 and the conversations were steered by semi-structured interview questions, which can be found at the end of the paper (Appendix 1). The interview questionnaire was constructed with the aim of testing the elaborated propositions and thus to answer the research question and sub-research questions of the research.

1.8 Structure of the study

This study includes the following five chapters: Introduction, Literature review, Research Design and Methodology, Findings, Discussions and Conclusions.

The introduction chapter lays the foundations of the study. It outlines the background of the study and present a primary review of the current literature to identify a research gap and establish the objectives of the study. The consequent research questions of this study lay the ground for introducing the theoretical framework of the research. Finally, the research methodology and structure of the study are outlined.

The literature review chapter is divided in four parts: Product Management in the FMCG industry, a continuously evolving role, the current and future challenges impacting the

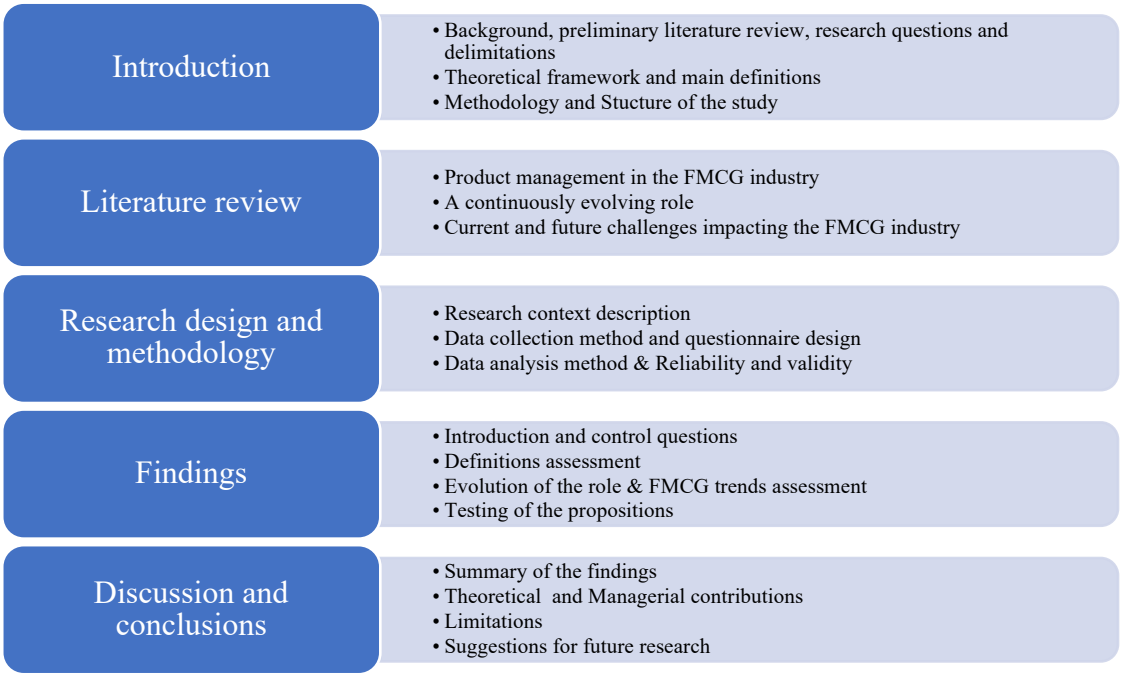
FMCG industry and Summary and ground for propositions. This chapter is aimed at providing a clearer understanding of product manager's role, missions and responsibilities in the FMCG industry, supplemented by a historical analysis of the concepts and their evolution, to finally provide a deeper understanding of the current challenges shaping the FMCG industry and impacting product managers environment. Finally, the key insights of the literature review are summed up to support the elaboration of the research propositions, which will lay the ground for the research in the following chapters and aim at formulating answers to the research questions.

The research design chapter presents the study's research context, and provides a description of the data collection method, which includes both secondary data – consisting of the literature review of the thesis – and primary data – consisting of qualitative interview conducted by the writer in the context of this thesis. The data analysis method used for this research – including collecting, coding, summarizing and organizing the set of data (Malhotra et al., 2006) – is also presented in this section, which ends by assessing the reliability and validity of the results obtained.

The findings chapter describes the data interpretation and primary analysis to provide material for the following discussion and conclusions chapter. It gathers the findings regarding each part of the questionnaire, from interviewee profiles control to the assessment of the concepts definitions, the evolution of the role and the trends impacting the FMCG industry, as well as the evaluation of the propositions developed in light of the interviewees thoughts and experience.

The discussion and conclusions chapter outlines the theoretical contributions of the research and the managerial implications providing answers to the sub-research and research questions, followed by an assessment of the study limitations and suggestions for future research ideas. The structure of the study is visually represented below in Figure 2 highlighting the main sections of the thesis and the main topics discussed in each of these sections.

Figure 2. Structure of the study



2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims at deepening the readers' understanding of the evolutions and future challenges for product manager in the Fast-Moving-Consumer-Goods (FMCG) industry through defining the concept of product management in the FMCG industry, analyzing the evolutions of the concepts since its first theorization, and delineating the main trends of the FMCG industry that already impact, and will continue to impact in the future, the role of product managers in FMCG companies.

2.1 Product management in the FMCG industry

Product management is a broad and ambiguous notion that varies greatly depending on the industry, market and products under consideration. It is important to first clarify the definition and global scope of the product manager before analyzing the product manager's missions and responsibilities in the specific case of the FMCG industry and how the organizational structure and role definition of the company impact the product manager missions and responsibilities.

2.1.1 Product manager's definition

The product manager assumes a central role in the organization since he is responsible for successfully introducing new products and effectively managing the life cycle of existing products; a role therefore directly impacting the growth and profitability of the firm (Tyagi and Sawhney, 2010). Despite its importance, however, the definition of the product manager remains a fuzzy concept, with remaining ambiguity regarding the role and responsibilities of the product manager which vary greatly depending on the product, firm and industry studied (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1995). To demonstrate the lack of common definitions of the product manager across literature, it is worth mentioning authors' attempts in the recent years to define product manager's function, summarized in the following Table 2.

Table 2. The definitions of Product Manager in the literature

Author(s)	Main idea
Brown & Eisenhardt (1995)	The product manager's success depends on leadership, teamwork, and communication.
Cagan (2017)	The product manager is responsible for structuring and managing an engaging and successful product organization, as well as developing and delivering products that customers will love and will grant profits.
Ebert (2007)	The product manager is responsible for each stage of product management from the development of the strategy to the operational implementation, product launch, after sales service, and product retirement.
Geracie (2010)	The product manager oversees all departments and operations linked to a product or product line, with the goal of maximizing the product's revenues by managing the operations across various departments associated to the product.
Gorchels (2006)	The product manager is responsible for one or more products from conception to discontinuation with the aim of maximizing business value. Because of the increased consumer sophistication, it is a central and interconnected role with an increased relation with marketing and sales.
Haines (2014)	The product manager is a proactive "mini-CEO" responsible for managing a product or product line, leading teams from different departments, and optimizing the product's competitiveness and profits while committing to corporate or business unit strategies.
McDowell and Bavaro (2013)	Product management is aiming at delivering great products. The product manager coordinates various teams but has control only on the product and not on collaborators. He oversees the product's strategy and lifecycle.
Perri (2018)	The product manager collaborates with stakeholders – both internal with other company's departments and external such as customers – to ideate and develop a product fulfilling the company and the customer's requirements.
Steinhardt (2017)	The product manager role is based on general management techniques that focus on product planning and product marketing activities, such as decision-making, employee motivation and process implementation.

Three key elements emerge from these definitions of the product manager. First, cross-functional management is an essential requirement for collaborating with the stakeholders – both internal and external to the organization – involved in the product development and management process. Second, the product manager is responsible for the product or line of products' success according to the firm's criteria – by coordinating and planning the development, launch, life cycle and performances phases – despite their limited decision-making abilities. Finally, the product manager has a broad role encompassing various missions and responsibilities while overseeing numerous departments within the organization.

Mironov (2010) summarizes his interpretation of product manager's role with a diagram that highlights three key relationships for a product manager: Development, Marketing & Sales and Market & Customers, and Executives. The previously mentioned key attributes of the product manager – cross-functional management, need for wide coordination and various missions and responsibilities – are regrouped in this diagram (See Figure 3) as an interconnected system revolving around the product manager.

Figure 3. The central role of the product manager (Mirovov, 2010)

Thus, this diagram assesses a clearer comprehensive definition of the role of product managers, encompassing pluridisciplinarity, coordination and cross-functional management, and enables the application of this framework to any product, company, or industry.

2.1.2 Main missions and responsibilities in the FMCG industry

Even though the preceding section's definition of the product manager remains broad and standardized, the actual nature of the product manager role and responsibilities varies widely depending on the industry studied. The aim of this section is to clarify the product managers' main missions and capabilities in the specific category of the FMCG industry.

Firstly, it is crucial to defining the Fast-Moving-Consumer-Goods (FMCG) industry to have a complete understanding of the product manager's main missions and capabilities in this industry. FMCG refers to nondurable products – a short shelf life due either to high demand or perishability – that sell quickly, in large quantities, at relatively low cost resulting in a high turnover on shelf, low profit margins and high-volume sales (Kenton, 2023). The FMCG market is segmented into four categories: food & beverages, toiletries, household and health products (Kenton, 2023). The main missions and capabilities of the product managers in the specific industry of FMCG are defined by the particularities of this industry. Indeed, the consumer's decision-making process is heavily influenced by advertising and promotion (Sen, 2021), the products demand a much faster response to consumer trends and needs (Loughlin et al, 2020) and the industry is large and competitive with some of the world's largest companies such as Coca Cola and Procter & Gamble (Kenton, 2023). As a result, the product manager has critical missions and responsibilities that directly affect the company's competitive advantages such as product profitability, consumer loyalty, or customer reach through distribution.

Additionally, it is essential to provide a clearer and more concrete definition of the missions and responsibilities of the product manager. With this intent, Haines (2014) defined the roadmap of the product manager's main areas of work based on the product management life cycle model, represented in Figure 4. This roadmap aims at defining product management as the process of bringing products from idea conception to final sale while providing a clear vision of how to organize product management in companies. The roadmap is divided in four main areas of work defined as Discovery and Innovation, New Product Planning, New Product Introduction and Post-Launch Product Management (Haines, 2014).

Figure 4. The Product Management Life Cycle Model and Four Main Areas of Work (Haines, 2014)

The first phase, Discovery and Innovation, refers to conducting research in order to collect data and derive insights on market, customer needs and behaviors, industry trends, or competitors. Market insights will enable the formulation of efficient strategies based on actual insights and accurate past and current product performances (Haines, 2014).

The second phase, New Product Planning, refers to the definition of the roadmap guiding decision-making, which is dependent on cross-functional collaboration to reach optimal decisions and is crucial for the following stages to be successful (Haines, 2014). It is divided into three stages, each followed by a decision-making step: the concept phase, where new ideas are evaluated based on revenue potential, competitive advantage potential and fit with the overall portfolio; the feasibility phase, including a more in-depth review of the project's business, market, technical, human resources and economic perspectives; and the product definition phase, which considers the company's capabilities to develop and launch the product through in-depth market research and assessment of the company's technical, resource and operational capabilities to develop a feasible and effective marketing mix (Product, Price, Place and Promotion) (Haines, 2014). During this Product Planning phase, the product manager must develop a clear product roadmap, set the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to evaluate progress, while focusing on both customers and stakeholders' interests, prioritization, and wide-end communication (Okada, 2022).

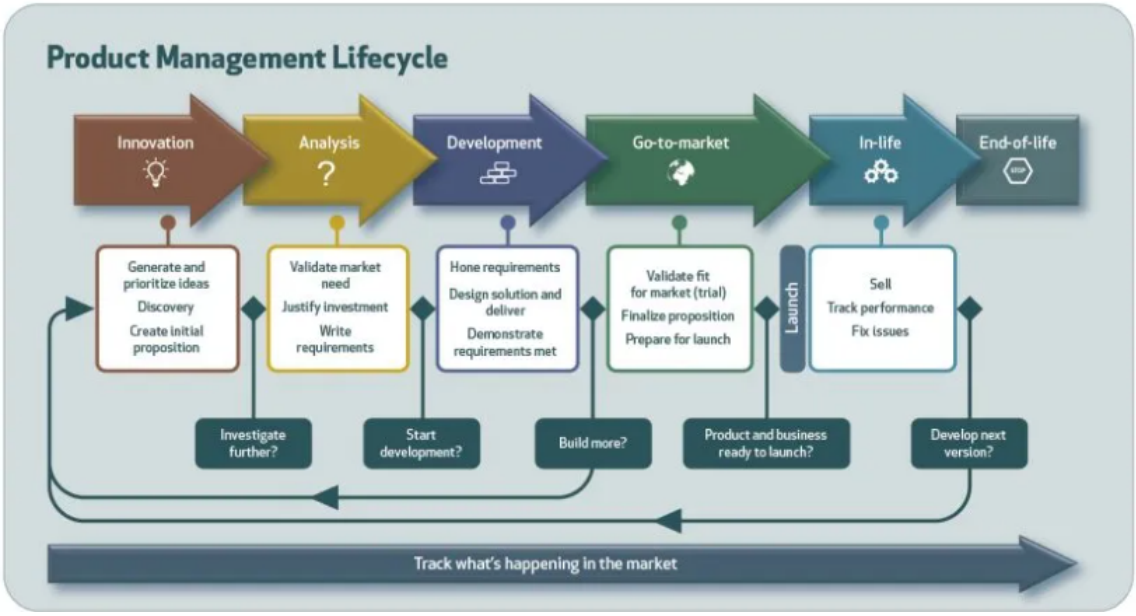
The third phase, New Product Introduction, refers to executing the plans previously elaborated to both prepare the product launch in the market and prepare the market to welcome the product through a development phase, to build the product alongside supporting

materials and documentation, and a launch phase, where the promotional activities to bring the product to the market are implemented (Haines, 2014).

The fourth and last phase, Post-Launch Management, refers to monitoring and optimizing the product performances through potential adjustments of the marketing mix, collaboration with internal department such as customer service or finance, and intense information sharing about product performances and marketplace's activities (Haines, 2014).

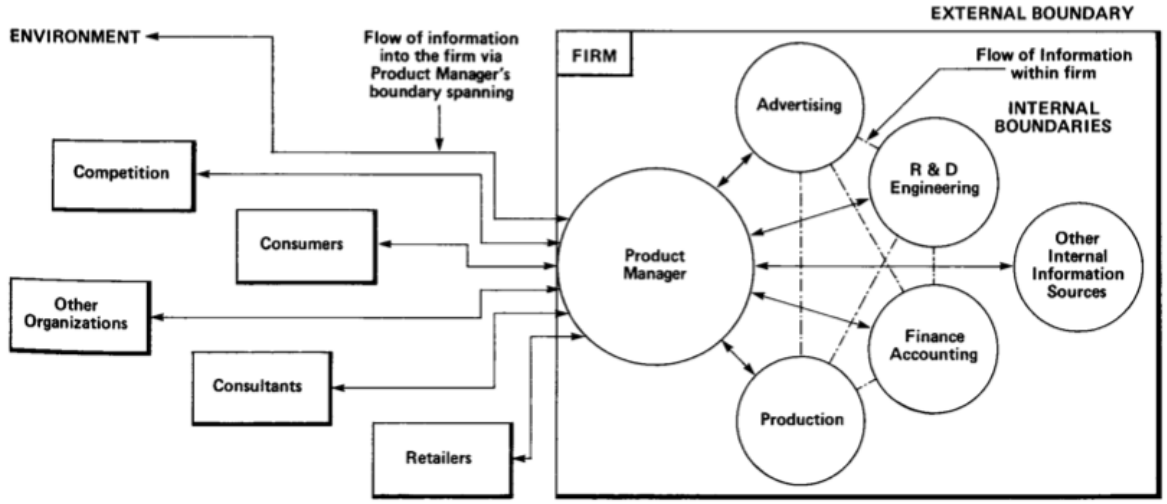
However, Haine's product management roadmap (2014) neglects two minor yet important components of the product manager role: the end-of-life product management and the non-linear but iterative aspect of the product management process. These two aspects are more visible in the product manager roadmap in Figure 5 (Product Focus, 2023). Indeed, product end-of-life management is essential. It is not possible to abruptly discontinue a product without maintaining customer support after the stop in production as the product is still on the market, and without implementing a smooth customer transition path to guide customers towards an alternative product and avoid excessive frustration for loyal customers (Anon and González De Villaumbrosia, 2017). Moreover, this roadmap emphasize the iterative component of product management, as each decision-making phase in the process may lead to the removal, addition or further improvement of elements, leading to a necessary step back to earlier phases of the process (Product Focus, 2023).

Figure 5. Product Management Lifecycle (Product Focus, 2023)



Furthermore, Haine's product management roadmap fails to depict the diverse stakeholders involved in the processes and a visual representation of the necessary cross-functional management. Lysonski (1985) developed a figure (Figure 6) depicting the numerous stakeholders, both internal and external to the firm, influencing the product manager.

Figure 6. Product managers' internal and external stakeholders (Lysonski, 1985)



This figure illustrates the interactions between the product manager and his environment, highlighting the need for the product manager to work closely with both external stakeholders, such as consumers, competitors, retailers and the global market in which the firm is operates, and internal stakeholders represented by the various firm departments taking part in the product development process (Lysonski, 1985). The product manager has a central role in the company, thus using cross-functional management to satisfy the interests of a wide range of entities, as well as working closely with them.

Despite the lack of literature providing a global framework of the specificities of the product manager's role and responsibilities in the FMCG industry, we can highlight three key components of the role: product managers are responsible for a wide variety of missions throughout the product development process, and their missions include iterative processes as well as a cross-functional collaboration with various stakeholders. In the specific industry of FMCG, the product manager's missions are impacted by the importance of advertising and promotion, the need for fast implementation processes to adapt to customers' quickly changing needs, to retailers' implementation framework and to a highly competitive market.

2.1.3 Organization structure and role definition impact

Despite the common ground in the literature about product management definition, the role, missions, and responsibilities of the product manager are heavily dependent on both the company's organizational structure and how the company defines the position of the product manager. These two factors have a significant impact, positively or negatively, on product managers' effectiveness.

Regarding the organizational structure of the company, the product manager's role in strongly dependent on the budget definition and resource allocation systems of the company, which directly impact the range of possibilities of product management operations (Loughlin et al., 2020). Furthermore, many FMCG companies favor the traditional siloed organizational system, which may hinder the product manager's role by leading to misaligned success metrics among the different departments of the company and poor cross-department collaboration (Loughlin et al, 2020). To build a successful and efficient product management, FMCG companies must favor coordination mechanisms, aligned objectives and shared communication among their internal departments (Tyagi and Sawhney, 2010). Thus, cross-functional coordination is a key element of the product manager's role, but it is highly dependent on the organizational system developed by the company.

Several aspects of the role definition within the company impact the effectiveness of product managers. Product managers must have clear performance criteria: product management's goals must be aligned with business objectives and consumer needs rather than focusing on cost and margins, which can have negative impacts on products by altering the vision and strategy definition (Tyagi and Sawhney, 2010; Loughlin et al., 2020). Clear and effective performance metrics for product managers will grant benefits such as preventing product managers from focusing on tactical activities rather than the crucial missions of strategical and planning activities (Tyagi and Sawhney, 2010). Furthermore, clear and effective performance metrics will favor a level of decision-making conferred to product managers in line with their responsibilities (Lysonski et al 1995; McDaniel, 1980).

Moreover, the company's ability to favor the product manager's contact with the market and consumers is a key determinant to product management success. FMCG companies tend to rely mostly on research and development to develop or improve products, whereas the focus should be on customer research and on including customers as early in the product

development process as feasible (Loughlin et al, 2020). The lack of contact of product managers with the market, especially with the customers and distribution channels, can lead to poor product management (Hise & Kelly, 1978). Consequently, the company's level of inclusion of external environment and stakeholders in its process impacts the efficiency of product management.

Additionally, the definition of product manager's processes within the firm is highly strategical: they must avoid linear processes and too many breakdowns causing excessive bureaucracy and creating blind spots, and they must involve the internal and external stakeholders early in the various processes to be fully efficient and time effective (Tyagi and Sawhney, 2010; Loughlin et al, 2020).

Finally, the role of the product manager must be conceived as always evolving, depending on the circumstantial requirements for the products. When major changes occur in the environment, the product manager need increased decision-making abilities and quicker validation procedures (Lysonski et al 1995). Particularly in the FMCG industry, product managers must be granted the decision-making abilities in line with their changing objectives and responsibilities.

Thus, companies must adjust their organizational system to be more integrative of the external environment and stakeholders, while favoring multi-level cross department collaboration to build a more effective product management system. The role of the product manager must be clearly defined, through scope and performance evaluation criteria, while acknowledging the possibility of changes in responsibilities, decision-making and processes depending on external events and circumstantial requirements.

2.2 A continuously evolving role

The definition of product management and product manager's position being fuzzy concepts regrouping various dimensions, it is important to clarify and provide depth to these concepts by looking at the origin and evolutions of the product manager role from the Brand Man (McElroy, 1931) to the development of Lean Product Management (Womack & Jones, 1996).

2.2.1 The Brand man of the 1930's

Product management was first theorized by Neil McElroy, a young economist working for Procter and Gamble. He wrote a memo in 1931 following his aim of selling more soap. He proposed the idea of a "Brand Man" and outlined a new organizational and managerial approach to the marketing and advertising functions within the company. With this memo, he set the foundations of modern product management.

He proposed the idea of assigning a dedicated individual – the "Brand Man" – to each brand or product within P&G's portfolio, who would be responsible for overseeing all the aspects of the brand, including product development, marketing, advertising, and sales (McElroy, 1931). Thus, the "Brand Man was defined as a central figure in the company strategy and organization, who could bring together the various functions and activities related to a brand, ensuring that they worked in harmony to achieve common objectives. The role of the Brand Man involved four main dimensions detailed in the following Table 3.

Table 3. The main role of the "Brand Man" according to McElroy (1931)

Key role	Concept
Full Responsibility	The "Brand Man" is responsibility for the brand's success, including financial performance and market share. He makes decisions related to product features, pricing, distribution, and marketing strategies.
Cross-Functional Coordination	The "Brand Man" is a connecting point between various internal departments, including research and development, manufacturing, sales, and advertising. He coordinates activities, facilitates collaboration, and ensures everyone has common goals.
Long-Term Planning	The "Brand Man" design and implement long-term plans for the brand, such as setting objectives, defining strategies, and developing marketing and advertising campaigns. He has a global and multi-dimensional vision of the brand's lifecycle and long-term growth.
Market and consumer understanding	The "Brand Man" shows a deep understanding of the target market and consumers. He studies the market and the consumer to develop accurate products, branding, and marketing strategies.

Thus, the concept of the "Brand Man" (McElroy, 1931) theorized the foundations for modern product management, by gathering the missions related to product life-cycle management – from ideation to performance evaluation – under the responsibility of one dedicated team in the company.

2.2.2 Product manager as a central role in the company in the 1960's

In the 1960's, product manager's roles have flourished, particularly in the FMCG industry. This expansion of the role is the consequence of different factors which combined altogether and contributed to fostering the need of product managers in consumer goods companies.

Firstly, the 1950's and 1960's were marked by significant advancements in technology, improving productivity and efficiency, and the post-war baby boom generated a dynamic demographic trend leading to a surge in consumer demand. Furthermore, the expanding middle class and increasing demand for consumer goods enabled companies to produce goods in larger quantities and benefit from economies of scale, leading to the practice of more affordable prices. Additionally, the advancements in distribution and retail infrastructures with the development of shopping centers, supermarkets, and chain stores granted more conveniency to consumers. This extremely favorable market environment enabled the emergence of major consumer goods companies, who have been able to significantly increase their sales and develop larger portfolios. (Wood & Tandon, 1994)

However, following these external changes, the internal organization of companies' experience and a new dimension of the product manager emerged.

> "From its inception, product management represented an organizational response to mass marketing opportunities. It was a new approach to harmonizing the many business facets required to manage successfully companies with multiple products and brands aimed at large homogeneous markets." (Wood & Tandon, 1994, pp.20).

Therefore, product managers flourished in the internal organization of consumer goods companies. Individuals or teams of product managers were responsible for defining the product strategy and product marketing, coordinating and supervising the roadmaps and operating plans for those products, and assessing the performances and adaptations required

– therefore coordinating tasks among different departments such as finance, accounting, production, distribution and marketing (Wood & Tandon, 1994). Product managers were therefore at the center of all the companies' departments, taking the main role and responsibilities in the company.

According to McDaniel and Gray (1980), product managers were growing in importance in several of the key domains of the company, and they were even expected to gain more and more responsibilities in the following years in many of the key areas of pricing, packaging, distribution, product planning, advertising, etc. Product management was therefore on a very bright path, pursuing an exponential growth particularly in the consumer goods companies' internal organizations.

2.2.3 The Golden Age of product management in the 1970's

Since more and more consumer goods companies are implementing product management in their internal organization, the choice of hiring product managers to be responsible for the products' strategies and the coordination of all the department involved in the product development process is becoming the norm. According to Wood and Tandon (1994), product managers are thus acquiring a significant influence within their organizations, and this influence is predicted to increase remarkably in the next years. Indeed, product managers are gaining in importance as they acquired a key role in the organization, coordinating the operations of many of the company's departments, and they are in charge of many key decisions concerning the products such as advertising, promotion, finance, production etc. Furthermore, the multiplication of success stories from consumer goods companies who included product management in their processes reinforced the rush towards hiring product managers. There are several consumer goods companies who achieved exceptional results thanks to product management, such as Procter and Gamble, Hewlett-Packard, Heinz or PepsiCo. (Wood and Tandon, 1994)

As an example, Hewlett-Packard developed a product management policy based on a division structure, where several sub-groups in the organization were responsible for their own group of products. This effective use of product management led Hewlett-Packard to achieve an exceptional sustained growth of 20% each year for 50 years, between 1943 and 1993 (Erikson, 2015).

The tremendous success of giant consumer goods companies reinforced the consideration for product management, which achieved a very prosperous era.

> "As the system prospered, product management became an increasingly accepted and largely unquestioned way of doing business." (Wood & Tandon, 1994)

The success of the product management system in the consumer goods industry brought outstanding performances leading to its development in other industries outside of consumer goods too.

2.2.4 Environment changes questioning product manager's role in the 1980's

A decade later, the product management system is being questioned concerning both the role of the product manager which encounters certain limits, and the system of product management itself regarding the important and quick changes in the global environment.

The critics towards the product manager's role focus on different aspects of the role including the skills, the role boundaries and company policy. These challenges are regrouped in the following Table 4 and will be detailed in the following paragraphs.

Table 4. The challenges faced by product managers.

CHALLENGES FACED BY PRODUCT MANAGERS	
SKILLS	- Lack of marketing experience (Buell, 1975) - Lack of creativity regarding advertising (Buell, 1975)
ROLE BOUNDARIES	- Lack of authority for decision-making (Buell, 1975; Kelly & Hise, 1980; Lysonski et al., 1995) - Use of external interfaces with poor control over (Kelly & Hise, 1980) - Burden of minor tasks (Kelly & Hise, 1980) - Responsibility for too many products (Kelly & Hise, 1980)
COMPANY POLICY	- Performance evaluation and objectives of PM (Buell, 1975) - Excessive job turnover (Buell, 1975; Kelly & Hise, 1980) - Lack of feedbacks from other departments and superiors (Kelly & Hise, 1980) - Blurry job descriptions ((Kelly & Hise, 1980)

The product manager's skills are being questioned in the specific domains of marketing experience and advertising creativity skills. Indeed, the rise in demand for product managers led consumer goods companies hired young individuals after a product manager graduation, owning great skills in management and coordination but lacking marketing knowledge and experience, hindering the product management efficiency (Buell, 1975). Furthermore, product managers have insufficient creativity, knowledge and experience about advertising to be responsible for advertising decisions, leading to poor executions and inefficient or longer creation processes. Product managers are thus recommended to limit their implication in advertising to information sharing, stakeholders coordination and supervision of the advancement, but qualified advertising agencies should be responsible for advertising decisions concerning creativity. (Buell, 1975).

Product managers are also facing challenges regarding the definition of their role in the company. The predominant issue is the lack of authority regarding decision-making: while product managers acquire more responsibilities in planning and managing and a central role in the company organization, they are facing less and less decision-making opportunities, creating a gap between the performance objectives set and their decision-making abilities to reach these objectives (Buell, 1975, Kelly & Hise, 1980, Lysonski et al., 1995). Product managers' role also include retrieving and analyzing both internal and external interfaces to have a global knowledge of the product and its global environment. However, the key interfaces to product managers are primarily external interfaces over which they have poor control (Kelly & Hise, 1980). With the proliferation of interfaces and information sources, product managers may become lost in this rising flow of phenomena to consider and deal with. Product managers are also experiencing a new burden: minor tasks such as endless correspondences or delivery expeditions leading them to spend less time on the key missions that influence the success of their products (Kelly & Hise, 1980). Finally, despite the creation of product management organization was supposed to favor specific attention to each of the products by dedicating specific individuals to their management, product managers are increasingly ending up managing too many products, leading to a poorer management hindering product management success and efficiency (Kelly & Hise, 1980).

Product managers also face challenges regarding the company policies, who are hindering their potential successful management of the products they are responsible for. Indeed, companies often set product managers' performance metrics based on the sales volume,

share of market, or profit generated by the products they are responsible for, whereas they have poor control over the respect of their plans by the other departments of the company, such as the finance department (Buell, 1975). Also, the excessive job turnover in consumer goods companies, usually of two years, hinders product manager's knowledge of the products and market as well as long-term planning (Buell, 1975, Kelly & Hise, 1980). Product managers also lack feedbacks from their superiors and the other departments they are working with regarding their plans and decisions' performances (Kelly & Hise, 1980). Finally, product managers are challenged by the lack of detailed job descriptions concerning the extent and limits of their role in the company's structure and decision-making processes (Kelly & Hise, 1980).

Concerning the questioning of product management itself, Wood and Tandom (1994) defined three main external phenomena in the global environment which are leading to question the product management definition and legitimacy. The first external challenge faced by product management is the growth of retail bargaining power, due to technological improvements such as Universal Product Code or retail scanner data, allowing retailers to retrieve more accurate data on product performances and evaluate better the trends in consumers' habits (Wood & Tandon, 1994).

> "The new technologies, more and more, now allow retailers to confirm what consumers want, and where and when they want it." (Wood & Tandon, 1994)

Consequently, the retailers' bargaining power have increased concerning the decisions about the choice of the product displayed and the shelf space allocation, therefore reducing the decision-making ability and bargaining power of product managers. However, product managers' role includes broader vision and knowledge of the market change's dynamics, combining information from both internal and external sources and from various sources, not limited only to retailers' purchase and stock data. (Wood & Tandon, 1994)

The second external challenge faced by product managers is the weakening impact of traditional product management techniques as retailers are all selling the same biggest brands and benefit from the same advantages when these brands invest in mass advertisings or implement promotion or discounts operations (Wood & Tandon, 1994). Thus, the retailer power is growing, not only impacting the selection and place of product on shelf, but also the marketing strategies of product managers.

The third external challenge faced by product managers is the increasing bargaining power of customers, who are becoming more educated and demanding. Due to ingredient disclosure laws and the disclosure of the pricing by unit, customers are more educated, can access more information and are able to better compare the different offers on the market, leading them to be more demanding. Customers are also increasingly sophisticated; it is the end of the mass market and product managers' offers must be differentiated to satisfy the customers' need for individualization. (Wood & Tandon, 1994).

To sum up, product manager's role is increasingly challenged, both internally, as individuals and members of a company organization, and externally, due to changes in the global environment and bargaining power redistribution. Product manager's role will need some rethinking and rebuilding, to clarify the role and boundaries inside the company, as well as developing a more customer and retail-centered product management.

2.2.5 A customer-centric approach in the 1990's

Following the questioning and challenges regarding the role of the product manager and product management itself, some changes in the discipline had to occur to fit the new requirements and a more customer-centric approach of product management emerged.

Where consumer goods companies were mostly sales-driven companies before, they began to adopt market-driven approaches. This change – due to technological improvements making production easier thus multiplying the choice possibilities for consumers and leading to increased competition – urged companies to adapt their products to fit customers. The new product management "is oriented toward creating rather than controlling a market; it is based on developmental education, incremental improvement, and ongoing process rather than on simple market-share tactics, raw sales, and one-time events." (McKenna, 1991). Thus, instead of looking for attracting the customer to the product and developing ads to make the customer's mind fit the product, product managers are now looking for knowing the market, understand customers' needs and adapt their products accordingly.

The processes of product management evolved to include these new dimensions by abandoning the traditional process of ideation, market research, product development, testing and implementation which proved itself not efficient anymore. Product management

is leading towards a new process based on knowledge (of technology, competition, market environment and company's capabilities) and experience (consumer and retailers' feedbacks analysis, inclusion of stakeholders in the processes). (McKenna, 1991)

According to Pitta et al (1996), product managers must consider the three following recommendations to fully develop a customer-centric approach to product management and thus tackle the important changes of the environment and role:

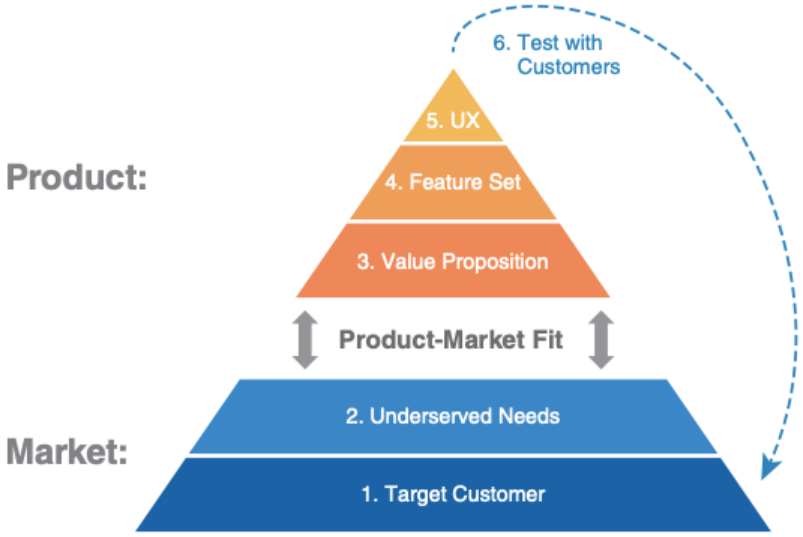
- Product managers must work closely with customers at each step, from idea generation to product development, to ensure the delivery of successful products.
- Bringing various internal and external stakeholders, such as customers, suppliers, retailers, as well as employees from other divisions will bring fresh perspectives and various points of view, reducing the risk of failure and helping identify potential issues earlier.
- The customer-centric approach requires resources for restructuring the company structure and processes to manage better the information extracted from stakeholders and take advantage of it efficiently, while improving information sharing procedures.

Following the external and internal changes of product management, the product manager's role has evolved towards including various stakeholders in the processes, allowing the development of product in line with the new customer's expectations and the need for satisfying retailers' needs.

2.2.6 Lean product management in the 2000's

In the 2000's, a new trend emerged with the development of the Lean Product Management concept, a new framework spreading to product managers mainly in the software industry but also in the consumer goods companies. The concept of "Lean" product management has been first developed in the 1990's with the publication of "Lean Thinking" where Womack & Jones (1996) developed a framework based on the success of Toyota's process in the 1940's and 1950's. The product development process created by Toyota helped the company increase the value delivered to customers while minimizing waste and maximizing the use of resources. The Lean Product Management framework is based on 5 key principles depicted in the Figure 7 below.

Figure 7. The Lean Product Process from "The Lean Product Playbook" (Olsen, 2011)



The core ambition of Lean product management is the continuous improvement of the product development cycle through iterative experimentation, customer feedback, and a fundamental will to create value for customers (Olsen, 2011).

The Lean product management put the creation of value for customers at the beginning of the process with the first two stages designed to know the targeted customer targeted, unserved needs and how he perceives value. Instead of focusing on increasing sales for the company, the product manager aims at filling the needs of customers with a more customer-focused approach. Thus, instead of focusing on market research and target studies before creating the process, the product manager focusses on experimentation and data extracted from tests with consumer all along the product development process to continuously improve the value added for the consumer. (Olsen, 2011)

The lean management process also fosters cross-organizational collaboration concerning product strategy and development decisions, taking insights both internal from other company's departments, and external with customers, retailers and others. The aim of the product manager is to use collaborative work to get the most accurate insight and thus achieve a product which perfectly fit the market need and demand. (Olsen, 2011)

Finally, the lean process relies on iterative testing to continuously improve the proposition. After launching the first version of the product, the aim is to pursue the improvements of the product by looping the three last stages to decide on which features to pursue, create them, and test them with the customers. (Olsen, 2011)

Thus, lean product management allows product managers to focus more effectively on what customers want and on delivering a product with high added value for customers. This process also reduces wastes with time-effectiveness management: more time is dedicated to the ideation rather than on the manufacturing process. Finally, this process allows product managers to quickly iterate the process until perfection is reached for customers.

2.3 Current and future challenges impacting the FMCG industry

The Fast-Moving-Consumer-Good industry is currently facing strong changes due to economic, social and technological shifts. In the recent years, the changes tend to accelerate, leading FMCG companies to quickly reshape their products, processes and push further their value offerings. The five main changes occurring in the FMCG industry are the accelerated technological development and digital transformation, the increasing customer expectations, the change towards data-driven decision-making, the raising awareness and requests for sustainability and corporate responsibility, and the rising competition and development of private labels. These changes impacting FMCG companies reshape the role of product managers and how they manage products in this evolving industry.

2.3.1 Accelerated technological development and digital transformation

Nowadays, technological development occurs in an increasingly quicker way, impacting directly FMCG companies which must tackle this great change more and more rapidly. Indeed, an example of the accelerated technological change is the telephone, a new technology introduced in 1878 that has changed the way we communicate forever. While 80 have been necessary to the telephone to reach 100 million users, only 20 years were required by the mobile phone, introduced a century later, to reach the same number of users. It took only five years to Facebook, launched in 2004, then two years for Instagram, introduced in 2010, and nine months for Fortnite launched in 2017. (Blick, 2018).

These increasingly rapid technological changes reshape all industries, including FMCG. Such rapid technological changes must be anticipated and requires rapid reaction, as new entrants can highly challenge the current market by taking advantage of these technological changes and develop strong competitive advantages a short period of time. (Schrock, 2019)

Yet, the main technological challenge faced by FMCG companies is the growing need for digital transformation, highly impacting product development. Salesforce (2023) defined this concept as followed:

> "Digital transformation is the process of using digital technologies to create new — or modify existing — business processes, culture, and customer experiences to meet changing business and market requirements. This reimagining of business in the digital age is digital transformation." (Salesforce, 2023).

In the digital Age, FMCG companies must adapt to digital transformation and implement changes across all functions of the company, including product management. Indeed, FMCG companies developing digitally enabled innovation can introduce new products to the market 50 percent faster, while dividing the costs induced by three and multiplying by two the return on investment (Haas et al, 2022). Thus, FMCG companies taking advantage of digital transformation to innovate ahead of competitors capture significant added market value.

Digital transformation has indeed led to four main trends that impact FMCG product development and will impact it furtherly in the future which are the development of Omni-channel shopping, Direct to Consumer companies, Influencer Marketing and Servitization.

A growing FMCG trend is the urge to develop omni-channel shopping experiences. Omni-channel shopping aims at making the purchase experience simple and effortless by using a combination of several devices, and/or mixing in-store and online experience. An example of FMCG company developing omni-channel shopping can be represented by Sephora, which took advantage of digital development by enhancing the customers' in-store experience with tablets to grant them access their online shopping lists on large screens inside the stores. (Byers, 2023)

The Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) model is a new trend among FMCG companies, which has been enabled by the increasing digitalization and shows a great potential as the D2C online sales grew by $17.75 billion in the US in 2020 (Byers, 2023). As consumers tend to shop more and more online, particularly for FMCG products, every company has the potential to develop a direct-to-consumer model to sell directly to the end user, and 99% consumer goods companies are investing in D2C (Lessard, 2023). Thus, FMCG companies are urged to develop this highly profitable model which, by removing intermediaries, promises greater

margins, more flexible product offerings and closer customer relationships (Byers, 2023). However, FMCG companies need to develop D2C quickly as startup based on this model are flourishing, challenging the traditional business models. Indeed, Gillette's share of the US razor market fell from 70% to under 50% over the course of a decade due to competitors such as Dollar Shave Club (Byers, 2023).

The trend of omni-channel is impacting not only the shopping experience, but also the marketing approaches of FMCG companies, such as Influencer marketing on top of traditional TV ads, PR, product placements. Indeed, influencer marketing developed strongly in the recent years, particularly in the FMCG sector and it proved to be a very powerful tool. CeraVe's success illustrate the efficiency of influencer marketing: their collaboration with the influencer Hyram Yarbro on TikTok allowed them to boost their sales among Gen Z two years earlier than forecasted (Byers, 2023). Also, the trend is going further, by not only working with the biggest influencers, but including also "micro" and "nano" influencers who are characterized by reduced but more engaged communities and provide great success to FMCG companies too (Byers, 2023).

Another trend for FMCG companies is the development of servitization. Servitization refers to the phenomenon of product companies increasingly adopting a new business model based on service, allowing them to achieve growth and competitive advantages (Baines et al, 2017). As customer's expectations are shifting from buying and consuming to problem-solving and added value, combined with the digital transformation opportunities, FMCG companies are urged to adopt servitization strategies to develop their business (Gebauer et al, 2021). Dollar Shave Club, for example, developed a successful servitization strategy by delivering razors and grooming products to customers by mail on a subscription basis, achieving a large consumer base and steady incomes (Singh, 2023).

2.3.2 Increasing customer expectations

While customers are becoming more educated and demanding, their expectations are increasing exponentially towards better and more personalized product experiences. Indeed, new technologies and the development of new business models increased both their expectations and their empowerment. According to Davidson et al (2014), three main trends define the increasing customers' expectations:

1. Consumers have access to more information which grant them with more choice and increase their bargaining power to influence organizations.
2. Consumers have higher expectations towards more integrated and sophisticated, while simple, experiences.
3. Consumers are less patient and more willing to endlessly switch from one brand to another, leading to a great decrease in brand loyalty.

Therefore, customers require companies to adapt fast to their changing expectations and new whishes or needs, they require more and more individualization and a better value delivery. These requirements are particularly important for the millennials, among who 80% demand improve response time; 76% expect organizations to understand individual needs and 68% anticipate organizations to harmonize consumer experience (Davidson et al, 2014).

These increasing customer's expectations have been exacerbated since the COVID-19 pandemic, as customers focus even more on health and wellness, sustainability, online shopping, instant delivery, premiumization, as well as personalized and localized offer (Delberghe et al, 2022).

This new trend of increasing customer expectations has led to three main new trends for FMCG companies such as personalization, premiumization, rising demand and concern for health and wellness.

FMCG must adapt to personalization trends according to the new customers' expectations. Research from McKinsey in 2021 showed that 71% of consumers require companies to provide individualized interactions, and 76% are frustrated if it does not occur (Arora et al, 2021). If consumers don't receive the personalized experience they expect, they will look for a new store, product or buying method. Personalization is more than ever a key requirement and FMCG companies must deliver it through several tools, such as portfolio proposition, distribution options and experience, or targeted promotions among others.

The last years also saw the emergence of premiumization. While high-income groups lead a rise in the demand for healthier, more sustainable, and higher quality products, low-income groups show higher price sensitivity and higher willingness to buy less and downtrading for cheaper products (Arora et al, 2021). Thus, FMCG companies should simultaneously focus on entry-level price offerings and premium products, instead of mid-range offerings.

FMCG must also adapt to the rising demand and concern for health and wellness. Health and wellness are not anymore about weight loss, consumers are looking for products better for them, which improve their lifestyle. To fulfill these new expectations, FMCG can develop health and wellness in a basic way with global new claims, or in a more specific way by targeting special needs. In the food industry, the basic innovation can be natural ingredients or low/no sugar or fat, and the specific innovation can be the inclusion of functional foods tackling specific health whether with a preventive of healing aim. (Pye, 2010).

2.3.3 Data driven decision-making

Nowadays, FMCG companies have access to an increasing volume of data and to improving analytics tools enabling efficient analysis, which allow them to make more informed decisions for their products. Indeed, the growing set of data available allow them to identify market trends, track product performance, and optimize product features more and more efficiently. Data-driven decision-making is an efficient tool to prioritize product enhancement and address customer pain point effectively. (Schrock, 2019)

Data analysis is crucial to product development and decisions at each step of the product development, especially the experimentation phases. For example, 69% of product managers conducted consumer interviews in 2019, which is a 10% increase over one year (Shalamanov, 2020). Data-driven decision-making is thus more and more used. While it allows a better understanding of the environment, market, customers, and product performances, it also represent a useful guide to reduce the risk of bias in the decision-making process – such as experience bias referring to judging more harshly others' opinions, false consensus bias or thinking our opinions or behaviors are more widely shared than they actually are, or expedience bias urging to choose the fastest option – leading to more efficient and accurate decisions to deliver higher value to customers (McLeod, 2022).

However, while data-driven decision-making is spreading in FMCG companies' processes, it represents some challenges to overcome. The large and growing size and dimensions of data available raises different challenges such as heavy analysis costs (money and time), uneven data collection method and timing limiting the result accuracy, difficulty to find the right set of measurement metrics, slowest decision-making due to an overreliance on data,

urge to opportunistic decisions instead of strategical due to the urge to improve the KPIs, or mistakes in analyzing and drawing inferences from the data set analyzed (Fan et al, 2014; Haynes, 2022; Leece et al, 2022).

Despite the opportunities enabled by the increasing access to data and data-driven decision-making, the effective use and unlocking of added value require effective management, processes within the company and a clear definition of goals and metrics. The recent development in data analysis tools and Artificial Intelligence might improve data management and data-driven decision-making.

2.3.4 Sustainability and Social responsibility

There is a growing emphasis on sustainability and social responsibility in the consumer goods industry, emphasizing the need to balance goals between environmental, social and environmental (ESG) dimensions.

Companies are facing increasing pressure to adapt to the new environmental and social responsibility requirements. Indeed, some regulation policies are developed to bind companies to the new restrictions, such as the European Union's Green Deal implemented to urge companies developing reusable or recyclable packaging by 2030 (European Commission, 2019).

Despite the increasing regulatory pressure, the growing pressure on sustainability is mostly driven by stakeholders, including consumers, employees, investors, and new market entrants. Consumers are increasingly focusing on sustainability in their purchasing decisions, with two-thirds of them adjusting their routines to reduce their environmental impact. Employees are also increasingly considering sustainability when choosing an employer, with three out of four employees wishing their company to prioritize environmental and social issues. Investors on their side are already prioritizing sustainability-oriented investment decisions and increasingly granting loans linked to sustainability criteria. "Green" start-ups are rapidly acquiring market share in consumer-goods segments, accounting for 57% of all new consumer-goods industry entrants (Am et al, 2022)

Under growing pressure, companies must ensure to develop a path to greater sustainability along the development, commercialization and use of the products. To do so, FMCG must involve each of their stakeholders along the supply chain, educate them to raise awareness and redefine its processes with suppliers and customers to achieve its sustainability goals and provide transparent and accessible information about the new offerings (Gutterman, 2023).

FMCG companies increasingly incorporate the concepts of corporate social responsibility and sustainable development in their business strategy. The most striking FMCG companies that has successfully developed ESG complying strategies are Nestlé – which developed fairer and more inclusive job, and developed a program named Creating Shared Value to ensure 30 million farmers with stable incomes through 2030 – or Henkel – which relies for certain brands entirely on collecting used plastic from poor people for a fee, and plans on making all packagings recyclable, reusable, or compostable by 2025 (Am et al, 2022).

Thus, sustainable development and social responsibility are growing trends in FMCG companies, which can promote success, innovation, and profitability. However, the challenge for FMCG companies is implementing these new goals effectively as it requires a rethinking of the whole organization – its culture, processes and interactions – and no function or stakeholder is left untouched.

2.3.5 Relentless competition and private labels

Nowadays, FMCG companies are facing an increasing number of competitors. According to Kelly et al (2018), national FMCG companies are facing relentless competition with the explosion in the number of small consumer goods companies, relying on millennial preferences and digital marketing to grow very fast, leading to high margins and strong emotional engagement. Their high potential grant them benefits from unconventional distribution channels and online sales from which data is overlook by national FMCG brands, from increasing venture capitalists fundings allowing them to challenge national brands in niches across categories, and advantaging listings opportunities offered by retailers willing to differentiate their proposition and improve their margins as these brands are mainly premium and rarely promote (Kelly et al, 2018).

Furthermore, FMCG companies are facing rising competition with the development of private labels products, which are brands generally owned and marketed by retailers. Since their introduction in the market 70 years ago, private label products have shifted from cheap and low-quality products to acceptable or standard products at lower prices than national brands products. Retailers developed tiered-private labels, characterized by an improvement of the value proposition focusing mainly on price and quality attributes, and recently increasingly focusing on sustainability, ethics, social responsibility, and image, in line with the shifting customers' expectations. (Gielens et al, 2021). Thus, the development of private labels has growing impacts on national FMCG companies who face increasing competition in terms of pricing, market shares, volume sales, brand image and shelf-space in retailers' stores.

The recent accumulation of events with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ukraine war and the economic context characterized by sustained inflation, the shift in consumer purchasing habits and market trends accelerated. All the shifts are occurring at an accelerated pace and all at the same time such as digital transformation, sustainable and corporate responsibility requirements, and increasing access to data favoring the emergence of challengers and urging FMCG companies to tackle these changes quickly to maintain competitive advantages.

2.4 Summary and ground for propositions

As previously explained in the introduction, this study has the main objective of answering the following main research question:

➔ ***RQ: How do the latest trends and changes in expectations within the FMCG industry affect product managers?***

Four sub-research questions have been developed to help frame the answer to this research question. Alongside with the sub-research questions, six propositions have been formed, based on the literature review insights, to guide the research part of the thesis. The propositions includes both positive and negative evolutions of the evolution induced by the trends in FMCG industry.

The first sub-research question is the following:

➔ *SRQ1: What is the impact of FMCG trends on product management?*

It aims at evaluating how the FMCG industry trends impact the general concept of product management and with which intensity. As described by Ebert (2007), product management covers several phases from the development of the strategy to the operational implementation, product launch, after sales service, and product retirement. However, Tyagi and Sawhney (2010) describes product management as a central role in the organization as it represents the key responsibilities of introducing new products and effectively managing the life cycle of existing products, therefore directly impacting the growth and profitability of the firm. Thus, the two main areas of product management which has the greater impact on the company's competitive advantages are product innovations and renovations. The proposition formed to evaluate the impact of FMCG trends on product management is therefore the following one:

P1: FMCG current trends enable product management with more opportunities for product innovations and renovations.

The second sub-research question is the following:

➔ *SRQ 2: How did the role and missions of the product manager evolve according to these trends?*

It aims at evaluating how the FMCG industry trends impact the product manager's role within the company and the specific missions linked in a more concrete analysis. Three propositions have been formed to evaluate how the role and missions of the product manager evolved according to these trends.

First, the product manager's internal and external stakeholder framework developed by Lysonski (1985), see Figure 6, highlights the importance of the contact with the external environment (companies, retailers, customers, competitors, etc) for product managers. However, Wood and Tandon (1994) stressed that strong change in the environment impact the role of the product manager, requiring more contact with customers, retailers and internal stakeholders. Thus, the proposition 2 was formed to evaluate how the current changes and evolutions in the FMCG market both enable and urge product managers to be closer to their stakeholders.

P2: FMCG current trends urge product managers to strengthen their relations with more diverse stakeholders, both internal and external to the company.

Secondly, the literature review highlighted the risks in quickly changing times for product managers to focus on tactical activities instead of the key missions of strategical planning activities (Tyagi and Sawhney, 2010). The analysis of the current and future challenges impacting the FMCG industry in Section 2.3 showed how the economic, social and technological shifts were important and how they were accelerating in the last years, leading FMCG companies to quickly reshape their products, processes and push further their value offerings. Thus, the proposition 3 was formed to evaluate the risks induced by these changes might lead to poorer focus of product managers on long-term strategy, blinded by what they have to do next as quickly as possible.

P3: FMCG current trends emphasize immediate responsiveness leading to a deeper focus on short-term strategy and tactical tasks instead of long-term strategy.

Thirdly, despite its importance, the definition of the product manager remains a fuzzy concept, with remaining ambiguity regarding the role and responsibilities of the product manager which vary greatly depending on the product, firm and industry studied (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1995). This fuzziness was further explored in the Section 2.1.1, emphasizing the variety of definitions around the concept of the product manager's role and missions. The numerous historical changes and evolutions since the first theorization in the 1930's, detailed in Section 2.3., stressed how confuse the product manager's concept is. Thus, following the strong changes in the FMCG industry, the proposition 4 was formed to evaluate how product managers perceive the clarity of their role.

P4: Product managers perceive their role and missions as increasingly unclear due to the FMCG current trends.

The third sub-research question is the following:

➔ *SRQ 3: How do they adapt in terms of methods, tools and capabilities?*

It aims at analyzing the evolution of the concrete requirements of a product manager to operate in the actual FMCG industry. The new trends – among the accelerated technological development and digital transformation, the increasing customer expectations, the change towards data-driven decision-making, the raising awareness and requests for sustainability

and corporate responsibility, and the rising competition and development of private labels – are shaping the new profile of product managers expected by companies. Haines (2014) defined the roadmap of the product manager's main areas of work and tools based on the product management life cycle model, represented in Figure 4. This roadmap aims at defining product management as the process of bringing products from idea conception to final sale. It is divided in four main areas of work defined as Discovery and Innovation, New Product Planning, New Product Introduction and Post-Launch Product Management (Haines, 2014). However, the Fast-Moving-Consumer-Good industry might require specific new methods, tools and capabilities to keep up with the diverse and interlinked trends. Thus, the proposition 5 was formed to evaluate how product managers adapt to the new trends in terms of methods, tools and capabilities is therefore the following one:

P5: FMCG current trends push product managers to develop or improve more diverse capabilities and skills.

The fourth sub-research question is the following:

➔ *SRQ 4: What limits do they encounter hindering the adaptation to changes? How to overcome those limits?*

It aims at analyzing what might hinder product managers in adapting to the new expectations, regarding role as well as methods, tools and capabilities. The literature review highlighted the need for companies to adapt their organizational system to be more integrative of the external environment and stakeholders (Loughlin et al, 2020; Hise & Kelly, 1978), while favoring multi-level cross department collaboration to build more effective product management system (Tyagi and Sawhney, 2010). The role of the product manager must be clearly defined, through scope and performance criteria (Tyagi and Sawhney, 2010; Loughlin et al, 2020), while acknowledging possible changes in responsibilities, decision-making and processes depending on external events and circumstantial requirements (Lysonski et al., 1995; McDaniel, 1980). Thus, the proposition formed to evaluate what hinders the adaptation of product managers to the new changes and how they deal with those limits is therefore the following one, strongly linked to the structure of the company.

P6: The organizational structure of the company still lacks adaptability thus remaining the biggest challenge for the adaptation of product managers to FMCG trends' new requirements.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The research design and methodology of the research are discussed in this section. First, the research context and case description are discussed to provide the framework and delimitations of the research. Second, the justifications for the choice of a data collection method based on qualitative interview are explained, and the key characteristics of qualitative research are further detailed. Third, the data analysis method is explained in more details. Finally, the reliability and validity of the research is addressed.

3.1 Research context and case description

The context of the research is mainly defined by the aim for clarifying the concept of product management and the product manager's role, how to tackle external changes and how to integrate these changes in the processes and reality of the company and role.

To do so, the context of the research has been purposefully contextualized to achieve specific results for a delimited industry, with the three following limitations. First, the study focus on the FMCG industry – including as a whole food & beverages, toiletries, household, and health products (Kenton, 2023) – and the current challenges and evolutions occurring in this industry, impacting the product management and the product manager's role within this specific type of products. Second, the study is therefore limited to product managers that have a major focus on the marketing side due to the choice of focusing on the FMCG industry and its distinctive characteristics. Third, the definition and exploration of the trends affecting product management in the FMCG industry has been purposefully limited to the five following ones, which occurred in the last years, and which have the most impact on product management and product managers: technological innovation and digital transformation, increasing customer expectations, need for data-driven decision-making, sustainability and social responsibility, and relentless competition and private labels.

The research context being stated, the case description can be explained. As the current trends occurring in the FMCG industry are impacting and will pursue in redefining the industry in the following years, it appears essential to link both the evolution of product management and product manager's role in the FMCG industry to the changes and new

challenges of this specific industry. Therefore, the research has been designed to provide answers to four fundamental objectives regarding the evolution of product management in the FMCG industry:

1. Providing a clearer and contemporary definition of product management and deeper knowledge about the product manager's role, missions, and responsibilities in the FMCG industry.
2. Developing a deeper understanding of the main trends affecting the FMCG industry and assessing the importance of their impact on product management.
3. Reviewing the main changes in the role, missions and responsibilities of the product manager and exploring how they adapt in terms of methods, tools, and capabilities to these new trends.
4. Exploring the potential reasons for failure or causes of drawbacks in the adaptation to changes for product managers to help avoid or prevent product's induced failure.

As a reminder, a main research question has been formed based on these objectives: How do the latest trends and changes in expectations within the FMCG industry affect product managers? With the aim of responding to the main research question, the four following sub-research questions were formed: 1. What is the impact of FMCG trends on product management? 2. How did the role and missions of the product manager evolve according to these trends? 3. How do they adapt in terms of methods, tools, and capabilities? 4.What limits do they encounter hindering the adaptation to changes? How to overcome those limits?

3.2 Data collection methods

This thesis is based on both primary and secondary data. The previous theoretical part of the thesis gathers the secondary data findings in a literature review. According to Malhotra, Nunan & Birks (2006, pp. 92-96), secondary data are easily accessible and relatively inexpensive data previously collected for purposes not essentially related to the research problem, and despite they may be outdated or lack accuracy regarding the specific research aim, they help to understand the context of the research subject. This thesis' literature review gathers various types of secondary data, including research papers, academic journals, books, trustworthy internet websites as well as study reports. The secondary data was

collected to provide a deep understanding about the concept of product management, the role, missions and responsibilities of the product manager and their historical evolution, as well as assessing the current challenges impacting the FMCG industry with the greatest impact to provide the analytical framework for the research.

This thesis is also based on primary data, which refers to data collected by the researcher for addressing a specific goal or issue often leading to higher acquisition costs and a longer time frame to collect and analyze the data (Malhotra et al., 2006, pp. 92-96). Primary data can be collected in various ways, including semi-structured, in-depth, and group interviews (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 388). The primary data of this study consists of semi-structured interviews. The choice of semi-structured interviews has been made purposefully for the data collection method as it allows to collect specific data to enable an in-depth analysis of insights, verbatims and opinions directly coming from product managers and to generate information on product management which is not available elsewhere and to provide insights from a different point of view in opposition to the current literature available on the subject which lacks actual product managers sources.

Furthermore, this thesis is centered around a qualitative research. Indeed, according to Malhotra et al. (2006, pp. 150), qualitative research is an unstructured and especially exploratory research design which relies on small samples with the aim of providing depth, insight and understanding. Thus, this research design perfectly fits the aim of this study, as the objective is to counterbalance the actual literature focusing on broad concepts not specific enough to each industry, by focusing on exploration and in-depth understanding of the effects of FMCG industry trends on product management. The analysis of individual experiences of product managers working in the FMCG industry will provide a more specific and accurate vision about the scope and impact of these trends and the complex phenomena induced.

Finally, the population of interviewees has been purposefully selected to match the expectations of this study. Indeed, as Eisenhardt (1989) explains, the population of interviewees must be carefully selected to control the variations in the findings and define the limits to be able to generalize those findings. Concretely, researchers conducting a qualitative research must not define the number of interviewees in advance, but they should pursue interviewing as long as they have not reach the theoretical saturation, where incremental interviews lead to poor additional learnings as the researcher is observing

insights that they have already gathered in previous interviews. Thus, there is no ideal number of interviews, but a number above four, to avoid complex generalization, and below ten, to avoid an overcomplex and broad volume of data, is the target. (Eisenhardt, 1989)

Following this frame, interviews have been driven step by step for the purpose of this study, and reached a total of six interviewees, consisting of product managers working in the FMCG industry, listed anonymously in Table 5.

Table 5. Interview participants

Title	Company sector	Date of interview	Interview duration	Title	Years of experience
Interviewee A	Household products	7th of July 2023	1h 02min	Brand Manager	5 in product management 3 in the FMCG industry
Interviewee B	Food & Beverages	11th of July 2023	1h 23min	Product Marketing Manager	7 in product management 5 in the FMCG industry
Interviewee C	Toiletries	12th of July 2023	1h 18min	Product Manager	9 in product management 9 in the FMCG industry
Interviewee D	Food & Beverages	21st of July 2023	1h 27min	Senior Product Manager	14 in product management 14 in the FMCG industry
Interviewee E	Toiletries	22nd of July 2023	1h 32min	Senior Brand Manager	13 in product management 18 in the FMCG industry

Interviewee F	Health products	26th of July 2023	1h 14min	Senior Product Marketing Manager	15 in product management 17 in the FMCG industry

The interviews were conducted in July 2023 by teams and in-person interviews and the conversations were steered by semi-structured interview questions, which can be found at the end of the paper (Appendix 1), which will be further explained in the following section. Also, as the research aims at study evolutions among product manager in the FMCG industry and how the latest trends and changes in expectations within the industry affect product managers, the research interviewees' profile is limited to product managers working for FMCG products with an experience of at least three years in the role and industry. The aim of the interviewees' selection was also to represent as much as possible the variety of the sector between food and beverages, toiletries, household products and health products. There were no further restrictions regarding age or gender.

3.3 Questionnaire design

The questionnaire is divided into nine parts: Introduction, Background of the interviewee, Organization profile, Concept control questions, Perceived evolution of the product manager, Main issues hindering the evolution, Assessment of the key trends of the FMCG industry, Test of the six propositions, and Conclusion. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1. Before conducting qualitative interviews with the questionnaire, a pre-testing was operated on one individual to confirm the clarity of the questions and overall questionnaire.

The first part of the questionnaire provides an introduction to the scope and objectives of the study. In this opening phase of the qualitative interview, the writer introduces the thesis topic, and outlines the goal of the interview as well as how the interviewee's answers will be used. This not only orients the interviewee but also establishes a clear context for the discussion with the aim of obtaining data as relevant as possible for the research. Moreover, the writer quickly reminds the interviewee about the anonymity and confidentiality of the interview, based on the terms of the interviewee's consent form – which can be found in

Appendix 3 – previously signed by the interviewee, to set the tone for an open and candid conversation with full knowledge of the limits of the interview results use.

The second part of the questionnaire consists of control questions to assess the alignment of the interviewee profile with the research requirements. Indeed, the interviewee's professional profile takes center stage. Various questions explore the current position of the interviewee, the product or line of products he/she is responsible for, as well as he/her educational background and professional background regarding product management and FMCG industry. This part is essential as it ensure the interviewee's profile fits the following research requirements: the research interviewees' profile is limited to product managers working for FMCG products with an experience of at least three years in the role and industry. Thus, these questions aim at ensuring the expertise of the interviewee in both product management and FMCG industry. Following the aim of the research to explore the impact of FMCG industry's trends on product management, this part of the questionnaire also ensure that the interviewees' selection also represents as much as possible the variety of the sector between food and beverages, toiletries, household products and health products.

The third part of the questionnaire also consists of control questions to assess the alignment of the interviewee's organization profile with the research requirements. Indeed, the questions focus on the type of FMCG sold by the company, the customers and target market, as well as the positioning of the company in its reference market. These questions allow the writer to gain insights on the company studied, enabling her to achieve a deep understanding of the background and frame of the interviewee's responses in the contact of his/her organization's characteristics.

The fourth part of the questionnaire consists of conceptual questions to assess the definitions of product management and product manager concepts according to the interviewee. Indeed, the interviewee is asked to explain what he/she knows about product management and the function of a product manager. This section provides fundamental insights into their understanding and viewpoint on these two concepts which are key concepts in this research. This assessment will enable to writer to assess the understanding of the interviewee as well as broaden or restrain his/her vision of the two concepts if required, to ensure the interviewee's responses fits the research requirements and scope.

The fifth part of the questionnaire consists of assessing how the product manager perceive the evolution of product management. In this part, the interviewee is encouraged to describe his/her role within the company, with the current state, the changes, and the desired evolution for the future. This part also tackles the actual and desired allocation of time between various missions, actual and changes in responsibilities as well as actual and desired capabilities and tools. These questions allow the interviewee to start reflecting on product manager's role, missions and responsibilities, the changes of the position across the last years, and their expectations or hopes for the future of product management in the FMCG industry.

The sixth part of the questionnaire consists of broad questions about the aspects hindering the evolution of product managers according to the interviewee. By exploring factors such as fuzziness of the job, organizational structure, cross-collaboration difficulties, decision-making abilities and fuzzy role definition, the questionnaire identifies challenges product managers face in FMCG industries, and how they evaluate these elements.

The seventh part of the questionnaire consists of an assessment of the key trends of the FMCG industry identified in the theoretical part of this research. Indeed, these questions aims at exploring the interviewee's perceptions of the most significant industry trends. Through a rating system, the questionnaire evaluates the perceived importance of the benefit/downside and the level of adaptation required for product managers regarding these five trends, as well as the potential additional trends assessed.

The eighth part of the questionnaire consists of the evaluation of the six propositions formulated following the theoretical part of the research, with a deepened analysis taking into account each of the five main FMCG trends identified in the current literature, as well as the potential other trends identified by the interviewee during the previous part of the questionnaire. This part of the questionnaire allows a deep dive in the FMCG trends identified, and an exploration of their impact on product management.

The ninth and last part of the questionnaire consists of the conclusion, to enable the interviewee to add anything to the discussion to complete or broaden its contribution to the research. The writer also takes this opportunity to detail to the interviewee the next step of her research to the interviewee.

Concerning the formatting of the questionnaire, the questions were designed to match a one hour and a half long qualitative interview. The interviewees were asked to spare a two-hour

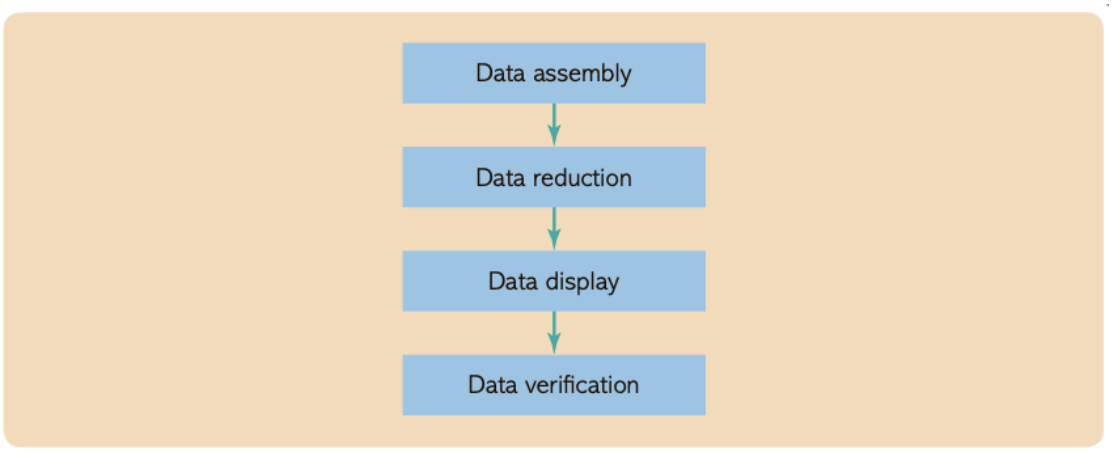
slot to ensure the possibility to answer all the questions despite potential longer answer time or delays. Additionally, the interview questionnaire and consent form were translated into French as both French product managers or product managers working in France and mainly speaking French at work were interviewed, hence the need to formulate these questions in French.

3.4 Data analysis methods

Concerning the data analysis method, the propositions will be tested through qualitative analysis. Once the data collection was completed through qualitative interviews, the interviews were transcribed based on the audio recordings of the interviews to improve accuracy and include verbatim and moments of thinking or hesitation, as well as changes of mind. After the data collection, the interview recordings were carefully transcribed into written form and translated in English for the purpose of the research.

In order to analyze qualitative interview, researchers must identify relationships among the data collected and define categories, to determine similarities and differences between the respondent's answers. This identification of relationships and categories will thus enable the writer to draw conclusions regarding the propositions defined based on the theoretical part of this research. The data analysis method chosen for this research is based on Malhotra et al. (2006) generic process of qualitative data analysis, which relies on four specific steps outlined in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8. Structure of the qualitative data study (Malhotra et al., 2006, pp. 240).



The first stage of the process – Data assembly – consists of collecting qualitative data from various types of sources such as notes or observations taken during or after interviewing, reflections of the researcher, theoretical support from secondary data or literature sources, or audiotape recordings and transcripts of those recordings, visual images or even video recordings (Malhotra et al., 2006). In this research, the data assembly stage consists of an assessment of the current literature structured in a in the theoretical part of the research, as well as the notes, observations, audio recordings and transcripts that emerged from qualitative interviews completed by the remarks of the writer.

The second stage of the process – Data reduction – refers to the stage where the writer selects the data that appears more important, organize it in different categories, and structure it by connecting the various data altogether (Malhotra et al., 2006). This stage first requires elaborating the transcripts of the qualitative interviews including as much information as possible, including the answers of the respondents as well as their thinking, hesitations, or any emotion that may be useful for the analysis. Based on these transcripts, as well as knowledge derived from types of data collected, the researcher can start the step of coding the data, which refers to summarizing the data by condensing a large amount of text into few words such as a theme or key words – a "code" – without analyzing the data, deriving categories from these codes, and attaching these categories to meaningful chunks of data (Malhotra et al., 2006). This step of coding the data is a crucial part of the qualitative analysis as it will strongly influence the findings drawn from the interviews. Following this process, the writer carefully transcribed the qualitative interviews and exported the interviewees answers transcripts to Excel spreadsheet format in order to facilitate the coding of the data and achieve a clean, concise and organized set of data to pursue the analysis process.

The third stage of the process – Data display – recommends summarizing and presenting the structure of the reasoning the researcher used to give meaning and organization to the qualitative data he/she collected (Malhotra et al., 2006). This allows the writer to present in a simple and efficient way the process of coding and the links made between the data and codes to achieve concrete findings to the reader. It gives a global and compact vision of the data analysis method used.

Finally, the fourth and last stage of the process – Data verification – consists of validating the data. Indeed, the researcher must maintain openness and skepticism towards the data and data analysis, therefore questioning the results obtained by comparing them to other data

sources looking for alternative explanations (Malhotra et al., 2006). In this research, the data verification was based on the findings in the theoretical part of the study, which allowed the writer to evaluate the validity of the data generated.

3.5 Reliability and validity

This research being based on qualitative interviews, it is challenging to fully assess the validity of the findings. Indeed, Malhotra et al. (2006) highlights the influence of cultural and social constructions from both the researcher and the interviewees. Qualitative interviews request for the researcher to acknowledge his/her own social and cultural constructions, as well as attitudes and values to reflect on how the questionnaire is build and how to interpret the answers of the interviewees. However, the writer mitigated the risk towards the validity of the results first by conducting a complete review of the existing literature on various topics related to product management, product managers, FMCG industry and latest FMCG trends, providing a solid theoretical ground and enabling an accurate framework for observations and interpretations. However, the researcher also reflected on the limitations of the current literature and took advantage of these limitations to focus on concrete questioning and to be evaluate to reality these theories. Furthermore, the writer benefit from two professional experiences in product management among FMCG companies, furtherly ensuring the validity of the findings by providing field experience on top of the theoretical knowledge acquired during the research. Additionally, the risks towards the validity of the findings were also reduced regarding the interviewees' attitudes, values, social and cultural constructions. The fact that each participant brings their unique social and professional background to the discussion was fully acknowledge by the writer. However, all the interviewees have been carefully selected based on professional experience in both product management and FMCG industry, ensuring a common understanding of the topic despite their distinct career paths. Furthermore, the topic of the research leans more towards a professional context, avoiding tackling interviewees' personal lives and thus providing findings with enhanced reliability.

To ensure the research validity, the writer applied the concept of theoretical saturation developed by Eisenhardt (1989), where the qualitative researcher must not define the number of interviews in advance, but should rather keep interviewing as long as the new interviews

do not lead to poor additional learnings or insights that have already been gathered in previous interviews. This method enabled the writer to achieve the right set of data, allowing sufficient learnings while keeping a clear database not overflowed in information.

Finally, the validity of the findings is furtherly ensured since each interviewee had no additional motivation to participate in the study than contributing to the writer's development of a database to build accurate findings. Thus, the interviewees had no motivation for twisting their answers and reasoning, ensuring the validity of the findings.

On the other side, the reliability of the qualitative research was also addressed through the transcription and language. Indeed, a meticulous approach was undertaken to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the data gathered. Each interview was recorded and transcribed, thus minimizing the chances of missing pieces of information or misinterpretation. The interviews were also conducted in French to reduce the risk of misunderstanding questions and concepts for French speaker interviewees. However, to facilitate comparison and analysis, interview questions and responses were later translated into English to fit the requirements of the research.

To ensure further reliability, the transcriptions of the interviews were cross-checked against audio recordings several times. These verifications enabled the writer to carefully include verbatims, interviewees' spoken words, filler words, self-corrections and silences or pauses. This comprehensive approach caught the nuances of participants' emotions and thoughts, enriching the depth of the data and findings.

Moreover, the empirical findings gained validation through theoretical insights, enhancing the strength of the research outcomes. The alignment between theoretical and empirical discoveries fortified the overall quality of the results. The observed consistency in empirical findings further attests to the research's reliability. The coherence across various facets of the study instills confidence in the outcomes and their interpretations.

4. FINDINGS

This section gathers the findings that emerged from the qualitative interviewees that have been implemented for the research. The objective is to develop an organized and structured set of data which will form the basis for answering the research questions.

4.1 Background of the interviewees and their organizations

This part of the questionnaire was designed to assess the alignment of the interviewee profile with the research requirements and gain insights about the context of their answers. It tackled both the product manager profile and the organization profile. The following sub-section thus detail the characteristics of the interviewees and organizations.

4.1.1 The interviewees' profile

The population of interviewees has been purposefully selected to achieve the most valuable findings regarding the purpose of the research. Indeed, they represent diverse profiles in terms of position, professional background, and years of experience in both product management and in the FMCG industry. For the purpose of maintaining the anonymity of the respondents, they have been given abstract names, allowing the traceability of the findings.

The first interviewee, Interviewee A, is a brand manager who is responsible for household products. Interviewee A is responsible for a wide portfolio with various typologies of products belonging to the Air Care market, and benefit from a background of 5 years in product management and 3 years in the FMCG industry, mainly in the household products industry.

The second interviewee, Interviewee B, is a product marketing manager who is responsible for food and beverages products. Interviewee B is responsible for a simple and well categorized portfolio of products belonging to the Pet Food industry, and benefit from a

background of 7 years in product management and 5 years in the FMCG industry, mainly in the food and beverages industry.

The third interviewee, Interviewee C, is a product manager who is responsible for toiletries products. Interviewee C is responsible for a wide portfolio with various typologies of products belonging to the Consumer Products Cosmetics market, and benefit from a background of 9 years in product management and 9 years in the FMCG industry, mainly in the toiletries industry.

The fourth interviewee, Interviewee D, is a senior product manager who is responsible for food and beverages products. Interviewee D is responsible for a portfolio of standardized and highly demanded products belonging to the Instant Coffee market, and benefit from a background of 14 years in product management and 14 years in the FMCG industry, mainly in the food and beverages industry.

The fifth interviewee, Interviewee E, is a senior brand manager who is responsible for toiletries products. Interviewee E is responsible for a wide portfolio with various typologies of products belonging to the Consumer Products Cosmetics market, and benefit from a background of 13 years in product management and 18 years in the FMCG industry, mainly in the toiletries industry.

The sixth interviewee, Interviewee F, is a senior product marketing manager who is responsible for health products. Interviewee F is responsible for a wide but standardized portfolio with various declinations of a product belonging to the Personal Care market, and benefit from a background of 15 years in product management and 17 years in the FMCG industry, mainly in the health products industry.

Thus, the panel of interviewees match the limitations previously set around the research interviewees' profile. Indeed, the six interviewees are product managers, or similar roles, presenting enough experimental background in both the FMCG industry and product management, with an experience of at least three years in the role and industry. The set of interviewees can also be considered representative of the variety of the sector between food and beverages, toiletries, household products and health products, with at least one interviewee in each sector.

4.1.2 The organizations' profile

The population of interviewees has been purposefully selected to achieve the most valuable findings regarding the purpose of the research. Indeed, they represent each of the four types of FMCG companies among food & beverages, toiletries, household and health products. This diversity in the company's profile was aimed at gathering more diverse insights and being able to generalize the findings the broad level of FMCG industry.

Furthermore, the organizations' profiles are complementary as they represent different positioning on the market. While most of them are leaders in their industry, the positioning of the portfolio in the market was quite diverse as the position of the brands as leaders is always depending on the product's sub-segments configuration while dealing with broad portfolios. And we also have some challenger companies represented in the population of companies.

4.2 Product management and product manager definitions

This part of the questionnaire was designed with the aim of guiding the respondents to reflect on their conception of product management and the product managers. Indeed, they were asked to define what is product management and what is a product manager. The main findings are presented in the Tables 6 and 7 below.

Table 6. Definition of product management according to the interviewees

Interviewee	**Definition of product management**
Interviewee A	*"Product management refers to developing and managing the products we are responsible for. The goal is to propose product which answers customers' expectations, and which are competitive in the market."*
Interviewee B	*"Product management refers to the process of developing, launching and following up the performances of the products in the market."*
Interviewee C	*"In my opinion, product management has the aim of transforming an idea into a reality and successfully implementing it on the market. It*

	requires understanding the consumers' needs, developing products according to these needs and developing accurate and efficient marketing strategies."
Interviewee D	*"Managing products is the responsibility of developing, managing and continuously improving a line of products with the aim of satisfying consumers' needs and reaching the company's goals."*
Interviewee E	*"Product management consists of developing and efficiently managing products across their lifecycle, from conception to launch, and making sure of the success of the products."*
Interviewee F	*"Product management is launching new products and improving existing products, while overseeing their entry on the market and beyond."*

From Table 6, it can be inferred that product managers commonly define product management as managing products, or a line of product efficiently, with the aim of filling a need to satisfy customers and satisfying the company's expectations regarding competitiveness on the market. Several components of product management were evoked during the interviews such as successful market entry, lifecycle management, the launch of new products and improvement of existing ones, the study of consumers, competitors, and market trends to develop marketing plans as well as performances tracking.

Table 7. Definition of product manager according to the interviewees

Interviewee	**Definition of product management**
Interviewee A	"*A good product manager must be proactive, creative for innovations, with an analytical and critical mindset, being comfortable with numbers, be able to take a step back to have a more long-term vision, be able to work in team and above all collaborating with a wide range of different partners.*"
Interviewee B	"*A product manager must be able to create and manage products from A to Z. It implies understanding the market, being creative, organized and persuasive.*"

Interviewee C	"*The product manager is the central point between very diverse teams such as R&D, data, agencies for packaging, visuals and media, factories etc. The product manager can be seen as an orchestra conductor with the goal of effectively managing the projects.*"
Interviewee D	"*My main responsibilities revolve around the development and management of the line of products I am responsible for. It includes market analysis to identify opportunities, development of new ideas of products, then developing, planning and launching products, and alignment with the other teams which are part of the product development process.*"
Interviewee E	"*The product manager's role consists of defining the strategy of our products, coordinating their development and granting their success on the market.*"
Interviewee F	"*It refers to developing strategies, planning, developing, launching and continuously managing the products.*"

From Table 6, it can be inferred that product manager definitions include a wide set of elements, from missions to hard skills and soft skills. It is a wide role, and it appears difficult to define by the interviewee regarding the diversity of elements that it includes, from near or far. This diversity is furtherly present in the interviewee's answers regarding their main responsibilities as product managers, displayed in Table 8.

Table 8. Responsibilities of the product manager according to the interviewees

Most consensual ▲

Stakeholders' coordination	Collaboration	Creativity	Product life-cycle management
Problem solving	Leadership	Decision-making	Understanding consumer's needs or anticipating them
Marketing strategies	Communicating	Data analysis	Tracking market trends
Time management	Performance tracking	Competitors' analysis	Innovating

From Table 8, it can be inferred that product managers have a very wide range of responsibilities which induce specific competencies regarding the missions they are responsible for, as well as soft skills for being able to execute these missions in an optimal way. Finally, the interviewees were asked to name advantages and disadvantages of the position in their experience. The findings from the qualitative interviews are listed in Table 9 below.

Table 9. Advantages and disadvantages of product manager's role according to the interviewees.

Advantages	Disadvantages
"*It is a very versatile position, we never get bored and continuously learn*" (Interviewee A)	"*It can be a stressful position as we have very diverse missions and often tight deadlines.*" (Interviewee E)
"*We can give free rein to our creativity*" (Interviewee D)	"*Sometimes we are quickly caught up by budget management, which is decided at global level and doesn't always allow us to do everything we would like for our products, so we have to make choices.*" (Interviewee D)
"*We can see what works and what doesn't work as planned very quickly, allowing us to adapt quickly.*" (Interviewee F)	"*Project management can be challenging, as we are dependent on the approval of all the stakeholders taking part in the product development process, with often a lot of back-and-forth.*" (Interviewee A)
"*It is very satisfying to see the product we developed at the supermarket or even at our family or friends' places.*" (Interviewee B)	"*We can get too focused on our clients, distributors, instead of our consumers, leading to paradoxical decisions.*" (Interviewee F)
"*We are always challenged for delivering more, it is very motivating.*" (Interviewee C)	"*It is easy to take the failure of one product too personally.*" (Interviewee B)

4.3 Perceived evolution of the product manager

This part of the questionnaire was designed with the aim of evaluating the perceived evolution of the product manager across the last years. It aims at guiding the respondents to reflect on their actual role and what could be improved regarding the missions, responsibilities and competencies and tools.

Regarding the changes concerning the role, six key elements have emerged in the qualitative interviews. First, product managers feel increasing expectations regarding proactivity and adaptation regarding changes, as described by Interviewee A:

"*I find that the role of product manager requires more and more proactivity. Everything changes very quickly, especially consumer expectations. We have to be quick to spot them, understand them and act accordingly on our portfolios.*" (Interviewee A)

Furthermore, Interviewee C highlighted the increased need to run large studies more frequently than before to be more competitive regarding the market and competitors:

"*We are under much greater pressure to study the market, trends, competition and customers on a more regular basis and in a deeper way.*" (Interviewee C)

As the changes occurs more quickly and customers' expectations are shifting continuously, product managers must adapt in a more thorough way their product, to include as quickly as possible the latest changes in expectation:

"Consumer expectations are always evolving. Every year, we may think that our products are top of the range, but there's always something to add, change or improve, such as quality, sourcing, more sustainable products that are better for the environment and health." (Interviewee E)

Product managers are also urged to implement more and more launches and relaunches in a year for each negotiation period with the clients, the distributors:

"10 years ago, we were launching one strong innovation each year, now we are launching 2 or 3 on top of other improvements or more variants in the existing products." (Interviewee A)

They find themselves more limited in their action and decision-making aptitudes as they face more and more processes with timings and approval loops to follow. Whether these processes are destined to improve the efficiency of project management and to allow better delivery in the product launches and relaunches, it can easily turn into a burden when things don't go as planned:

"We have to deal with more numerous project management platforms which requires the approval of other people from other departments, directors or cluster countries decision-makers, which kind of slow down the processes in the end." (Interviewee F)

And their decision-making abilities as well as their creativity regarding the management of their product has also been restricted due to the latest external events of COVID-19 and inflation:

"We are also more constrained in our decision-making, whether in terms of the rationalization of decisions at higher hierarchical levels, particularly due to crises such as inflation or COVID." (Interviewee D)

Regarding the desired evolution of product manager's role, the interviewees tend to wish for lighter processes and more freedom in the decisions regarding the features of the products and the allocation of budgets, as summed up by interviewee D and F:

"Lighter processes would make my job way easier, especially when timings are really tight and we have strict schedules to respect. We should have a second accelerated method when projects are getting too late regarding the timings set previously." (Interviewee D)

"I would like to have more freedom to adapt the products developed globally to the French market. I would also like to do more customer testing, directly with consumers. I find that my vision is sometimes too focused on what retailers want so that our products are listed and we have good distribution, but we are indirectly less concerned about what our consumers want and think." (Interviewee F)

Regarding the time repartition dedicated to each mission, and the desired evolution for the future, the main findings are summed-up in the following Table 10 which has been constructed based on the participant's combined inputs and the average of the percentages of time they spend on each of their missions.

Table 10. Overview of the participants' actual and desired time repartition by mission

Mission	Actual time repartition	Desired time repartition
Strategy development	15%	19%
Market analysis	10%	10%
Life-cycle management	10%	12%
Product development	15%	17%
Implementation of the marketing plan	10%	10%
Resources and budget management	5%	3%
Stakeholders' coordination	15%	10%
Performances analysis	5%	5%
Problem solving	7%	5%
Competitive intelligence	4%	4%
Innovation	4%	5%

From Table 10, it can be inferred that product managers wish to spend more time on the core missions of strategy development, life-cycle management and product development, as well as innovation. On the other side, they wish to dedicate a smaller share of their time to problem-solving, stakeholders' coordination and resources and budget management.

Regarding their competencies and tools, the interviewees would like to improve mainly their data-analysis competencies, which according to Interviewee B "has become a key element in product management", and having more opportunities for formations within their companies to improve their skills and management abilities.

4.4 Aspects hindering the evolution

This part of the questionnaire was designed with the aim of evaluating the aspects hindering the evolution of the product manager studied in the previous section. It aims at guiding the respondents to reflect on how they deal with these changes, and which factors influence the most their abilities of evolution.

First, all the interviewees consider the changes and evolutions of their role as challenging, as it impacts a wide range of their day-to-day missions. Indeed, this need to continuously adapt in a more and more thorough way is summed up by Interviewee D:

> *"It takes a lot of personal commitment to spot these changes, to see where we need to improve and adapt to growing and ever-changing expectations and to adapt to new methods and ways of working. But it's still very interesting to always have areas of improvement, we're always looking for more, further."* (Interviewee D)

Then, the interviewees were asked to evaluate four aspects delineated in the current literature as the most limiting their abilities to adapt to change. The key findings are gathered in Table 11 below, the elements being classified from 1 (most challenging) to 4 (less impact).

Table 11. Interviewee's evaluation of the main elements hindering adaptation to change according to literature

Elements hindering adaptation to change	Evaluation by the interviewees	Explanations
Fuzziness of the job definition	3	*"It is true that the scope of our missions and our role sometimes encompasses many different areas that are managed more specifically by other teams, so we can't always adapt to changes in this area."* (Interviewee A)
Organizational structure within the company	1	*"The company's organizational structure has a big impact on our ability to adapt, so this is the most important point because it defines everything."* (Interviewee C)
Cross collaboration difficulties	4	*"It is also fairly complex to manage, because if you change even one process, it has an impact on a lot of other people too. By changing even one process, it has an impact on a lot of other people too. It might takes time but it is still possible in my opinion."* (Interviewee F)
Decision-making abilities	2	*"The ability to make decisions plays a crucial role, since without decision-making power, nothing can be adapted."* (Interviewee D)

Thus, while these four elements are considered important challenges for the adaptation abilities of the product managers, two of them seems to have the most impact: the organizational structure of the company and decision-making abilities.

4.5 Assessment of the key trends of the FMCG industry

This part of the questionnaire was designed with the aim of assessing the key trends of the FMCG industry identified in the theoretical part of this research. The interviewees were guided into discussing their perceptions of the most significant industry trends, while rating the perceived importance for product management and the level of adaptation required for product managers regarding these five trends.

The first question was aiming at identifying the most important trends in the FMCG industry according to the interviewees, to identify potential other trends impacting the product managers outside of the five trends identified in the literature review. The five main trends identified in the literature are not yet presented to the interviewees, thus they provided genuine opinion about which trends in the FMCG industry were impacting their work in their opinion without bias. Five main trends emerged across the different answers from the interviewees.

First, the customers are more demanding and have more expectations from the products, pushing product managers to improve continuously their products.

> *"I'd say that customers are increasingly demanding, and trends are constantly changing. This pushes us to constantly improve and change our products. For example, our customers used to look for good value for money, then they turned to superior efficiency even if it meant paying the price, and now they prefer sacrificing slightly quality for more environmentally friendly products."* (Interviewee A)

Second, the urge of the transition towards a more sustainable development is pushing product managers to include new dimensions into the processes of product development.

> *"The rising expectations for companies and products to implement a more sustainable development is forcing us to adapt our products and our general offering in this direction. Indeed, we have been changing our formulas, packaging, claims and sourcing as well to*

adapt to these new requirements. While it provides concrete competitive advantages, it requires a lot of work from our side." (Interviewee C)

Third, product managers are witnessing the strong development of new circuits: e-commerce and hard discounters.

"We have seen a strong increase of our e-commerce sales and also at Action. These new circuits have urged us to completely revise our offer and our marketing plans, with a focus on promotional packages and online promotional events, for example." (Interviewee A)

Finally, the inflation growing exponentially in the last two years, urging product managers to adapt their products consequently by implementing revalorization strategies.

"With inflation, our volumes fell drastically. We had to react very quickly to regain growth in value, and we reviewed our portfolios, particularly our formats and claims, to enhance the value of our offering." (Interviewee F)

In the end, the five main trends identified by the interviewees were all very linked to the five trends identified in the current literature, at the only exception of the inflation, which occurred recently and haven't been evoked in the literature studied in the context of this research.

The interviewees also have been asked to evaluate the impact of the five following trends impacting the FMCG industry according to the literature: technological innovation and digital transformation, increasing customer expectations, need for data-driven decision-making, growing call for sustainability and social responsibility and, relentless competition and shift of private labels. The average rankings of these five trends by the interviewees is detailed below in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Interviewee's average assessment of the five trends.

Legend:

1: Technological innovation and digital transformation

2: Increasing customer expectations

3: Need for data-driven decision-making

4: Growing call for sustainability and social responsibility

5: Relentless competition and shift of private labels

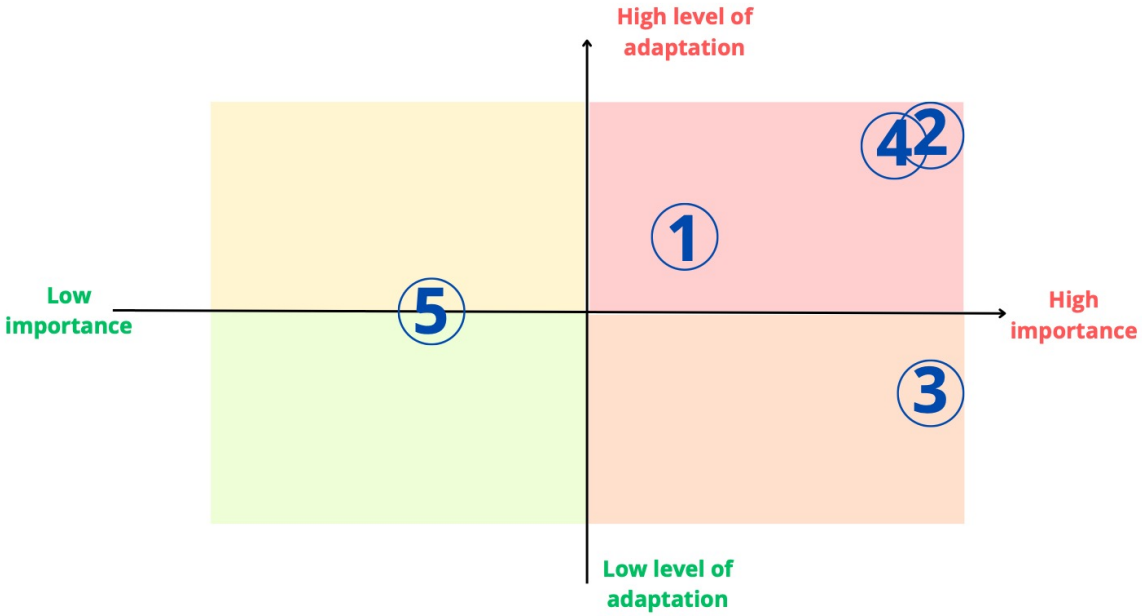


Figure 9 highlights the key findings concerning the five trends impact on product managers in terms of importance for the role and level of adaptation required. The main trend impacting the most product managers is therefore unanimously the increasing customers' expectations. Each participant grade five out of five for the two characteristics.

"Our clients, whether retailers or consumers, are at the heart of our company and of the brand, so answering their expectations is truly our number one priority. So, I would give a 5 to the importance. And a score of 5 too for the adaptation required, because we must constantly improve our products and offer new ones. Especially in the FMCG industry and for our products because customer loyalty is more uncertain, so we need to deliver more and better." (Interviewee F)

The second main trend, very close as well as quite linked to the previous one, is unanimously the growing call for sustainability and social responsibility. Each participant graded above four out of five for the two characteristics.

"I put a 4 on the importance, as it is increasingly crucial for our clients and consumers, but on the other side there is always a risk on the image with the risk of greenbashing. The benefit is often uncertain and difficult to evaluate despite the importance of the trend. However, it is a 5 concerning the adaptation as it requires rethinking and rebuilding a large part of the company and its products, while at the same time being persuasive with consumers." (Interviewee A)

The third most important trend is technological innovation and digital transformation. The grading of this trend was quite ambivalous. Indeed, it is a strong trend with a determining importance for processes and techniques within the company. However, it was not seen as important concerning the inclusion of technology within the product itself as only superpremium consumer goods companies need to include advanced technology in their product. Hence, the perceived need for adaptation varied consequently the diverse importance perceptions.

"3 for importance. There are so many possible developments, especially for our working methods. For example, when it comes to competitive analysis, we have lots of softwares and even Google, which brings everything is at our fingertips. But our products aren't very technologically advanced, so it's not really that important for us. And 4 for adaptation. It is still a long process to include them in our processes. And above all, we cannot always afford the cost of advanced technology." (Interviewee D)

The trend in fourth position is the need for data-driven decision-making. Despite its crucial importance, the perceived level of adaptation seems more facilitated to the interviewees.

"I would put 4. It is very important for effective product management, because we want to rely on accurate figures to make the best possible decisions. But the risk is that we are too quickly overwhelmed by the vast amount of data that is available nowadays, so we need to sort it out and be able to limit ourselves to the key facts. In terms of adaptation, I would put it at 2, since we already have access to numerous platforms such as Nielsen, which are unfortunately not free but are very efficient." (Interviewee B)

The trend in fifth position is the relentless competition and shift of private labels. Its importance and level of adaptation are unanimously seen as less crucial according to the interviewees. Indeed, surprisingly FMCG product managers consider global competition as part of the FMCG industry configuration and also do not compare their performances to private labels products as consider playing in a different category within the market.

"They take a great share of market shares, but we have totally different positioning, offerings and means, so we cannot compare our products' performances with PL product's. It is not our core competition, and we benefit from a strong brand image. We don't really adapt according to their actions on the market." (Interviewee A)

4.6 Adaptation to changes in role, missions, responsibilities, tools and capabilities

This part of the questionnaire consists of the evaluation of the influence of FMCG trends on product managers (PM) capabilities to adapt to changes in role, missions, responsibilities, tools and capabilities, with a deepened analysis taking into account each of the five main FMCG trends identified in the current literature. Table 12 below highlights the key findings of the qualitative research.

Table 12. Assessment of the influence of FMCG trends on PM capabilities to adapt to changes in role, missions, responsibilities, tools and capabilities

FMCG trend	Influence	Explanations
Technological innovation and digital transformation	Missions Tools Capabilities	"*Operational management has migrated to platforms. All our validation processes take place on these platforms. They help us to be more efficient, and they also enable us to keep a record of all the decisions we make*." (Interviewee F) "*We now have access to online training on a platform developed by the company to help us develop our skills*." (Interviewee A) "*Databases have considerably improved, allowing us to easily access and manage a huge set of data. But this is a double-edged sword, as it also makes the analysis more complex. For example, we have access to sales data from all the distributors, and increasingly from the hard discounters, which gives us increasingly precise and representative insights*." (Interviewee B)
Increasing customer expectations	Missions Responsibilities Capabilities	"*The biggest challenge is speed. We must launch an innovation before competitors or react as quickly as possible when our competitors launch an innovative new product appreciated by consumers. That's why we must be proactive, attentive to market trends, and move processes forward as quickly as possible. It urges us to develop products quickly and get them to market very quickly,*

		requiring us to adapt our operational speed, and speed up our processes." (Interviewee E)
Need for data-driven decision-making	Role Missions Responsibilities Tools	"*Data-driven decision making is definitely a great help. We can dig deep into phenomena, understand them better and therefore make informed decisions. We have a clearer vision of what works and what doesn't. It makes it much easier for us to make bolder decisions."* (Interviewee C) *"It is a key element for persuading people, especially marketing directors and other stakeholders, because the figures represent concrete arguments, it is hard to discuss them."* (Interviewee A) *"It is easier to make predictions that are not too far from reality. We can adapt more easily to the constantly changing market context by anticipating and making more certain decisions."* (Interviewee D)
Growing call for sustainability and social responsibility	Role Competencies Responsibilities Capabilities	*"It is changing our role, because we're not just selling products anymore, there's a whole more eco-responsible approach that is emerging."* (Interviewee F) *"We have to be innovative, offering new concepts that are more respectful of the environment while still being highly effective. For example, as aerosols are affected by a negative image regarding naturalness, we developed gas-free sprays. It took a lot of work to achieve an equivalent quality, as well as convincing consumers that these products had the same use and were just as effective. This also involved new claims, new logos, new packaging, and clear, transparent names for the consumer."* (Interviewee A)
Relentless competition and shift of private labels	Missions Responsibilities Tools	"*The harsh battle for market share has been reinforced with the inflation. Many consumers have tight budgets and are looking for price-competitive options. We have to double-up our efforts in terms of strategy, marketing and distribution to remain competitive. But we still have a brand image that allows us to remain very competitive in the market."* (Interviewee B)

		"We have been working on a premiumization of our offer to optimize the loss in volume and keep stable value sales." (Interviewee B)

4.7 Urge to strengthen relations with more diverse stakeholders

This part of the questionnaire consists of the evaluation of the influence of FMCG trends on the need of product managers to strengthen relations with more diverse stakeholders, both internal and external, with a deepened analysis taking into account each of the five main FMCG trends identified in the current literature. Table 13 below highlights the key findings of the qualitative research.

Table 13. Assessment of the influence of FMCG trends on the need of product managers to strengthen relations with more diverse stakeholders, both internal and external

FMCG trend	Influence	Explanations
Technological innovation and digital transformation	Both internal and external	*"Yes, especially with the strong development of e-commerce. We have seen the development of an e-commerce division within the company, which has grown considerably and with which we work closely. We've also brought in a new agency to develop content for social networks, and we have also benchmarked new communications agencies for influence, and more recently for micro-influence."* (Interviewee B) *"We are much more in direct contact with our consumers, who can share their opinions and recommendations on an increasingly diverse range of platforms."* (Interviewee C)
Increasing customer expectations	Both internal and external	*"We are working more closely with the I&A team, which gives us more precise insights about our consumers. They are carrying out more and more qualitative interviews."* (Interviewee F) "*When developing the whole reporting side, we developed our relations with Nielsen. This enabled us to develop our reporting tools to better meet consumer expectations."* (Interviewee A)

		"We strengthened our relations with retailers, particularly through the sales teams, with whom we are increasingly in contact. This enables us to adapt our offer and develop fairer relationships and contracts." (Interviewee D)
Need for data-driven decision-making	Both internal and external	*"We don't have much more stakeholders involved, we just strengthened our relationship with our databases providers."* (Interviewee A) "*As explained earlier, we are also working more closely with the I&A team to develop a database that's more in line with consumer reality. This enables us to gather the insights we need to make data-driven decisions."* (Interviewee F)
Growing call for sustainability and social responsibility	External	*"We have many new partners, whether in terms of supply, environmental standards or social NGOs. For example, the partnership with the state and an association to develop clean, more welcoming and bullying-free toilets in primary schools, to avoid children holding back all day because they don't want to go, which causes health problems in the long term."* (Interviewee A)
Relentless competition and shift of private labels	None	*"Not really. Perhaps more collaboration between the marketing teams and the trade marketing teams, or the sales teams."* (Interviewee E)

4.8 Deeper focus on short-term strategy instead of long-term strategy

This part of the questionnaire consists of the evaluation of the influence of FMCG trends on emphasizing immediate responsiveness leading to a deeper focus on short-term strategy and tactical tasks instead of long-term strategy, with a deepened analysis taking into account each of the five main FMCG trends identified in the current literature. Table 14 below highlights the key findings of the qualitative research.

Table 14. Assessment of the influence of FMCG trends on emphasizing immediate responsiveness leading to a deeper focus on short-term strategy and tactical tasks

FMCG trend	Influence	Explanations
Technological innovation and digital transformation	Long-term	*"Technological innovation is more of a long-term project. We must discover them, think about how to include them in our products or processes, before we can implement them."* (Interviewee E)
Increasing customer expectations	Short-term	*"We must be increasingly reactive to the new market trends. We are urged to react in the moment rather than thinking about customers' future needs over the longer term, which is increasingly uncertain and harder to analyze."* (Interviewee F) *"We are very short-term oriented, since contracts with retailers are renegotiated every year, and this is the opportunity to launch our new products or relaunches. Thus, we have to define the strategy, define the marketing plan, develop the products and put the marketing mix in place in the space of a year, often with several different projects. This means that we must be very focused on our strategy and actions over the course of a year."* (Interviewee B)
Need for data-driven decision-making	Long-term	*"Not really. On the contrary, it encourages us to analyze phenomena in detail, the performance of our products and those of our competitors, how the market is doing and what the emerging trends are, for example. I'd say that it urges us to focus on the long term."* (Interviewee A) *"In my opinion, it allows us to make more considered decisions and therefore less tactical ones."* (Interviewee C)
Growing call for sustainability and social responsibility	Short-term	*"We are under pressure to offer more sustainable products. We look for the quickest and least expensive solutions to offer our customers more responsible products before or at the same time as our competitors. But sometimes we wonder whether it might not have been more effective to take the time to prepare a long-term plan, of five or even 10 years, to innovate better and more sustainably."* (Interviewee D) *"To develop more environmentally friendly formulas or packaging, we sometimes have to call on external factories*

		instead of our own, because it would be too costly and time-consuming to reorganize all our factories in such a short period. And now that we're using partners, I doubt that we'll be moving our production back into our own factories any time soon." (Interviewee B)
Relentless competition and shift of private labels	Short-term	*"Sometimes we can be obsessed by what our competitors are doing and be tempted to react immediately. There's kind of a danger for our products when a competitor launches a new product that performs very well. We immediately want to do the same. But sometimes it's better to take more time to launch a better innovation that might perform better or be more in line with the brand's identity."* (Interviewee B) *"Everything changes so quickly. I find it hard to take a step back and take the time to look at more long-term objectives."* (Interviewee A)

4.9 Increasingly unclear perception of the role and missions of product manager

This part of the questionnaire consists of the evaluation of the influence of FMCG trends on the increasingly unclear perception of the role and missions of the product manager, with a deepened analysis taking into account each of the five main FMCG trends identified in the current literature.

As seen in section 4.2., the interviewees presented a complete understanding of their role and missions as product managers. Despite the literature detailing the increasing fuzziness about the role, due to the numerous changes it faced across the years, the product managers seem to link this fuzziness to the very role of product managers, and not to the five main FMCG trends identified. Instead, they just acknowledge the wide scope of their role as product managers.

> *"It is true that the scope of our missions and our role sometimes encompasses many different areas that are managed more specifically by other teams, so we can't always adapt to changes in this area."* (Interviewee A)

But they do not recognize any of the five FMCG trends identified as increasing the unclear perception of their role and missions.

"I don't think any of these trends makes my job fuzzier. It can be quite fuzzy in some way, but not due to technological innovation, customer expectations, data-driven decision-making, sustainability or private labels." (Interviewee D)

4.10 Develop or improve more diverse capabilities and skills

This part of the questionnaire consists of the evaluation of the influence of FMCG trends on developing or improving more diverse capabilities and skills, with a deepened analysis taking into account each of the five main FMCG trends identified in the current literature. Table 15 below highlights the key findings of the qualitative research.

Table 15. Assessment of the influence of FMCG trends on developing or improving more diverse capabilities and skills

FMCG trend	Capabilities and skills developed or improved
Technological innovation and digital transformation	- Mastering new platforms - More complete databases knowledge - More accurate analysis of the market, customers, or competitors - New management tools - Easier to collaborate with remote contacts by video, particularly with people in other countries - New products and strategy development for Action & Ecom - Improved time management
Increasing customer expectations	- Communication - Understanding consumer needs and anticipating them - Marketing strategies - Proactiveness - Effective project management
Need for data-driven decision-making	- Improved analytical skills - Better decision-making - Better identification of opportunities

Growing call for sustainability and social responsibility	- Knowledge of environmental regulations - Ability to assess the environmental impact of products - Creativity and problem-solving to find new solutions
Relentless competition and shift of private labels	- Proactivity - Competitors' analysis

4.11 Organizational structure hindering the adaptation

This part of the questionnaire consists of the evaluation of the organization structure of the company's influence on PM abilities to adapt to the new requirements induced by the following FMCG trends, with a deepened analysis taking into account each of the five main FMCG trends identified in the current literature. Table 16 below highlights the key findings of the qualitative research.

Table 16. Assessment of the organization structure of the company's influence on PM abilities to adapt to the new requirements induced by the following FMCG trends

FMCG trend	Influence	Explanations
Technological innovation and digital transformation	Enabling	*"We often have training courses to learn how to use the software or when new digital processes are introduced."* (Interviewee F) *"Following the development of e-commerce, an e-commerce department was quickly created within the company."* (Interviewee B)
Increasing customer expectations	Hindering	*"Sometimes a little more flexibility in the processes could enable us to bring products to market more quickly."* (Interviewee A) *"I would like to be able to do product testing, i.e. to develop a product on a small scale to see if it can work at national level. This would allow us to strike a balance between the risk of failure with a large-scale product and the potential loss of revenue due to a successful innovation not launched."* (Interviewee C)
Need for data-driven decision-making	Hindering	*"Sometimes I would like to follow my instincts a little more. The figures point us in the direction of what all the competitors will also be doing. Why not try to think outside the box a little."* (Interviewee E)

Growing call for sustainability and social responsibility	Hindering	*"The primary aim will always be to make profits. We can do a bit better, but it's hard in a multinational company to get things moving."* (Interviewee D)
Relentless competition and shift of private labels	Hindering	*"Our innovations are developed globally, at the head office, so we are rather limited not only in developing new products locally but also in adapting products to the French market."* (Interviewee A) *"The predefined processes make it difficult to adapt as quickly as we would like."* (Interviewee C)

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter aims at summarizing the findings and providing answers to the research question that was defined at the beginning of the research as well as the four sub-research questions defined that will help providing detailed and complete answers. Furthermore, this chapter aims at drawing the theoretical contributions of the research and its managerial contribution. Finally, the limitations of the study will be evaluated and will enable the researcher to provide suggestions for future research.

5.1 Summary of the findings

This research has the main objective of answering the following main research question: "***How do the latest trends and changes in expectations within the FMCG industry affect product managers?".*** Four sub-research questions have been developed to help frame the answer to this research question. Alongside with the sub-research questions, six propositions have been formed to guide the research part of the thesis.

The first sub-research question is the following: **"*What is the impact of FMCG trends on product management?"***. One proposition has been formed and evaluated through qualitative interviews to investigate this sub-research question.

➔ *Proposition 1: FMCG current trends enable product management with more opportunities for product innovations and renovations.*

Concerning the trend of technological innovation and digital transformation, the interviewees tend to think this trend enables product management with more opportunities for product innovations and renovations. Indeed, it grants access to wide databases with increasingly precise data, which allows more accurate analysis of the market, customers and competitors as well. Thus, product managers can develop better forecast, and quickly analyze the performance, allowing them to access better opportunities for product innovations and renovations. Additionally, the digitalization of the processes made the product managers more efficient and allowed an improvement of the time management. As a consequence, product managers are now able to launch a drastically increasing number or

innovations and renovations each year, confirming the unlocked potential. Finally, the emergence of ecommerce also provided new opportunities for product managers, who could adapt their portfolios to the specific needs of the circuit, with specific formats or marketing operations.

Concerning the trend of increasing customer expectations, the interviewees tend to think this trend enables product management with more opportunities for product innovations and renovations. Indeed, as the changes in the market occur more quickly and customer's expectations are shifting continuously, product managers must adapt in a more thorough way their product, to include as quickly as possible the latest changes in expectations. They always have new opportunities for changes and thus innovations or renovations, such as including new circuits in the strategy, creating new products with new features, a new packaging, a new formula, new claims or else, therefore implementing new strategies. In addition, the increasing customers' expectations urge product managers to deepen their attention towards market trends and customers, allowing them to act more quickly in developing and adapting their portfolios.

Concerning the trend of the increasing need for data-driven decision-making, the interviewees tend to think this trend enables product management with more opportunities for product innovations and renovations. Indeed, it is an efficient helping tool for new product development: product managers are urged to support their decisions with concrete data, helping them to dive into the market needs and understand them better, therefore making bolder but supported decisions. Furthermore, data-driven decision making makes the negotiations with internal such as marketing directors and external stakeholders such as the clients, retailers, way easier as the innovations and renovations can be justified by concrete data and facts.

Concerning the trend of the growing call for sustainability and social responsibility, the interviewees tend to think this trend enables product management with more opportunities for product innovations and renovations. Indeed, it urges product managers to rethink their portfolio including new perspectives and they are enabled in making their portfolios more environmentally friendly, or even launch innovations more respectful of the environment.

Concerning the trend of relentless competition and shift of private labels, the interviewees tend to think this trend enables product management with more opportunities for product

innovations and renovations. Indeed, product managers must adapt their portfolios with renovations and innovations to keep up with the increasing competition, whether from national brands or private labels. They must renew their portfolio and strengthen their proposition to convince clients and keep space on shelf, and they must convince customers to maintain their value sales.

Thus, **Proposition 1 is supported by the findings**: FMCG current trends enable product management with more opportunities for product innovations and renovations.

The second sub-research question is the following: ***"How did the role and missions of the product manager evolve according to these trends?"***. Three propositions have been formed and evaluated through qualitative interviews to investigate this sub-research question.

➔ *Proposition 2: FMCG current trends urge product managers to strengthen their relations with more diverse stakeholders, both internal and external to the company.*

Concerning the trend of technological innovation and digital transformation, the interviewees tend to think this trend urge product managers to strengthen their relations with more diverse stakeholders, both internal and external to the company. Indeed, new internal stakeholders have emerged, such as ecommerce department, and the product managers relations have been strengthened with external stakeholders such as influence and micro-influence agencies for social media visibility, or even directly with consumers as they can post reviews or communicate with the company more easily on the Internet.

Concerning the trend of increasing customer expectations, the interviewees tend to think this trend urge product managers to strengthen their relations with more diverse stakeholders, both internal and external to the company. Indeed, product managers' relations have been strengthened with both internal departments such as the I&A team, or the people in charge of consumer trends analysis, whether internal or external, as well as external stakeholders such as retailers, the direct clients, to be able to satisfy their changing needs.

Concerning the trend of the increasing need for data-driven decision-making, the interviewees tend to think this trend urge product managers to strengthen their relations with more diverse stakeholders, both internal and external to the company. Indeed, they must develop their relations with external database providers and internal or external analytical teams to get the most data and therefore to make the most accurate decisions.

Concerning the trend of the growing call for sustainability and social responsibility, the interviewees tend to think this trend urge product managers to strengthen their relations with more diverse stakeholders, especially external to the company. Indeed, they must develop partnerships with new suppliers, factories, providers, transport agencies, NGOs and others to build more sustainable and socially responsible products and brands.

Concerning the trend of relentless competition and shift of private labels, the interviewees tend to think this trend wasn't influencing the urge product managers to strengthen their relations with more diverse stakeholders, both internal and external to the company.

Thus, **Proposition 2 is supported by the findings**: FMCG current trends urge product managers to strengthen their relations with more diverse stakeholders, both internal and external to the company, at the exception of relentless competition and shift of private labels.

➔ *Proposition 3: FMCG current trends emphasize immediate responsiveness leading to a deeper focus on short-term strategy and tactical tasks instead of long-term strategy.*

Concerning the trend of technological innovation and digital transformation, the interviewees tend to think this trend do not lead to a deeper focus on short-term strategy and tactical tasks and rather enable a better focus on long-term strategy. Indeed, this trend require more analysis and taking the time to understand its change as well as how it can be used by product managers. Indeed, FMCG products are not primarily impacted by new technology, and the digital transformations are enablers for long-term strategy are they require time to be processed and included in the daily tasks of the product manager.

Concerning the trend of increasing customer expectations, the interviewees tend to think this trend emphasize immediate responsiveness leading to a deeper focus on short-term strategy and tactical tasks instead of long-term strategy. Indeed, the quick pace of the changes induced urge product managers to react as soon as possible to develop or maintain their competitive advantages. This pressure is enhanced by the yearly renegotiation of the contracts with retailers, which urge product managers to implement the change in alignment with the retailers' fixed deadlines.

Concerning the trend of the increasing need for data-driven decision-making, the interviewees tend to think this trend do not lead to a deeper focus on short-term strategy and tactical tasks and rather enable a better focus on long-term strategy. Indeed, it urges product

managers to focus on a reasoning based on a growing and more complex set of data, requiring time for analysis and understanding to define the next steps, thus focusing more on longer-term strategy.

Concerning the trend of the growing call for sustainability and social responsibility, the interviewees tend to think this trend emphasize immediate responsiveness leading to a deeper focus on short-term strategy and tactical tasks instead of long-term strategy. Indeed, similarly to the trend of increasing customer expectations, the pressure induced by the growing customer's expectations regarding sustainability and social responsibility lead product managers to focus more on tactical tasks and proactivity.

Concerning the trend of relentless competition and shift of private labels, the interviewees tend to think this trend emphasize immediate responsiveness leading to a deeper focus on short-term strategy and tactical tasks instead of long-term strategy. Indeed, similarly to the trend of increasing customer expectations, the pressure of competitiveness induced lead product managers to focus more on tactical tasks and proactivity.

Thus, **Proposition 3 is quite ambivalently supported by the findings**: only three FMCG current trends urge product managers to strengthen their relations with more diverse stakeholders, both internal and external to the company, namely the increasing customer expectations, the growing call for sustainability and social responsibility and the relentless competition and shift of private labels, which are interlinked. On the contrary, technological innovation and digital transformation and increasing need for data-driven decision-making lead to a deeper focus on long-term strategy for FMCG product managers.

➔ *Proposition 4: Product managers perceive their role and missions as increasingly unclear due to the FMCG current trends.*

The interviewees did not recognize any of the five main trends of the FMCG industry as impacting their perception of their role and missions as increasingly unclear. Indeed, product managers seems to link this fuzziness to the very role of product managers and its wide scope by definition, and not to the five main FMCG trends identified.

Thus, **Proposition 4 is not supported by the findings:** Product managers do not perceive their role and missions as increasingly unclear due to the FMCG current trends.

The third sub-research question is the following: ***"How do they adapt in terms of methods, tools and capabilities?"***. One proposition has been formed and evaluated through qualitative interviews to investigate this sub-research question.

➔ *Proposition 5: FMCG current trends push product managers to develop or improve more diverse capabilities and skills.*

Concerning the trend of technological innovation and digital transformation, the interviewees tend to think this trend push product managers to develop or improve more diverse capabilities and skills. Indeed, it enable product managers to develop new capabilities and skills, such as mastering new platforms, more accurate analytical capabilities and skills, new management tools more efficient, better time management, new collaboration capabilities and skills, as well as deeper new product development capabilities.

Concerning the trend of increasing customer expectations, the interviewees tend to think this trend push product managers to develop or improve more diverse capabilities and skills, such as communication, consumer understanding and knowledge, accurate marketing strategy definition, proactiveness and project management skills.

Concerning the trend of the increasing need for data-driven decision-making, the interviewees tend to think this trend push product managers to develop or improve more diverse capabilities and skills, such as improved analytical skills, better decision-making abilities, and better identification of opportunities.

Concerning the trend of the growing call for sustainability and social responsibility, the interviewees tend to think this trend push product managers to develop or improve more diverse capabilities and skills, such as deepened knowledge of the environmental regulations, the ability to assess the environmental impact of their portfolios and problem-solving skills with deepened creativity.

Concerning the trend of relentless competition and shift of private labels, the interviewees tend to think this trend push product managers to develop or improve more diverse capabilities and skills, such as proactivity and deepened competitors' analysis skills.

Thus, **Proposition 5 is supported by the findings:** FMCG current trends push product managers to develop or improve more diverse capabilities and skills.

The fourth sub-research question is the following: ***"What limits do they encounter hindering the adaptation to changes? How to overcome those limits?".*** One proposition has been formed and evaluated through qualitative interviews to investigate this sub-research question.

➔ *Proposition 6: The organizational structure of the company still lacks adaptability thus remaining the biggest challenge for the adaptation of product managers to FMCG trends' new requirements.*

Concerning the trend of technological innovation and digital transformation, the interviewees tend to think the organizational structure of the company enables the adaptation of product managers to the new requirements induced by FMCG trend. Indeed, the companies often offers various formations to the product managers to facilitate their adaptation to the new processes, tools and requirements induces by technological innovation and digital transformation. Furthermore, the companies seem flexible enough for adapting their structures to the new requirements, such as the development of ecommerce teams within the companies for example.

Concerning the trend of increasing customer expectations, the interviewees tend to think the organizational structure of the company hinders the adaptation of product managers to the new requirements induced by FMCG trend. Indeed, product managers which for more flexibility in the processes and product launch opportunities within their companies, which might remain too restricting to a certain extent for now.

Concerning the trend of the increasing need for data-driven decision-making, the interviewees tend to think the organizational structure of the company hinders the adaptation of product managers to the new requirements induced by FMCG trend. Indeed, to a certain extent, product managers see data-driven decision-making as hindering creativity and the opportunity for out of the box innovations.

Concerning the trend of the growing call for sustainability and social responsibility, the interviewees tend to think the organizational structure of the company hinders the adaptation of product managers to the new requirements induced by FMCG trend. Indeed, companies's structure and processes might remain focus on profits instead of developing more sustainable and socially responsible models, which requires much adaptation on the long term and strong investments.

Concerning the trend of relentless competition and shift of private labels, the interviewees tend to think the organizational structure of the company hinders the adaptation of product managers to the new requirements induced by FMCG trend. Indeed, the interviewees are part of international companies, where R&D and innovation are controlled at the global level, hindering the potential opportunities for local innovations and adaptations.

Thus, **Proposition 6 is supported by the findings:** The organizational structure of the company still lacks adaptability thus remaining the biggest challenge for the adaptation of product managers to FMCG trends' new requirements, at the exception of technological innovation and digital transformation.

5.2 Theoretical contributions

The previous section summarizes the qualitative study's findings interpretation and particularly the analysis of the propositions developed based on the theoretical part of the research regarding the data set collected. This section also aims at interpreting the findings by comparing them to the existing literature studied in the theoretical part of the research to provide answers to the four sub-research questions developed at the beginning of the thesis.

SQ1: What is the impact of FMCG trends on product management?

The literature review highlighted the broad scope of product management, for which numerous definitions and points of view are possible, as shown with the various examples of definitions displayed in the section 2.1.1 of this research. The literature emphasized on the difficulty to develop a universal definition of product management, and on the fuzziness of the product manager's role. Indeed, Brown and Eisenhard (1995) evoked the remaining ambiguity regarding the role and responsibilities of the product manager which vary greatly depending on the product, firm and industry studied. However, this study supports in a way these findings, as product managers in the specific industry of FMCG were able to provide similar and clear definitions of product management and product managers, as well as the role, responsibilities, missions and capabilities linked. Therefore, product management and product manager's definitions must be defined in a smaller concept, at the industry level, to be generalized and continuous. In this context of a definition focused on the industry, the

clarity of the role definition is not impacted by the current trends, no matter their importance regarding the role.

Furthermore, Ebert's definition of product management (2007) focus on the missions of the product manager, who is responsible for each stage of product management from the development of the strategy to the operational implementation, product launch, after sales service, and product retirement. However, in the light of Tyagi and Sawhney contribution (2010), product management as a central role in the organization as it represents the key responsibilities of introducing new products and effectively managing the life cycle of existing products, therefore directly impacting the growth and profitability of the firm. Thus, the two main areas of product management which has the greater impact on the company's competitive advantages are identified as product innovations and product renovations. The research focused on these two main components of product management and highlighted the positive effect of the main trends impacting FMCG industry on these two key elements. Indeed, the findings support the fact that the five main trends identified as impacting FMCG industry enable product management with more opportunities for product innovations and renovations, and thus have a positive impact on product management.

The findings of this study also defined a more specific knowledge about the specific impact of each of the five trends on product management. Indeed, the increasing customer expectations and the growing call for sustainability and social responsibility are the most impacting trends on product management in terms of importance and level of adaptation required for product managers. Technological innovation and digital transformation is relatively important and requires adaptability but to a lesser extent as it depends highly on the level of technology needed by the products, often reduced for fast moving consumer goods. The need for data-driven decision-making is also strong in terms of importance and required adaptability but its opportunities are more mitigated. Finally, the relentless competition and shift of private labels is the less impacting trend, as it quite acknowledged by product managers and they tend to consider private labels as a specific category of products with which they compare less their portfolios.

SQ2: How did the role and missions of the product manager evolve according to these trends?

First, Lysonski (1985) developed a framework of the product manager's internal and external stakeholder (Figure 6), highlighting the importance for product managers to be in contact with both internal and external stakeholders such as companies, retailers, customers, competitors and else. According to Wood and Tandon (1994), a strong change in the environment impact the role of the product manager, requiring more contact with customers, retailers and internal stakeholders. The empirical part of this research validated this theory, as product managers acknowledged the recent need to develop relationships of strengthen existing ones according to the following FMCG trends: technological innovation and digital transformation, increasing customer expectations, need for data-driven decision-making and growing call for sustainability and social responsibility.

Second, Tyagi and Sawhney (2010) highlighted the risks in quickly changing times for product managers to focus on tactical activities instead of the key missions of strategical planning activities. According to the research findings, FMCG product managers indeed would like to spend less time on problem-solving, stakeholders' coordination and resources and budget management, and rather spend more time on strategical activities such as strategy development, life-cycle management and product development, as well as innovation (see Table 10). Thus, the findings of this research show that product managers spend more time than they wish on tactical activities. The analysis of the current and future challenges impacting the FMCG industry in Section 2.3 showed the trends impacting the industry were important and how they were accelerating in the last years, leading FMCG companies to quickly reshape their products, processes and push further their value offerings. According to the findings of this research, FMCG current trends do not automatically induce immediate responsiveness leading to a deeper focus on short-term strategy and tactical tasks instead of long-term strategy. Indeed, only three FMCG current trends urge product managers to strengthen their relations with more diverse stakeholders, both internal and external to the company, namely the increasing customer expectations, the growing call for sustainability and social responsibility and the relentless competition and shift of private labels, which are interlinked. On the contrary, technological innovation and digital transformation and increasing need for data-driven decision-making lead to a deeper focus on long-term strategy for FMCG product managers.

Third, the literature review explained the fuzziness of the product manager role by the numerous historical changes and evolutions since the first theorization in the 1930's, detailed

in Section 2.3., stressing how confuse the product manager's concept is. The findings of the research contradict the literature as the product managers do not link the fuzziness of their job to the changes in the FMCG industry, and they even seem to have a clear idea of their role, missions, and responsibilities.

SQ3: How do they adapt in terms of methods, tools and capabilities?

The literature review highlighted how the new trends – among technological innovation and digital transformation (Schrock, 2019; Haas et al, 2022), increasing customer expectations (Davidson et al, 2014; Delberghe et al, 2022), need for data-driven decision-making (McLeod, 2022 ; Fan et al, 2014; Haynes, 2022; Leece et al, 2022), growing call for sustainability and social responsibility (Am et al, 2022; Gutterman, 2023), as well as relentless competition and shift of private labels (Kelly et al, 2018; Gielens et al, 2021) – are shaping the new profile of product managers expected by companies.

Haines (2014) defined the roadmap of the product manager's main areas of work and tools based on the product management life cycle model, represented in Figure 4. This roadmap aims at defining product management as the process of bringing products from idea conception to final sale. It is divided in four main areas of work defined as Discovery and Innovation, New Product Planning, New Product Introduction and Post-Launch Product Management (Haines, 2014).

However, the Fast-Moving-Consumer-Good industry requires specific new methods, tools and capabilities to keep up with the diverse and interlinked trends. Indeed, the findings of the research support the literature review, as FMCG current trends push product managers to develop or improve more diverse capabilities and skills. To do so, they must provide personal commitment to learn and adapt to new methods, tools and capabilities detailed in the previous section. They might be helped in this adaptation by their company's structure and tools such as flexibility, will and resources to adapt, and formations to develop their skills.

SQ4: What limits do they encounter hindering the adaptation to changes? How to overcome those limits?

According to the literature, four main criterion hinders the adaptation to changes. First, Loughlin et al. (2020) and Hise & Kelly (1978) highlights the need for companies to adapt their organizational system to be more integrative of the external environment and

stakeholders. Second, Tyagi and Sawhney (2010) companies need to favor multi-level cross department collaboration to build more effective product management system. Third, Tyagi and Sawhney (2010) and Loughlin et al. (2020) stated that the role of the product manager must be clearly defined, through scope and performance criteria. Fourth, Lysonski et al. (1995) and McDaniel (1980) asserted the need for companies to acknowledge possible changes in responsibilities, decision-making and processes depending on external events and circumstantial requirements. This theoretical background was supported by the findings, as the four hindering elements stated – fuzziness of the job definition, organizational structure, cross collaboration difficulties and decision-making abilities – were seen as hindering their potential adaptation to changes in the industry by product managers. The findings of the research enabled a classification of these criterions, from the most to least crucial. The adaptability of the organizational structure within the company should be the number one priority, followed by improved decision-making abilities, clear definition of the scope of product manager position, and finally more efficient and easy cross collaboration.

Concerning the organizational structure of the company adaptability, the findings revealed that companies are proving efficient regarding the trend of technological innovation and digital transformation. Indeed, they seem to adapt quite well to this trend by transforming its processes and structure. However, organizational structure still lacks enough adaptability to adapt to changes regarding increasing customer expectations, need for data-driven decision-making, growing call for sustainability and social responsibility as well as relentless competition and shift of private labels.

5.3 Additional contributions

The previous section summarizes the theoretical contributions of this research, by focusing on providing answers to the four sub-research questions developed at the beginning of the thesis. This section aims at highlighting additional theoretical contributions of this research by focusing on three main subjects that emerged from the research without previous theorization in the literature nor study in the questionnaire designed for this research.

The first one is the recent strong impact of the inflation on product management. Indeed, since 2022 FMCG companies are struggling with a drastic fall of their volume sales. There is not enough perspective on the events for this topic to be covered by the literature.

However, the interviewees evoked the pressure of this new trend, highly impacting their position as they must revise their production, sourcing and logistic costs pressuring their management and opportunities, adjust their prices, rationalize their product lines. Indeed, their aim is primarily finding back growth in value and leading the return to growth of the market or segments. Also, product managers should keep in mind the need for finding back volume sales, but this preoccupation remains secondary as it must be planned on a longer term.

The second one is that product managers in the FMCG industry tend to focus more on their clients. Indeed, Figure 4 illustrates the interactions between the product manager and his environment, highlighting the need for the product manager to work closely with both external stakeholders, such as consumers, competitors, retailers and the global market in which the firm is operates, and internal stakeholders represented by the various firm departments taking part in the product development process (Lysonski, 1985). However, this research highlighted the common trait across product managers to focus on their primary clients, distributors, instead of their customers/users.

The third one is the surprising disregard and low consideration on the fifth trend of relentless competition and shift of private labels. FMCG companies are facing rising competition with the development of private labels products – brands generally owned and marketed by retailers – which are improving their value proposition by focusing mainly on price and quality attributes, while increasingly focusing on sustainability, ethics, social responsibility, and image, in line with the shifting customers' expectations (Gielens et al, 2021). Thus, the current literature highlights the trend of relentless competition and shift of private labels as a trend reshaping the FMCG industry. However, this research findings reveal that FMCG product managers at the opposite considers private labels as a separated category of products, to which they do not compare their brands and products performances. Indeed, most of them believe in the differentiation of their products or brand as premium enough to not be impacted by private labels products.

5.4 Managerial implications

Since its introduction in the 1930's (McElroy, 1930), product management developed quickly until being used by about 85% of consumer package goods industries in the 70's

(Buell 1975). Furthermore, product management is a key determinant to companies' success in the market: product management remains a crucial determinant of a company's success, as it encompasses planning and executing product strategies activities and it remains essential to the creation or management of the company's competitive advantages (Lysonski,1985). However, a gap has been identified among the current literature available. Indeed, poor amount of literature about product management and product managers has been published in the recent years, the previous literature focus on product management and the role of product manager as broad concepts without focusing on a specific industry, the recent studies focus on new types of product management despite the primary type of product management is still a key to unlocking the companies' and products' potential, and finally too few studies evaluate the current changes in the FMCG industry and their impact within the company, and more specifically product management.

Therefore, this research has concrete applications to the managerial field due to its aim of exploring the impact of FMCG industry's trends on product management and more specifically how the latest trends and changes in expectations within the industry affect product managers, impacting product management globally as well as their specific role, missions, and responsibilities. Within this scope, the research aims at fulfilling four fundamental objectives regarding the evolution of product management in the FMCG industry destined both to FMCG companies and product managers in the FMCG industry. First, the research aims at providing a clearer and contemporary definition of product management and deeper knowledge about the product manager's role, missions, and responsibilities in the FMCG industry. Second, the research aims at developing a deeper understanding of the main trends affecting the FMCG industry – technological innovation and digital transformation, increasing customer expectations, need for data-driven decision-making, growing call for sustainability and social responsibility as well as relentless competition and shift of private labels – and assessing the importance of their impact on product management. Third, the research aims at reviewing the main changes in the role, missions and responsibilities of the product manager and exploring how they adapt in terms of methods, tools, and capabilities to these new trends. Finally, the research aims at exploring the potential reasons for failure or causes of drawbacks in the adaptation to changes for product managers to help avoid or prevent product's induced failure.

Finally, this research aims at providing a better understanding of the concepts of product managers and product management, the role, tools, capabilities and skills required, as well as the areas of improvement regarding the adaptation to FMCG industry's changes. This research thus highlights the need for providing a structure and deeper understanding to improve the education of product managers and therefore reduce the gap between what universities and schools teach versus the concrete requirements of this position in this specific industry. Indeed, while the changes of the FMCG industry are accelerated across the latest years, the need to adapt the product managers' education to the new requirements of the FMCG industry seems more and more crucial. It might enable product managers and FMCG companies to apprehend better these trends and improve the adaptation to certain trends which seems to be persistent since the origins of product management and have not been solved since then.

5.5 Limitations

This section aims at discussing the potential limitations of the research. Indeed, the scope of the research is limited to exploring the role of product managers within the FMCG industry in France, and therefore may not be applicable to other positions within the company, other industries or other countries. Furthermore, the population of interviewee was largely composed of product managers working in international groups, thus the findings might not be applicable to smaller companies or start-ups for example.

Concerning the validity of the findings, some limitations result from the very definition of qualitative interviews. Indeed, qualitative interviews' findings might be affected by subjectivity and bias, as the definition of the questionnaire and the analysis of the data depends on the researcher's knowledge, interpretations and judgments. However, this risk is mitigated by the deep analysis of the literature which enabled the researcher to achieve a deeper knowledge and to broaden her perspectives in order to avoid overlooking potential aspects of the research.

Additionally, the questionnaire was consistent, leading to interviews lasting more than one hour. Despite the questionnaire was designed to ensure the validity of the result and the limitation of biases by leading the interviewees to reflect on the various subjects before being

introduced to the findings gathered in the theoretical part of the research, its length might have impacted the quantity and depth of concrete details in the answers.

5.6 Suggestions for future research

The limitations of the study being outlined, the researcher aims at providing suggestions for future research in this part of the thesis. First, concerning its scope, the research could be used as a basis for conducting similar research for other positions, industries or countries, such as exploring the subject regarding the luxury industry, or at the European Union scale. This research could also be used as a basis for conducting mor specific studies regarding the type of FMCG industry – food and beverages only for example – or depending on the competitive positioning of the company in the market – leader, challenger, follower, outsider – or its size – micro, small, medium or large – which might present different trends and challenges for product managers.

Regarding the validity of findings, the use of quantitative data analysis could enable a bigger scale for the study and therefore ensure more deeply the generalization of the findings, while enabling the collection of quantifiable data. Additionally, the use of quantitative data analysis and quantifiable data could enable the researcher to eliminate control questions in the questionnaire therefore reducing the length of the interview while ensuring the validity of the data.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview questionnaire (English version)

Interview questions

Introduction
- Introduction of the thesis topic
- Goal and use of the interview
- Anonymity and confidentiality reminder

The profile of the interviewee
- What is the title of your current position?
- What type of products or line of products are you responsible for?
- What is your professional background? Which path did you undertake to reach the role of product manager? How many years of experience do you have in the role of product manager? In the industry of FMCG?

Organization profile
- Which type of products does your company sell among Food and beverages, Toiletries, Household products, Health products?
- Can you briefly describe your customers and target market?
- What is your company's positioning in the market? Leader, Challenger?

What is product management and product manager
- How would you define product management? Can you classify these attributes from most to least important?
- How would you define product manager? Can you classify these attributes from most to least important?
- What are your main responsibilities?
- In your opinion, what are the 3 main advantages and 3 main downsides of the position of product manager?

The perceived evolution of the product manager
- How would you define your actual role as product manager in the company?
    - Did you notice changes over the last years?
    - How would you describe your desired role evolution?
- What percentage of your time do you dedicate to each of your main missions?
    - What percentage of your time would you want to dedicate to each of these missions?
- Do you think you have new responsibilities that emerged due to the new trends?
- Could you describe your capabilities and tools you use as a product manager? What do you feel you need to improve? Do you feel improvement is enabled by your organization?

Aspects hindering the evolution of product management
- How do you adapt to these changes in role, missions, responsibilities, tools and capabilities? Is it easy or Hard? Why?
- Can you evaluate how the following elements influence your capabilities to adapt to changes in role, missions, responsibilities, tools and capabilities as a product manager? Can you classify these six elements from the biggest enabler to the least enabler and explain why?
        - Fuzziness of the job definition

- Organizational structure within the company
- Cross collaboration difficulties
- Decision-making abilities

Assessment of the key trends of the FMCG industry

- In your opinion, what are the key trends impacting the most your company? How do they impact your work?
    - Can you rate the importance of the benefit/downside and the level of adaptation required out of 5? Can you explain why?
- According to the current literature, the 5 following trends are impacting the FMCG industry. *(NB for the writer: explain what this trend refers to).* Can you rate the importance of the benefit/downside and the level of adaptation required out of 5? Can you explain why?
    - Technological innovation and digital transformation
    - Increasing customer expectations
    - Need for data-driven decision-making
    - Growing call for sustainability and social responsibility
    - Relentless competition and shift of private labels

P1: Can you evaluate how the following FMCG trends influence your capabilities to adapt to changes in role, missions, responsibilities, tools and capabilities as a product manager? Why? Can you provide concrete examples?

- Technological innovation and digital transformation
- Increasing customer expectations
- Need for data-driven decision-making
- Growing call for sustainability and social responsibility
- Relentless competition and shift of private labels
- Others?

P2: Do you think current FMCG trends urge product managers to strengthen their relations with more diverse stakeholders, both internal and external to the company. Why? Can you provide concrete examples?

- Technological innovation and digital transformation
- Increasing customer expectations
- Need for data-driven decision-making
- Growing call for sustainability and social responsibility
- Relentless competition and shift of private labels
- Others?

P3: For each of the following FMCG current trends, do you think they emphasize immediate responsiveness leading to a deeper focus on short-term strategy and tactical tasks instead of long-term strategy. Why? Can you provide concrete examples?

Technological innovation and digital transformation

- Increasing customer expectations
- Need for data-driven decision-making
- Growing call for sustainability and social responsibility
- Relentless competition and shift of private labels
- Others?

P4: Do you think the following FMCG trends are affecting the way you perceive your role and missions of product manager as increasingly unclear? Why? Can you provide concrete examples?

- Technological innovation and digital transformation
- Increasing customer expectations
- Need for data-driven decision-making
- Growing call for sustainability and social responsibility
- Relentless competition and shift of private labels
- Others?

P5: Do you think that the following FMCG current trends push product managers to develop or improve more diverse capabilities and skills? Can you explain why and provide concrete examples of new capabilities and skills?

- Technological innovation and digital transformation
- Increasing customer expectations
- Need for data-driven decision-making
- Growing call for sustainability and social responsibility
- Relentless competition and shift of private labels
- Others?

P6: Do you think that the organizational structure of the company often lacks adaptability, thus hindering the adaptation of product managers to the new requirements induced by the following FMCG trends? Can you explain why and provide concrete examples?

- Technological innovation and digital transformation
- Increasing customer expectations
- Need for data-driven decision-making
- Growing call for sustainability and social responsibility
- Relentless competition and shift of private labels
- Others?

Conclusion

- Is there anything you would like to add?
- Explain what I will do next

Estimated duration: 1h-1h30

Appendix 2. Interview questionnaire (French version)

Questions de l'interview

Introduction
- Présentation du projet de thèse
- Explication de l'objectif et de l'utilisation de l'interview
- Rappel des modalités d'anonymat et de confidentialité

Profil du répondant
- Quel est l'intitulé de votre poste actuel ?
- Quel type de produits ou gammes de produits êtes-vous responsable ?
- Pouvez-vous présenter rapidement vos précédentes expériences professionnelles ? Comment avez-vous accédé au poste de chef de produit ? Combien d'années d'expérience avez-vous en tant que chef de produit ? Dans le secteur des PGC ?

Profil de l'organisation
- Quel type de produits votre entreprise vend-elle parmi : produits alimentaires et boissons, produits de beauté, produits ménagers, produits pharmaceutiques ?
- Pouvez-vous décrire brièvement vos consommateurs et votre marché cible ?
- Quelle est la position de votre entreprise sur le marché ? Leader, Challenger ?

Qu'est-ce que la gestion de produit et le responsable de produit
- Comment définiriez-vous la gestion de produit ? Pouvez-vous classer ces attributs par ordre d'importance ?
- Comment définiriez-vous un chef de produit ? Pouvez-vous classer ces attributs par ordre d'importance ?
- Quelles sont vos principales responsabilités ?
- Selon vous, quelles sont les 3 principaux avantages et les 3 principaux inconvénients du poste de chef de produit ?

L'évolution perçue du responsable de produit
- Comment définiriez-vous votre rôle actuel en tant que chef de produit dans votre entreprise ?
    - Avez-vous remarqué des changements au cours des dernières années ?
    - Comment décririez-vous votre évolution de rôle souhaitée ?
- Quel pourcentage de votre temps consacrez-vous à chacune de ces missions ?
    - Quel pourcentage de votre temps souhaiteriez-vous consacrer à chacune de ces missions ?
- Pensez-vous qu'il vous a été attribué de nouvelles responsabilités liées aux nouvelles tendances de l'industrie ?
- Pourriez-vous décrire les aptitudes et outils essentiels au chef de produit ? Que pensez-vous avoir besoin d'améliorer ? Selon vous, votre organisation facilite-t-elle ces améliorations ?

Les entraves à l'évolution de la gestion de produit
- Comment vous adaptez-vous à ces changements de rôle, de missions, de responsabilités, d'outils et de compétences ? Est-ce facile ou difficile ? Pourquoi ?
- À quel point les éléments suivants influencent votre capacité à vous adapter aux changements de rôle, de missions, de responsabilités, d'outils et de compétences en tant

que responsable de produit ? Pouvez-vous classer ces six éléments du plus grand facilitateur à l'entrave la plus importante et expliquer pourquoi ?

- Flou autour de la définition du poste
- Structure organisationnelle au sein de l'entreprise
- Difficultés liées aux enjeux de collaboration transversale
- Niveau de prise de décision accordé

Évaluation des principales tendances de l'industrie des PGC

- Quelles sont les principales tendances qui impactent le plus votre entreprise ? Comment impactent-elles votre travail ?
  - Pouvez-vous évaluer l'importance de l'avantage/inconvénient et le niveau d'adaptation requis sur 5 ? Pouvez-vous expliquer pourquoi ?
- Selon la littérature actuelle, 5 tendances ont un impact majeur sur l'industrie des PGC. (*NB : expliquer à quoi cette tendance fait référence*). Pouvez-vous évaluer l'importance de l'avantage/inconvénient et le niveau d'adaptation requis sur 5 ? Pourquoi ?
  - Innovation technologique et transformation numérique
  - Des clients de plus en plus exigeants aux attentes croissantes
  - Nécessité de fonder les prises de décision sur des données concrètes
  - Importance croissante accordée au développement durable et à la responsabilité sociale (critères ESG)
  - Concurrence acharnée et changement des marques de distributeur

P1 : À quel point ces tendances influencent-elles votre capacité d'adaptation aux évolutions du rôle, des missions, responsabilités, outils et compétences d'un chef de produit ? Pourquoi ? Des exemples concrets ?

- Innovation technologique et transformation numérique
- Des clients de plus en plus exigeants aux attentes croissantes
- Nécessité de fonder les prises de décision sur des données concrètes
- Importance croissante accordée au développement durable et à la responsabilité sociale (critères ESG)
- Concurrence acharnée et changement des marques de distributeur
- Autres ?

P2 : Pensez-vous que ces tendances poussent les chefs de produit à renforcer leurs relations avec un spectre plus large d'acteurs, internes et externes à l'entreprise ? Pourquoi ? Des exemples concrets ?

- Innovation technologique et transformation numérique
- Des clients de plus en plus exigeants aux attentes croissantes
- Nécessité de fonder les prises de décision sur des données concrètes
- Importance croissante accordée au développement durable et à la responsabilité sociale (critères ESG)
- Concurrence acharnée et changement des marques de distributeur
- Autres ?

P3 : Pensez-vous que ces tendances forcent une réactivité immédiate, décuplant l'attention accordée à la stratégie court terme et aux tâches tactiques, au détriment de la stratégie long terme ? Pourquoi ? Des exemples concrets ?

- Innovation technologique et transformation numérique
- Des clients de plus en plus exigeants aux attentes croissantes
- Nécessité de fonder les prises de décision sur des données concrètes

- Importance croissante accordée au développement durable et à la responsabilité sociale (critères ESG)
- Concurrence acharnée et changement des marques de distributeur
- Autres ?

P4 : Pensez-vous que ces tendances affectent la manière dont vous percevez votre rôle et vos missions de responsable de produit de manière de plus en plus floue ? Pourquoi ? Des exemples concrets ?

- Innovation technologique et transformation numérique
- Des clients de plus en plus exigeants aux attentes croissantes
- Nécessité de fonder les prises de décision sur des données concrètes
- Importance croissante accordée au développement durable et à la responsabilité sociale (critères ESG)
- Concurrence acharnée et changement des marques de distributeur
- Autres ?

P5 : Pensez-vous que les tendances de l'industrie des PGC poussent les chefs de produit à développer ou améliorer de nouvelles compétences et des aptitudes plus diverses ? Pourquoi ? Des exemples concrets de compétences et aptitudes ?

- Innovation technologique et transformation numérique
- Des clients de plus en plus exigeants aux attentes croissantes
- Nécessité de fonder les prises de décision sur des données concrètes
- Importance croissante accordée au développement durable et à la responsabilité sociale (critères ESG)
- Concurrence acharnée et changement des marques de distributeur
- Autres ?

P6 : Pensez-vous que la structure organisationnelle de l'entreprise manque souvent de souplesse, entravant ainsi l'adaptation des chefs de produit aux nouvelles exigences induites par ces tendances ? Pourquoi ? Des exemples concrets ?

- Innovation technologique et transformation numérique
- Des clients de plus en plus exigeants aux attentes croissantes
- Nécessité de fonder les prises de décision sur des données concrètes
- Importance croissante accordée au développement durable et à la responsabilité sociale (critères ESG)
- Concurrence acharnée et changement des marques de distributeur
- Autres ?

Conclusion

- Aimeriez-vous ajouter quelque chose ou compléter un point évoqué ?
- Expliquer les prochaines étapes du projet

Durée estimée : 1h-1h30

Appendix 3. Interviewee consent form (English version)

INTERVIEWEE'S CONSENT FORM

MSc student in double diploma (International Marketing and Business Development at Skema Business School and International Marketing Management at LUT University), I am undertaking qualitative interviews of product managers in the FMCG industry, within the scope of my research in the topic area of "**Exploring the evolution of product management in the FMCG industry**".

Please confirm your wish to participate in my study by reading the detail below and signing to indicate that 1) you have been fully informed about the study, 2) that you understand what participation mean and 3) what will happen to the results.

By signing this consent form, I declare that:

- I have been provided with the opportunity to take into consideration the information about the above project, ask all the questions I wanted, and have had them answered satisfactorily.
- I am fully aware of what is expected from me. I understand that I will be asked a set of questions, which I am supposed to answer as honestly as possible.
- My decision to participate in this study is fully voluntary. I also understand that I am free to leave at any time without providing any reason.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use my data within a week after it has been collected. I understand that in this case my data will be deleted and will not be used for this research.
- I give my permission to the researcher – Agathe GOURANTON – and her supervisors – Professor Olli Kuivalainen and Professor Peter SPIER – to have access to the data provided by me during the data collection process.

- I understand that my data will be treated with care and confidentiality. I also understand that it will not be given to any third party and will be disposed of after six months from the study completion date (December 2023).
- I understand that regardless of the type of data provided by me during this study, my identity and the identity of individuals I speak about will remain anonymous.

Participant name

_____

Participant signature

_____

Date

_____

Appendix 4. Interviewee consent form (French version)

FORMULAIRE DE CONSENTEMENT

Étudiante en Master dans le cadre de mon double diplôme – International Marketing and Business Development à Skema Business School et International Marketing Management à LUT University, je réalise des entretiens qualitatifs avec des chefs de produits travaillant au sein de l'industrie des produits de grande consommation, dans le cadre de ma thèse de master intitulée "**Exploration de l'impact des nouvelles tendances de l'industrie des PGC sur la gestion de produit**".

Veuillez confirmer votre volonté de participer à cette recherche en lisant les informations détaillées ci-dessous et en signant ce formulaire pour indiquer que : 1) vous avez été pleinement informé(e) de l'objet de la recherche, 2) vous comprenez ce que signifie votre participation et 3) dans quelle mesure vos réponses seront utilisées.

En signant ce formulaire de consentement, je déclare que :

- On m'a donné la possibilité de prendre en considération les informations concernant le projet de recherche mentionné ci-dessus, de poser toutes les questions que je souhaitais et d'avoir reçu des réponses satisfaisantes.
- Je suis pleinement conscient(e) de ce qui est attendu de ma part. Je comprends que l'on me posera un ensemble de questions auxquelles je suis censé(e) répondre aussi honnêtement que possible.
- J'ai pris la décision de participer à cette étude da façon entièrement volontaire. Je comprends également que je suis libre de me retirer à tout moment sans avoir à fournir d'explications.
- Je comprends que je peux retirer l'autorisation d'utiliser mes données dans un délai d'une semaine après leur collecte. Je comprends que, dans ce cas, mes données seront supprimées et ne seront pas utilisées pour cette recherche.

- J'autorise la chercheuse - Agathe GOURANTON - et ses superviseurs de thèse - Professeur Olli Kuivalainen et Professeur Peter SPIER - à avoir accès aux données que je fournis au cours du processus de collecte de données.
- Je comprends que mes données seront traitées en toute sécurité afin de maintenir la confidentialité. Je comprends également qu'elles ne seront pas transmises à des tiers et qu'elles seront détruites six mois après la date de fin de l'étude (décembre 2023).
- Je comprends que, quel que soit le type de données que je fournisse au cours de cette étude, mon identité et l'identité des personnes dont je parle resteront anonymes.

Nom du/de la participant(e)

_____

Signature du/de la participant(e)

_____

Date

_____