Customer Journey Management Within B2B E-commerce

A case study on how to implement Customer Journey Management

Master's thesis in Quality and Operations Management

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SUMMARY

In light of increasing competition and technological advancements, organizations are moving towards adopting customer-centric approaches. However, in their pursuit to reach customer-centricity, organizations tend to rely more on their internal beliefs instead of adequately capturing and addressing customer feedback. Customer journey management—the strategic process of mapping, evaluating, and optimizing customer interactions and experiences across many touchpoints—can increase customer satisfaction and foster business success. However, academic research on customer journey management (CJM) implementation and utilization is lacking, highlighting the need for additional research.

This study aims to fill a gap in the literature by examining the implementation of CJM within a B2B e-commerce wholesaler. An inductive qualitative case study was used to achieve this. Semi-structured interviews with four customer segments and literature reviews have been used to iteratively create a customer journey map based on client feedback. Based on this data, potential improvements were developed.

In conclusion, an eight-step model has been developed to facilitate the implementation of CJM. Each stage includes explanations of important considerations to take into account when carrying out the tasks. This model encompasses understanding the customer journey, industry, and business. It involves dividing the customer journey into touchpoints, collecting data to analyze the customer journey, and forming a generic journey map. By identifying areas for improvement and generating feasible suggestions, enhancements can be developed and implemented. It is important to note that this process is iterative and continuous, ensuring ongoing refinement and optimization.

Keywords: *Customer journey, customer journey map, customer journey management, touchpoints, B2B, customer-centric, customer satisfaction.*

Acknowledgments

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Description of key terms

This section will give a short explanation of terms used throughout the thesis with the aim of simplifying the comprehension of them.

Touchpoint – Any direct or indirect interaction an individual has with a company.

Customer Journey – A composition of all touchpoints that an individual generally experiences before, during, and after a purchase.

Customer Journey Map – Visualization of the customer journey with customer satisfaction index, customer behavior, and development potential at each touchpoint.

Customer Journey Management – A tool in strategic management that can be used to better understand and improve the customer journey.

B2B (Business-to-Business) - business activities such as marketing and sales of products and services geared towards the business world (National Encyclopaedia, n.d., a).

E-commerce (Electronic commerce) – Online commerce and distance commerce conducted via fixed or mobile data communication (National Encyclopaedia, n.d., b).

1. Introduction

This chapter contains background information on the research topic, the studied case company, as well as the aim, research questions, delimitations, and the disposition of the study.

1.1 Research topic

The adoption of a customer-centric approach has gained notable importance due to the rising utilization of digital technologies and intensifying competition in the market. The adoption of a customer-centric approach, which prioritizes the identification and fulfillment of unique customer needs instead of treating all consumers uniformly, can result in a rise in sales (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Kotler et al. (2012) suggest that organizations that prioritize customer-centric strategies are more likely to foster a satisfied and loyal customer base. Organizations that focus on customer-centricity are also more proficient at adapting to market fluctuations and technological advancements, which can result in increased long-term profitability and growth (Colin, 2017).

Understanding the discrete phases, the customers encounter with an organization and the factors that influence them holds notable importance for any business aiming to increase its customer-centricity (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). These encounters are called touchpoints and refer to distinct entities such as locations, individuals, or tools that customers come across during their journey of buying a product or service (De Keyser et al., 2020). These touchpoints are accompanied by contextual factors, surroundings, and conditions that influence the customer experience. Additionally, the characteristics and features of these touchpoints play an important role in shaping the overall customer experience. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) posit that customers can interact with an organization at three different stages of the customer journey, pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase.

Customer journey mapping helps visualize these touchpoints and how customers interact with them (Rosenbaum et al., 2017a). They continue by defining customer journey maps as a visual representation of the entity comprised of multiple touchpoints and interactions between a customer and a product or service provider that constitute the customer's overall experience. Typically, customer journey maps depict touchpoints horizontally in accordance with a process

timeline and list all potential organizational touchpoints that customers may encounter during the service exchange procedure (Rosenbaum et al., 2017a).

While comprehending and analyzing the touchpoints depicted in a customer journey map, it is a common mistake to assume that all touchpoints are of equal importance (Rosenbaum et al. 2017b). Consequently, managers tend to exaggerate how customers will perceive their interactions with the organization. In addition, they emphasize the importance of focusing on the most important client interactions. Developing a customer journey map and using the information gained from customer insights can lead to several advantageous outcomes, including effective utilization of resources, the promotion of innovation, and the development of corporate strategies based on customer values (Norton and Pine 2013). Customer journey management (CJM) is the term used to describe this strategy (Grewal & Roggeveen, 2020).

Additionally, the goal should be to align corporate strategy with the customer-centric experiences and touchpoints that add the most value to the customer's overall journey (Norton & Pine 2013). However, CJM research is fragmented and lacks coherence (Rusthollkarhu et al. 2022). Although there has been a surge in attention toward customer journeys, the management of Business-to-Business (B2B) customer journeys is infrequently deliberated. Sales and marketing teams often tackle journey-related concerns, although with distinct conceptualizations that focus on a restricted number of touchpoints (Norton & Pine, 2013). This approach overlooks the difficulty of connecting touchpoints across various channels to achieve a cohesive customer experience. Consequently, a notable gap ensues due to the decentralization of CJM among various teams in an organization.

In conclusion, CJM is complex and varied containing a wide range of factors that have an impact on it. Understanding the diverse phases of the customer journey and the determinants that impact them is imperative for organizations striving to enhance their customer-centric approach when developing new improvements. However, current research on the implementation of this tool is limited to only three steps. Understanding the customer journey, analyzing it, to then make customer-centric developments based on these insights (Lemon & Verhoef (2016), (De Keyser et al, 2020). However, there is a scarcity of thorough literature on the implementation of CJM and what elements that should be considered in the process. This absence has generated an academic motivation in exploring the tool further and developing a

comprehensive guide on its implementation in B2B organizations, as well as identifying key considerations for successful implementation.

1.2 Aim

This thesis aims to explore how a B2B organization operating in e-commerce can implement customer journey management to support strategically making decisions regarding developments. Due to the current scarcity of academia's knowledge on how to apply the tool, this study aims to examine and act as a starting point in how CJM should be applied in practical operations. Its results will then be compared with the current insufficient existing theory on the subject, to conclude how to effectively implement CJM, and key factors to consider during the implementation process.

1.3 Research question

To achieve the stated aim, two research questions have been formulated. These questions aim to facilitate understanding and advance academic knowledge regarding the implementation of customer journey management, and what a B2B e-commerce organization needs to consider when trying to implement the tool.

Research question 1: *How can a B2B e-commerce company effectively implement customer journey management to guide development work?*

Research question 2: *What are key factors to consider for a B2B company operating in e-commerce when implementing customer journey management?*

1.4 Delimitations

To answer the research questions, the thesis will conduct a case study at a wholesale company within B2B e-commerce. The case company will be actively used to analyze the implementation of customer journey management and how it can be utilized as a tool for strategic management decisions. Thus, the thesis will be limited to only the B2B e-commerce wholesale industry. Moreover, within the vast landscape of customer interactions, the thesis will narrow its scope to three distinct customer segments. The first segment, potential customers, comprises potential customers who have taken the initial step of creating an account

on the company's website but have yet to proceed with their inaugural order or have only placed a first order but not a second one. New customers that have placed their first order during the last two months formulate the second customer segment. The third segment involves large customers, distinguished by their track record of placing over 150 orders. Lastly, the attention turns to the former customers, who used to be actively purchasing customers but have abruptly ceased their ordering activities.

1.5 Disposition of thesis

The thesis will be structured into six different chapters. Chapter 1, Introduction, presents the research topic and question to the reader. Subsequently, Chapter 2 presents a theoretical framework that establishes the theoretical underpinnings of the thesis. Chapter 3 outlines the research design and methodology used in the thesis. The chapter also delves into the thesis's trustworthiness and ethical considerations. Chapter 4, which consists of Results and Analysis, presents the empirical findings that have been systematically categorized and analyzed. Chapter 5 entails a comprehensive evaluation of the results and analysis in relation to the theoretical framework, both in relation to the case company and general discussion. Lastly, the final chapter of the study, Chapter 6, presents an answer to the research question and puts forth recommendations for future research endeavors.

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter contains theories about relevant subjects that will help in answering the research question presented in the previous chapter. The theory has been divided into subchapters to structure the information.

2.1 B2B relations

Interactions that occur between organizations when they pursue to buy or sell a product or service can be referred to as B2B relations (Hutt & Speh, 2019). The basis of forming B2B relations lies in the ability of organizations to create value for one another, which should be included in the market offerings (Pawlowski & Wiechetek, 2022). The success of B2B relations could lead to further trading between organizations, thus contributing to economic growth not only for the involved organizations but also for the business world (Hutt & Speh, 2019).

The establishment and maintenance of trust between organizations is a crucial factor for the continuation of B2B transactions (Gummesson, 2017). In certain instances, B2B relations may necessitate formal agreements and extended obligations, thereby requiring a high degree of reliance on the part of organizations regarding their partners. For organizations to achieve such objectives, it may be imperative to establish close bonds among their respective stakeholders and formulate robust legal structures and mechanisms for handling conflicts that may arise.

According to Geehan (2011), the majority of purchasing decisions for a product are not made by the end users themselves. Hence, it is crucial for organizations to ascertain the genuine requirements and preferences of the ultimate decision-maker, in addition to those of the end user, while selling a product or service. Furthermore, the process of developing products or services can be enhanced by actively involving decision-makers, thereby promoting a positive relationship between the organization and its customers.

2.2 E-commerce

When an organization uses online platforms to conduct parts of their business, such as buying and selling products or services, it can be referred to as e-commerce (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). What distinguishes e-commerce from traditional offline channels is the involvement of online transactions, which is an important part of conducting business today.

E-commerce will help customers decrease the time and money spent on transactions, thus making organizations' businesses more effective as it is automated through online platforms. The increased efficacy that e-commerce can offer compared to offline channels is one of the main drivers for its rapid growth in recent times (Turban et al., 2018). Additionally, by moving from offline to online channels, the need for physical stores and salespeople decreases, and as a result, organizations will see a decrease in overall costs.

If organizations utilize online platforms, they will also be able to look beyond the close geographical area they might be bound to and reach out to potential customers worldwide (Turban et al., 2018). This is another upside of using e-commerce compared to offline channels as it enables organizations to reach out to a wider market. Thus, firms may increase revenue by forming new collaborations or discovering new business opportunities that were inconceivable using offline methods.

However, there are some drawbacks that can be associated with the implementation of e-commerce. Since the use of online channels entails the transfer of certain sensitive information both internally and externally via online platforms, security is considered a possible pitfall in the use of e-commerce (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Companies must be updated on risks when transferring sensitive data and make sure it can be done in a safe manner. Furthermore, integrating e-commerce into an organization does not come without challenges. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) further emphasize the importance of effective communication when implementing the several online platforms it may take to successfully run their business as e-commerce. Also, if the different systems used are too different it might be difficult to make them communicate effectively without any hurdles.

2.3 Touchpoints

Every time a customer has any type of contact with a company's brand, product, or service, they will form some sort of opinion about it (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010). When a person has a direct or indirect, physical, or digital interaction with a brand or company, these interactions are known as touchpoints (Baxendale et al., 2015; Rudkowski et al., 2020). Herhausen et al. (2019) define it as any one-way (for example, customers observing commercials about the products or service) or two-way (direct contact between customer and people or chat-bot from

the company) interaction between a customer and a company, including interactions between customers, where information or a transaction is exchanged.

2.3.1 Different types of touchpoints

Towers & Towers (2022) explain that there is no common definition of how many or which categories one can divide touchpoints into. However, they found some common threads among previous research and propose that touchpoints can be put into three groups: brand-owned, partner-owned, and touchpoints that neither the brand owner nor the partner can control.

Lemon and Verhoef (2016), argue that there are four types of touchpoints: brand-owned, partner-owned, customer-owned, and external/social. However, they have called for more research to be done on how each category of touchpoints affects one another and the overall customer journey.

According to Witell et al. (2020), it is important for managers to understand the different touchpoints and classify each one correctly. By doing so, they can effectively manage all touchpoints and identify the crucial ones. If managers treat some touchpoints as unimportant early on, it could lead to notable issues further down the customer journey (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). It is also essential that touchpoints are not treated identically, as their functions vary depending on the stage of the customer's journey (Gao et al., 2021).

It is important to manage touchpoints sequentially rather than individually. It will contribute to a more effective method of managing all touchpoints and make it simpler to identify the most important "moments of truth" in the customer journey (Homburg et al., 2017; Lundin & Kindström, 2023). Stein & Ramaseshan (2016) fill in on this and additionally highlight that when identifying and measuring touchpoints, it must be done from the customer's perspective. In this situation, they emphasize how difficult it is to accomplish this because the customer experience is situational, subjective, and dependent on the perspective of the individual customer. This is in line with Helkkula (2011), who shows that all customer interactions are subjective and that everyone has a personal way of thinking about different situations. This further implies that people's opinions can be shaped by more than just one interaction between the company or brand and the customer.

Each touchpoint serves a unique function; therefore, businesses must first determine how to meet customers' expectations at each one (Lund & Kindström, 2023). Since touchpoints are sequentially dependent on one another (Stein & Ramaseshan, 2016), managers need to come up with plans for how to handle touchpoints both individually and sequentially (Lund & Kindström, 2023).

2.3.2 Digital touchpoints

Naturally, there are some differences between physical and digital touchpoints, and De Keyser et al. (2020) have called for additional research on digitalized touchpoints to identify these differences.

Digital touchpoints usually occur during a customer's first interactions with an organization (Lundin & Kindstrom, 2023). For instance, customers may connect with the organization via search engines, company websites, or social media. These digital tools allow customers to initiate contact sooner than they would have physically been able to, extending the beginning of a customer's journey. It also provides the organization with an opportunity to develop search engine optimization or personalized content through social media (Ledford, 2015).

2.3.3 Moment of truth

A touchpoint may include a so-called "moment of truth," which refers to a critical point where the customer interacts with the company and forms an opinion about its brand, product, or service (Homburg et al., 2017). The way the customer feels about the interaction at this critical point depends on how well the company meets the customer's expectations. For example, it could be here that the customer makes the purchase decision based on the experience.

To make a good impression, build customer loyalty, and increase sales, it is important to find the key moments of truth and design customer experiences that meet or possibly exceed customer expectations at given moments (Temkin, 2010).

2.4 Customer Journey

B2B customer journeys are defined as a series of touchpoints across different stages (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Stein & Ramaseshan, 2016). The customer journey consists of three stages of decision-making: pre-purchase, during-purchase, and post-purchase (Lemon & Verhoef,

2016; Towers & Towers, 2022). Towers & Towers (2022) define a customer journey as a customer's engagement with all categories of touchpoints throughout all three stages of the decision-making process. The customer journey is essential to comprehending consumer behavior and developing successful marketing strategies (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Baxendale et al. (2015) highlight that the majority of existing research focuses on specific parts of the customer journey instead of giving a full picture of all customer touchpoints. Additionally, many companies often tend to focus on individual touchpoints rather than the entire customer journey (Rudowski et al., 2020). Lemon and Verhoef (2016) also highlight this and explain that all touchpoints, from pre-purchase to post-purchase, contribute to the overall customer experience. They further emphasize that customer journeys are iterative and change over time, which makes it even more important to take a step back and observe all the touchpoints in the customer's journey.

Customer experience is an important marketing factor that can influence customer satisfaction, loyalty, and support (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). It is essential to evaluate the many stages of the customer journey that can be seen in Figure 1 to comprehend the full customer experience.

Grewal & Roggeveen (2020) propose a different view where the customer journey may not always take a linear route. Instead, it can be seen as a circular process where previous experiences from the last journey have an impact on the current journey. They also imply that customers may sometimes skip the "pre-purchase" stage and go straight to the "during purchase" stage.
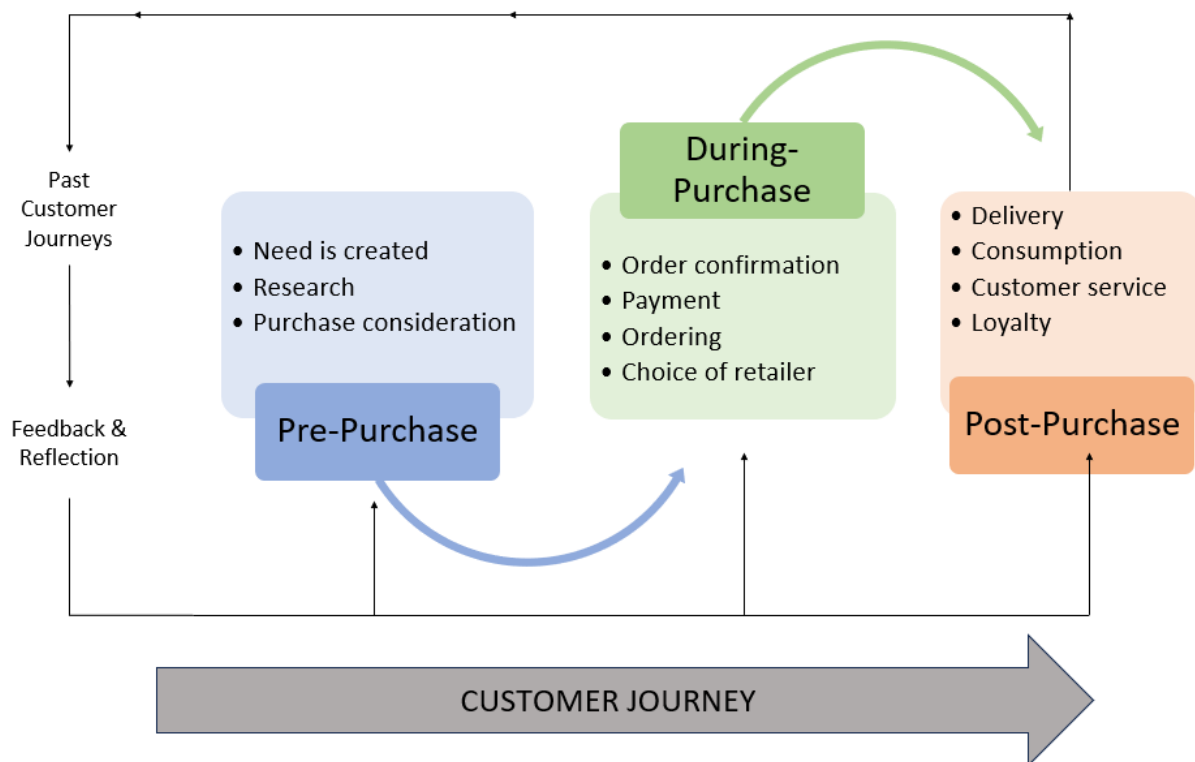
Figure 1: The foundations of a customer journey (Adopted Lemon & Verhoef, 2016)

In the context of a digital environment, customers assume a notably more participatory role in the customer journey (Lundin & Kindström, 2023). They highlight the potential for organizations to decrease the overall quantity of touchpoints through the implementation of digital touchpoint sequences and those that facilitate concurrent interaction among multiple actors. The process of digitizing the customer journey may involve the synchronization and consolidation of additional touchpoints. In this context, the significance of individual relationships and exchanges is diminished, as the customer's experience is contingent upon the seamless integration of all digital touchpoints.

According to Lundin and Kindström (2023), the implementation of digitalized B2B customer journeys facilitates the creation of pertinent touchpoint sequences that effectively guide customers and could generate new value-added opportunities. Having more transparency, information, and a more complete overview of the entire customer journey can enhance the organization's control and increase the possibility to affect the customer experience. In turn, digitalizing the customer journey enables organizations to design and develop touchpoint sequences as well as support their execution (Lundin & Kindström, 2023).

2.4.1 Pre-purchase

As defined by De Keyser et al. (2020), all of a customer's interactions with a given touchpoint prior to making a purchase fall under the "pre-purchase" stage. During the pre-purchase stage, customers engage in activities such as information search, option evaluation, and decision-making (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). At this point, to ensure an excellent customer experience, companies must provide customers with relevant and valuable information and make the decision-making process as simple as possible.

Digital touchpoints are typically more common in the pre-purchase phase of the customer journey (Lundin & Kindström, 2023). These digital touchpoints at the beginning of the customer journey give customers more information and make it easier for them to move on in their journey, which could make later stages shorter.

2.4.2 During purchase

The during purchase-stage involves the customer's interactions with touchpoints during the purchase decision and action (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). This includes the customer's choice, placing an order, paying for it, picking it up, or getting it delivered. As the initial point of direct interaction between a customer and a company, this phase is crucial for influencing the whole customer experience (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Therefore, organizations need to ensure that for every customer, the during purchase-stage is streamlined and convenient with actions being taken to problems that may occur. This is in line with Herhausen et al. (2019) who state that organizations should make sure that the customer journey is efficient for customers purchasing the products or services they need.

2.4.3 Post-purchase

Lastly, the post-purchase stage comprises the customer's experience following the purchase (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). It includes touchpoints that relate to how the products or services are used and consumed, such as brand communities. This phase is crucial for shaping the customer's opinion of the company and their likelihood to make future purchases or recommend it to others. Companies must make sure that the customer is satisfied with their purchase and quickly fix any problems. Pizzutti et al. (2022) propose that in this phase, touchpoints that involve information searches for products or services are for the most part initiated by the customer. They further point out that it is a great opportunity for the organization to initiate

contact with customers and give more information during or after the consumption of the product or service.

2.5 Customer Journey Map

A key component of creating a thorough understanding of the customer experience is mapping a visualization of the touchpoints (Srinivasan et al., 2002). A customer journey map is a visual representation of the sequence of interactions a customer has with an organization during the entire customer journey (Rosenbaum et al., 2017a). By mapping out the touchpoints and listing important information at each of them, managers will develop a better understanding of the customer journey as a whole (Stein & Ramaseshan, 2016). It will also provide the opportunity to develop an overview of the customer experience from a customer's perspective (Helouani, 2021).

Although it was initially and successfully proposed for B2C markets, Temkin (2010) has developed a five-step model for how a company can map its customers' journeys. The first step is to collect all the existing knowledge and insights the company has about its customers. This can be done by cross-functionally collecting different perspectives of the company's customers, which will foster stakeholder involvement at an early stage.

Temkin (2010) continues by explaining that the second step is to generate hypotheses. Groups frequently have very different customer images; therefore, it is important to have cross-functional communication and sort through these to form a unified opinion. He also suggests that when developing the hypotheses, it is also important to create a map of the expected journey. This can then be used to visualize the expectations of the insights. In the end, it may also be interesting to save this to investigate the similarities and differences between the initial and the actual customer journey map.

The third step is to investigate the customer's processes, needs, and perceptions. According to Temkin (2010), while businesses know a lot about their customers, this knowledge is often skewed in favor of the company. To clarify the matter, companies can have a good idea of who their customers are but have less control over their behavior. Companies must broaden their perspectives to include the customer's perspective to obtain a more comprehensive image of the customer. By adopting a customer-centric approach, organizations can enhance their

comprehension of customer behavior (Helouani, 2021). Several methods are available to conduct this process, such as interviews, forms, and self-evaluation, wherein an employee assumes the role of a customer (Temkin, 2010). Customer feedback from page surveys and widgets is also a good source of data for customer journey mapping because it gives the map an idea of what customers think and feel (Helouani, 2021). According to Lemon and Verhoef (2016), companies can also ask customers to create an ideal customer journey map to gain a different perspective.

The fourth stage involves the analysis of the gathered data pertaining to the customers. Temkin (2010) suggests that it is important to provide clear and concise explanations of customer interactions, expectations, and impressions based on the outcomes of the data analysis. Further analysis could be conducted at this juncture to establish a more fundamental viewpoint. Through the process of analyzing genuine user interactions with digital analytical tools, the organization can gain insights into trends across a wider demographic, supplementing the customer data already collected, and thereby achieving a better understanding of how customers interact during the customer journey (Helouani, 2021).

When the company reaches the fifth and final step, it is time to create the customer journey map. This map is created by converting data and analysis into a simplified visualization of how customers perceive the journey (Temkin, 2010). It is critical that customer needs are clearly visible, as this demonstrates how well the company meets them at each stage. Moreover, if the customer identities differ notably, companies can create individual customer journey maps for each identity (Rosenbaum et al., 2017a). The reason for this is that the creation of so-called all-inclusive maps will only depict a customer journey with touchpoints some customers will encounter while others do not. As a result, the company will not be able to visualize the true experiences of their customers. The focus should be on creating maps that derive from up-to-date data from customer experiences to visualize a more realistic map. This is in line with Temkin (2010), who stated that it is critical at this stage to ensure that it is founded on the opinions of the customers.

Jellvert and Lindblom (2021) describe their take on how a generic customer map should be illustrated. To better understand this approach, Figure 2 below will help by illustrating how this should be conducted.
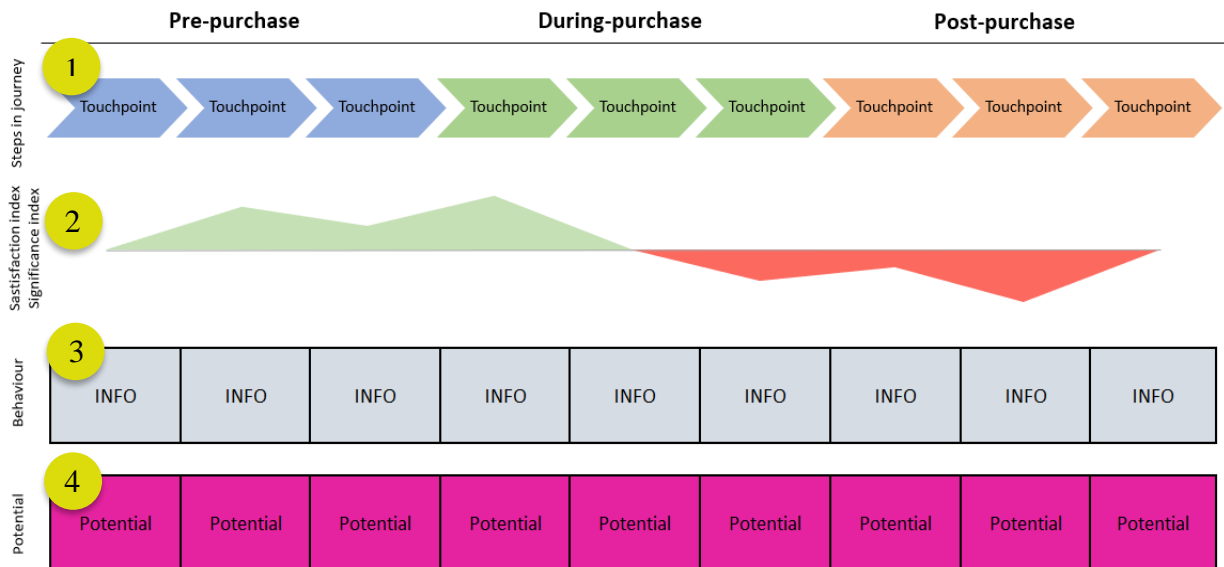
Figure 2: Generic Customer Journey Map (adopted by Jellvert & Lindblom, 2021

1. A horizontal timeline should be used to align the defined touchpoints that formulate the generic customer journey map. This is to help display where in the customer journey certain things happen. The three different stages, pre-purchase, during-purchase, and after-purchase are illustrated using three different colors to separate them visually. However, they also emphasize the importance of understanding that all customer journeys rarely look the same. Customer journeys are iterative, and the generic journey is only utilized to enable measurability and generalizability.

2. The customer satisfaction index should thereafter be illustrated to help visualize and understand how well customers are experiencing the different touchpoints. A good experience is above the midline, while a worse experience is below. Using distinct colors to help visualize the good and bad experiences is preferable. For example, green can be used to display good and red to display the index of unsatisfactory touchpoints.

3. Thirdly, a short and summarized text should be integrated to briefly explain what is happening and what the customers are experiencing during each touchpoint. This will give the reader a compact and quickly accessible overall insight into every step in the generic customer journey.

4. Lastly, the potential for development should be displayed for every touchpoint that has capabilities for improvements. A distinct color should be used to capture the viewer's attention since this is the takeaway that the map is intended to generate. Jellvert & Lindblom (2021) have used a clear purple to display this.

2.6 Customer Journey Management

Jaakola & Terho (2021) emphasize that the goal for any company should be to have satisfied customers who have a problem-free experience throughout their entire journey. If the customer journey is smooth and consistent from start to finish, customers will be able to move from one touchpoint to the next more easily and with less effort. In such a journey, customers will not, for instance, encounter inconsistent product or service information across touchpoints (Gasparin et al., 2022). The organization should strive for collaboration throughout the entire customer journey rather than having separate, isolated silos (Lundin & Kindstrom, 2023). This broader perspective will enable the organization to move its customers along their journeys more efficiently and to discover new ways to assist them regardless of where they are on their journeys.

A customer journey analysis requires customer input to comprehend and map the journey from the customer's perspective (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Given that customers frequently employ multiple touchpoints at various stages of their journey, it is important to take them into account at each of these decision-making stages (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Grewal & Roggeveen (2020) define CJM as a tool to better understand and improve the customer's journey with the company. They emphasize that the aim of the tool is to first map the journey, then illuminate and act on the opportunities for improvements that emerge from the map. Additionally, they describe how important it is to have a CJM system for systematic use in interaction with understanding and analyzing the customer's journey. CJM differs from customer journey mapping in that it involves systematically working with developments and analyzing the current situation, as opposed to merely visualizing it. Thus, customer journey mapping can be seen as an important part of customer journey management (Grewal & Roggeveen, 2020).

Norton & Pine (2013) describe that if companies can create an understanding of which elements the customer values most and then design customer journey maps that also visualize this, they can understand their customers' current experience with the organization. Then there is the opportunity to define, based on the tool, what development potentials that exist to optimize the customer journey. These lessons can then form the basis of how the organization continues to work with its strategy (Norton & Pine, 2013).

To successfully manage the customer journey, Lemon and Verhoef (2016) suggest the following three steps for managers: First, they should aim to comprehend the customer journey from both the organization's and the customer's viewpoints, identifying crucial characteristics at each stage. Second, organizations must define the specific parts or touchpoints that occur during the journey. Thirdly, they should seek to determine the specific triggers that cause clients to continue or leave the customer journey (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Jellvert & Lindblom (2021) highlight some additional key aspects to think about when implementing CJM. Staying objective when analyzing and working is essential with the tool to ensure the core value of its customer-centric nature. Furthermore, they emphasize the importance of taking a step back and keeping a holistic view of the full customer journey rather than focusing solely on touchpoints that performed poorly according to customers. This will enable the organization to better understand how touchpoints could relate to and affect one another.

Other researchers, such as De Keyser et al. (2020), take on a different viewpoint to improve and manage touchpoints and the whole customer journey. When managers implement this in their organization, they should first focus on streamlining the overview of their touchpoints, i.e., customer journey mapping. Secondly, they should strive to recognize the context in which the touchpoints are related, for example, how much the customer is interacting at this point, what are their previous experiences, what is the current mood of the customer, etc. Thirdly, assessing all delivered qualities means: Is the company reaching the customer's expectations at all points? How easily can they move from one touchpoint to another? Lastly, managers should evaluate all the previous three steps as one and benchmark them against competitors. After this is done, they are ready to take action to improve touchpoints and the customer journey.

Jellvert & Lindblom (2021) explain that after the implementations of the chosen improvements have been finalized, a new iteration should be conducted to investigate what impact the improvements had on the customer journey. In cases where the results are not achieved, the company needs to continue to act on the opportunities until they are achieved. Thereafter, when the chosen improvements have been fulfilled, a new customer journey map should be created. The company will then get a picture of the new current situation, with a new customer satisfaction index that demonstrates new potential for improvements. Grewal & Roggeveen (2020) also share the view of CJM being a tool that should be considered as a circular process.

2.7 Key factors to consider for CJM implementation

Table 1 presents an overview of four key factors, as identified by the academic literature cited in the theoretical framework, that should be considered when implementing CJM within an organizational context.

Table 1: Key factors when implementing Customer Journey Management.

Key factors	Supported by
Iterative and continuous methodology	Grewal & Roggeveen, 2020; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Jellvert & Lindblom, 2021
Objectivity when analyzing	Temkin, 2010; Jellvert & Lindblom, 2021
Holistic evaluation of the customer journey	Grewal & Roggeveen, 2020; Lundin & Kindström, 2023; Rudowski et al., 2020; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Stein & Ramaseshan, 2016; Jellvert & Lindblom, 2021
Insights from the customers are the cornerstone in developing improvement suggestions.	Norton & Pine, 2013; De Keyser et al., 2020; Jellvert & Lindblom, 2021; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016

3. Methodology

The objective of this section is to provide a depiction of the case company, elucidate the research design and strategy, expound on the process of discovering and evaluating pertinent literature, and how this study employs qualitative methodologies for data collection and analysis. Lastly, the trustworthiness and ethical implications of the thesis are also examined.

3.1 Research Strategy

According to Bell et al. (2019), the term "research strategy" refers to a comprehensive approach to conducting business research. It is emphasized that the process of selecting a research strategy is a crucial aspect for individuals seeking to conduct impactful business research. The field of research employs two distinct methodologies, namely quantitative research strategies and qualitative research strategies. The employment of quantifiable data is a central focus of the quantitative research approach, which is particularly well-suited for studies that involve substantial amounts of data. The utilization of a qualitative research approach is founded on the interpretation of words more than numbers and is better suited for investigations that aim to comprehend the fundamental motivations, beliefs, and desires of individuals. The grounded theory approach is extensively employed in qualitative research, wherein researchers continuously juxtapose their empirical observations with pre-existing theories and repeatedly refine their hypotheses by amalgamating both (Bell et al., 2019).

CJM is a field that has received limited attention in academic research, thus data were scarcely available at the moment of conducting this study. As a result, the researchers opted for a qualitative research strategy to generate findings regarding this area. The researchers also integrated grounded theory into their methodology to acquire an in-depth understanding of every stage of the implementation of CJM and continuously analyze their approach throughout the course of the study.

The proponents of the case study design tend to exhibit a preference for qualitative techniques, such as participant observation and unstructured interviewing, as they are perceived to be particularly advantageous in facilitating an in-depth, comprehensive analysis during a study (Bell et al., 2019). Thus, having a qualitative strategy, a case study would be the most suitable for generating an in-depth understanding of the implementation and usage of CJM.

3.2 Case Study

The fundamental approach of a case study involves a comprehensive and in-depth examination of a singular case (Bell et al., 2019). In the context of academic research, a case study involves the examination of a particular object in a delimited situation or system of interest with the aim of providing a comprehensive and detailed analysis of it. This is what ultimately sets a case study apart from other types of research designs. Consequently, as pointed out by Bell et al. (2019), the outcomes of the study are not necessarily generalizable to other times or places beyond those in which the research was conducted. Although it may be of interest to develop generalizable findings, the main objective should always be to concentrate on completely understanding the complexity surrounding the specific case. This is for the researcher to develop a thorough explanation of the case in question. Without establishing a differentiation of this nature, it becomes unfeasible to differentiate the case study as a distinct research design.

The case company that has been studied in this thesis operates as a B2B e-commerce wholesaler. They were founded approximately a decade ago, and offer around 4,500 different products, ranging from food and beverage to cleaning and utility tools. The company has chosen to partner up with a 3PL provider who takes care of the warehousing and distribution of all products.

The company has a goal of only being a go-between for manufacturers and retailers through smooth e-commerce that connects buyers and sellers. Their business model is to give the customers the freedom of choosing when and how much to order and not have to sign contracts that will force them to buy certain volumes. The CEO (Personal communication, January 17, 2023) stated the company's business model as follows: *"While others move forward, we move backward. We have taken the wholesale business back to where it was 15 years ago – a distributor for producers. We supply food products to large-scale kitchens. Period. Oh, and everything is done through super-efficient e-commerce."* This sets the company apart from competitors who often choose to implement contract-based business models that often are a hybrid between e-commerce and physical stores.

The typical customer is a company that operates in the food service sector or another industry where food is necessary for day-to-day operations. Restaurants or cafes that serve lunch are some examples of typical clients. The case company solely provides services to corporate

clients, and the majority of their goods are purchased at the webshop with clients in the food service industry in mind. As a result, items are sold in large quantities, such as boxes of pasta weighing a few kilograms, instead of smaller portions like 500g bags. In addition to food service, other customer segments served by the company include office activities, gyms, padel halls, and others.

The company has recently started to shift focus from growth to being more profitable. To increase their profit, they have investigated how customers interact with their website to discover how well they are performing in certain e-commerce key performance indicators (KPIs). Upon observing the initial purchase patterns of customers, it became apparent that approximately 50 percent of individuals who created a new account in 2022 did not place any subsequent orders. By identifying and resolving potential obstacles customers may encounter when placing their initial or subsequent orders, could result in benefits for the company, such as increased customer retention. In addition to this, the company also fails to retain customers who placed their first order at a desirable level. Thus, it calls for research to delve deeper into their customer journey and identify effective management strategies to aid in improving the overall customer experience. This, together with the scarce research conducted on how organizations should implement CJM serves as motivation for conducting a case study, as it involves comprehending the intricacies of incorporating CJM into the framework of a business model that is employed by the company.

Additionally, this case study will not include stakeholders from the 3PL partner in the thesis as that would render in another company being involved, thus not being focused on a delimited system or situation as mentioned by Bell et al. (2019).

3.3 Research Approach

Bell et al. (2019) posit that the research approach pertains to the function of theory in research, and they differentiate between deductive and inductive approaches. The utilization of a deductive research approach entails the testing of a theory and is deemed suitable when the researcher aims to examine a hypothesis that is based on a theory. Inductive research involves the development of a novel theory that is derived from the analysis of the gathered data. The optimal conditions for obtaining favorable outcomes are when the subject matter has not been

extensively researched and the available data is limited. They also conclude that a case study often adopts an inductive approach when the primary research strategy is qualitative.

Due to the limited availability of research on CJM and how to implement it in an organization, this thesis objective was to contribute to the existing body of knowledge through a qualitative case study. As such, an inductive research approach was deemed most appropriate to apply.

3.4 Literature Review

For this thesis, an initial literature review has been conducted to gain a better understanding of the customer journey and formulate the introduction to the thesis. This thesis builds on the work of a previous thesis by Jellvert and Lindblom (2021) about CJM in B2B organizations to avoid "reinventing the wheel" in areas where their findings are applicable to this thesis. From this, the authors could see early on that *Katherine Lemon* and *Peter Verhoef* were two of the most cited on this specific topic. This led the authors to first examine their article from 2016 about customer experience in the customer journey.

Once the initial review was completed, the authors set up a structured literature review on the topic of CJM, which was conducted between February 6th and 17th, 2023. The first screening was conducted on the *Web of Science* using the search term *customer journey management.* This search only resulted in finding five articles with the given search term in the title. At this stage, the authors had to broaden the search terms to find more relevant articles and searched for articles containing "*customer journey.*" After excluding the proceeding papers, the screening resulted in 82 articles. In the second screening, the abstracts of those articles were read to exclude any that were not relevant to this study according to the preset requirements, such as articles only focusing on B2C or physical stores. To further explore and find relevant information, the authors have used a technique called "snowballing," which entails examining references found in the articles that had been screened for additional relevant information (Wohlin, 2014). The snowballing was conducted at the same time as the authors took in recommendations for possible relevant articles. Using the authors' judgments to sort out relevant articles finally resulted in a total of 23 articles, and the process can be seen in Figure 3 below.
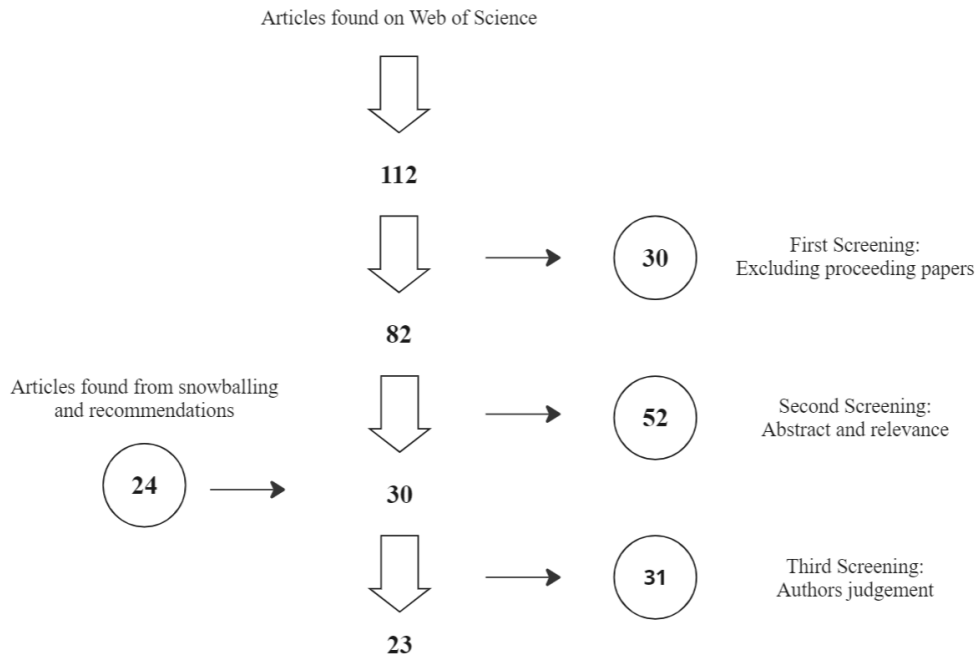
Figure 3: Process of literature review

From the same criteria and way of working as described above, the authors searched for the terms "touchpoints," "customer experience," "B2B relations," and "e-commerce" to provide more depth to the theoretical framework. This screening was conducted at the websites of Chalmers Library, Web of Science, and Google Scholar between February 22nd and March 22nd, 2023.

3.5 Hypothetical Customer Journey Map

To establish a preliminary understanding and hypothesis of the customer journey and experience for the case company's customers prior to the project's initiation, a workshop was conducted with all employees. Prior to the workshop, the nine steps in the customer journey were defined together with the study's supervisor, i.e., the CEO of the company. This made it possible to construct a visualization of the entire customer journey that could fit in one figure but at the same time contained relevant sectioning of the respective touchpoints. The workshop started by dividing the employees into different teams, where each team was given a particular touchpoint in the customer journey to investigate. On a scale of +10 to -10, each group evaluated the performance of the company and provided a brief description of the touchpoint. The outcome of this perceived customer journey is depicted below in Figure 4, and it was later compared to the actual customer journey map constructed from customer interviews.
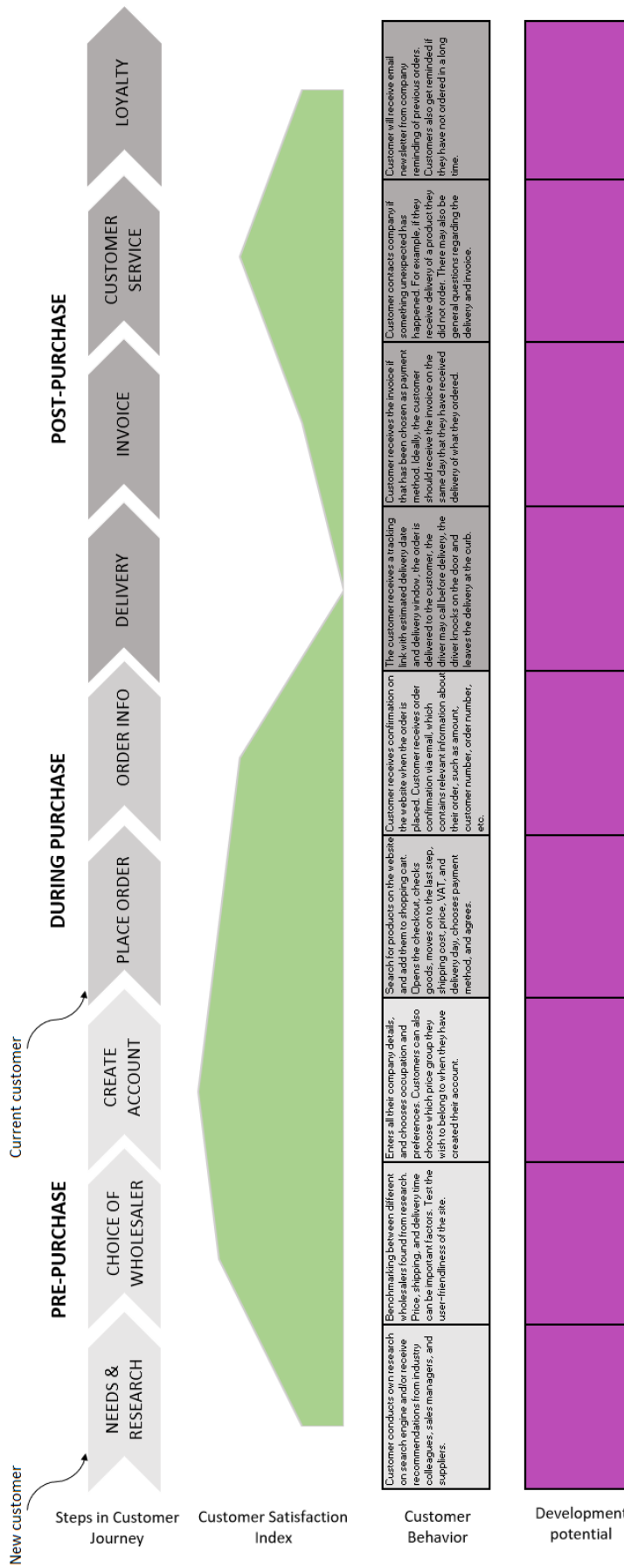
Figure 4: Case company's perceived Customer Journey Map

3.6 Data Collection

Interviews and observations are two methods for gathering primary data, according to Bell et al. (2019). For interviews, they distinguish between structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interview techniques. Also, they claim that structured interviews make it difficult to recognize the true opinions and beliefs of the interviewees. Therefore, semi-structured and unstructured interviews are the ones that should preferably be conducted in qualitative research.

In an unstructured interview, there are no set questions to ask or answers to be provided by the interviewee. Instead, the interviewee is informed about the topic and then given time to reflect freely on how they perceive it. For a semi-structured interview, the questions have been pre-selected, but they should only be used as a guide, allowing for flexibility and follow-up questions to elicit unexpected and interesting insights from the interviewee (Kallio et al., 2016).

For this study, information has been gathered from the case company's customers using semi-structured interviews. This was done to ensure a consistent structure throughout the entire data collection phase and to give interviewers the flexibility to personalize some questions throughout the interview based on respondents' answers. All interviewees participated anonymously to protect those being interviewed and ensure that they could provide truthful responses. Thus, prior to each interview, the interviewers asked for permission to use the respondents' answers in the study and assured everyone that they would remain anonymous throughout the study.

The goal of the customer interviews was to get an unbiased and accurate overview of how the customers perceived the different touchpoints throughout the customer journey. This information was then used to analyze and comprehend whether customers felt that certain touchpoints were positive, negative, or indifferent to generate findings and, later, make fair recommendations on improvements for the company.

The case company provided the researchers with a list of customers from the aforementioned customer segments, along with a corresponding telephone number for each one. The researchers then proceeded to reach out to customers, resulting in a total of 39 telephone interviews conducted between February 17th and April 14th, 2023. The phone interviews lasted between three to nine minutes and the length of each interview was determined by the dynamic

of the dialogue. A continuous evaluation of each interview has been conducted alongside new interviews to understand if there was any information missing that could be added to the subsequent interviews without harming their consistency. As the study was constrained by time and resources, the researchers decided on April 14th to move on to evaluate the 39 interviews conducted and include them in the Result and Analysis chapter. This was done to ensure that subsequent chapters could receive the attention needed to formulate a thorough answer to the research question.

In addition to conducting interviews, the researchers utilized digital analytics tools to observe and determine how customers behave. These tools provide researchers with a more in-depth perspective (Filip & Čegan, 2019). The tool utilized in the study was Google Analytics, which monitors customer behavior, such as how they navigate a website when they visit it. This provided the authors with data on how many customers visit the different parts of the website and how many are moving on to place orders, for example. The aim of gathering such data was to, alongside the interview data, evaluate and investigate possible synergies between customer opinions and retention, for example.

3.7 Data Analysis

The majority of the interview questions were phrased in an open-ended manner, thereby eliciting a diverse range of responses. The difficulty of scrutinizing the collected data posed a challenge as most of the interviews were conducted in Swedish and the thesis is written in English. Consequently, the authors transcribed the interviews in Swedish initially and then proceeded to translate them into English meticulously to prevent any potential misinterpretation of the words. The researchers utilized Google Translate to facilitate the translation process from Swedish to English while also employing a verification step to ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of the translated words. The list of interviewees can be found below, in Table 2.

Following the completion of the translation, the interviews were systematically organized to facilitate the researchers' analysis of the information obtained from them. Apart from the transcribed interviews, they were also organized into concise bullet points to facilitate an overview of noteworthy information and the recognition of recurring themes in the responses. The process of segmenting was performed utilizing Excel to facilitate a more comprehensive

analysis of the accumulated data by the researchers. Which of the four potential segments, former, potential, new, or large customer, each interviewee belongs to have been integrated into Table 2. Given that the research methodology was iterative in nature, the authors employed grounded theory as a methodological approach and consistently compared theoretical constructs with empirical data obtained from interviews to ensure their pertinence. The aforementioned statement constitutes a fundamental component of grounded theory, as noted by Bell et al. (2019). Through a systematic and organized approach, the researchers obtained a comprehensive understanding of the customer's journey, facilitating the identification and analysis of potential problem areas that customers might experience.

Table 2: List of interviewees

Interview	Customer Segment	Date contacted
1	Former	2023-02-17
2	New	2023-02-17
3	New	2023-02-23
4	Former	2023-02-23
5	Former	2023-02-23
6	New	2023-02-23
7	Large	2023-02-23
8	Potential	2023-02-23
9	Large	2023-02-23
10	New	2023-02-23
11	New	2023-02-23
12	New	2023-02-23
13	New	2023-02-23
14	New	2023-02-24
15	New	2023-02-24
16	New	2023-02-24
17	Large	2023-03-20
18	Potential	2023-03-20
19	Former	2023-03-20

20	Potential	2023-03-20
21	Potential	2023-03-20
22	New	2023-03-20
23	Potential	2023-03-20
24	Large	2023-03-20
25	Potential	2023-04-14
26	Potential	2023-04-14
27	Large	2023-04-14
28	Potential	2023-04-14
29	Potential	2023-04-14
30	New	2023-04-14
31	Potential	2023-04-14
32	New	2023-04-14
33	Potential	2023-04-14
34	New	2023-04-14
35	Potential	2023-04-14
36	Potential	2023-04-14
37	New	2023-04-14
38	Former	2023-04-14
39	Large	2023-04-14

Additionally, Google Analytics, which is a tool to track customer behavior when integrating with the website, has been utilized during the study to better understand certain parts of the customer journey. This tool was already used by the company prior to the study; therefore, the researchers could retrieve data on customer behavior between February 10th and April 10th, 2023. No organizing of data was needed as Google Analytics already visualize it in a clear manner. The data retrieved could for example show how many customers entered each stage of the process when creating an account. These insights could then be included when analyzing customer interviews to add a more in-depth understanding of the performance at the create account stage of the customer journey.

3.8 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is considered more applicable to qualitative research than validity and reliability since qualitative research often involves subjective and interpretive methods, which can make it more challenging to establish the validity and reliability of findings in the traditional sense (Bell et al., 2019). However, trustworthiness is a broad concept that includes validity, reliability, and other factors important to qualitative research, such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility refers to the dependability of the research and is demonstrated by publishing findings for others to evaluate and determine the accuracy of the interpretation (Bell et al., 2019). This is ensured by the thesis being uploaded to Chalmers' public thesis database when finalized. Transferability refers to the applicability of the study in other contexts and is evaluated based on the depth of analysis of a specific group. It is important for this study to apply not only to the case company but also to other companies in the B2B e-commerce area. Dependability illuminates the consistency of findings over time and is determined by the researchers' adherence to their plan and record-keeping. This was met by the study having extensive tracking of each interview and all data gathered during the research process, which was later visualized in the report. Confirmability refers to the objectivity of the research and is ensured by the researcher's demonstrating impartiality and not allowing personal beliefs to influence the study. This part can be seen as challenging since one of the researchers works for the company and could have some personal beliefs that possibly could interfere with the study. The positive part is that the researchers have a greater insight into the case company and did not have to spend time investigating areas that the one researcher already had knowledge of. To mitigate the risk of subjective evaluation it had to be set from the beginning to thoroughly discuss the outcome to not be biased and only focus on being as objective as one could be.

3.9 Ethics

Bell et al. (2019) outline four ethical principles: harm to participants, informed consent, privacy, and deception. To protect participants, both customers and employees were anonymized, and their privacy was preserved. Informing those who were interviewed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that their responses would be kept anonymous, ensured participants proceeded with articulated consent. Prior to the interview, it was made clear to the

interviewees what the interview was for, how the information would be used, and that they had the right to end the interview at any time if they so desired.

4. Result & Analysis

In this chapter, the interview results will be provided, and each touchpoint will be presented with its corresponding rating followed by an analysis. The chapter ends with the full customer journey map, further analysis of critical touchpoints, and suggested future actions for the company to take.

4.1 Interview Results

The conducted 39 interviews provided the researchers with enough information to proceed to analyze and rate each touchpoint from each interview. The interviewees' experiences varied according to their level of interaction with the touchpoints, therefore, not all customers provided feedback on all touchpoints.

The interview script used for all interviews, included in Appendix 1, was designed to ensure that the interview questions were relevant and informative. The questions asked during the interviews were tailored to the specific customer segments to which each interviewee belonged. This ensured that the questions asked were relevant to the interviewee's experience, while also ensuring the gathered feedback was relevant to the specific touchpoints.

To give each touchpoint from each interview a fair and unbiased rating, the rating was conducted separately by the authors with a scale ranging from +2 to -2. This rating was applied instead of the +10 to -10 scale used in the employees' evaluation since a smaller scale with clear instructions would enhance the clarity of what sets the different ratings apart. A rating of +2 denoted a high level of customer satisfaction, indicating that the customer not only expressed satisfaction but also highlighted specific aspects that exceeded their expectations. For example, if the customer said to be satisfied with the customer service contact, especially because they received such great help with their invoice questions.

A rating of +1 indicated a general level of customer satisfaction without any specific positive aspects mentioned by the customer. It implied that the customer was satisfied with their experience at this touchpoint but did not highlight any aspects that stood out or exceeded their expectations. Furthermore, when the customer did not mention the touchpoint or expressed indifference toward it, a score of 0 was assigned.

In contrast, a rating of -1 indicated negative customer feedback where customer expectations were not met, but without mentioning any specific aspects. A rating of -2, on the other hand, indicated the customer was very dissatisfied and pointed out specific aspects that were very disappointing or problematic. For example, the customer was unsatisfied with the delivery process, since they always received late deliveries and were not informed about it. For all touchpoints that a customer did not experience did not receive any rating. For example, those who only were potential customers had only conducted the first three touchpoints.

Following the independent rating, an evaluation of the results took place. From this it was concluded that there were some minor differences in the individual rating, but never more than one point. For example, one of the authors rated one touchpoint +2, and the other rated it +1. To further ensure that there were no major differences between the individual ratings, for example, if one had rated +2 and the other -2, this was discussed for each interviewee's ratings. Followed by this, the total result of the two authors' ratings was divided by two to obtain the mean value for each touchpoint per customer. Afterward, the mean value and standard deviation for each touchpoint could be calculated excluding all customers who did not mention specific touchpoints during interviews, and the results are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Abbreviation, Number of interviewees (N), mean value, and standard deviation for each touchpoint.

	Needs and Research	Choice of wholesaler	Create account	Place order	Order info	Delivery	Invoice	Customer service	Loyalty
Abbreviation	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9
N	39	39	39	27	27	28	27	27	27
Mean Value	0,31	0,12	−0,17	0,28	0,2	−0,13	0,13	0,39	0,28
Standard Deviation	0,53	0,54	0,72	0,58	0,50	0,89	0,47	0,74	0,47

The standard deviation illustrates the variance or dispersion of ratings for a specific touchpoint. A low standard deviation indicates that ratings are tightly clustered around the mean, indicating a high level of customer agreement regarding the touchpoint in question. In contrast, a high standard deviation suggests that ratings are more variable, with customers expressing a variety

of opinions, indicating that their experiences were more subjective and diverse. Below in Figure 5 the mean value and standard deviation of each touchpoint are depicted in a scatter plot to visualize how they differ. Each touchpoint is named T and the corresponding number to its order in the customer journey, thus T1 is 'needs and research', and so forth (see Table 3). It is evident that create account (T3) and delivery (T6) has the lowest mean value, but also the highest standard deviation and that will be brought up at the respective touchpoint below in Section 4.2.
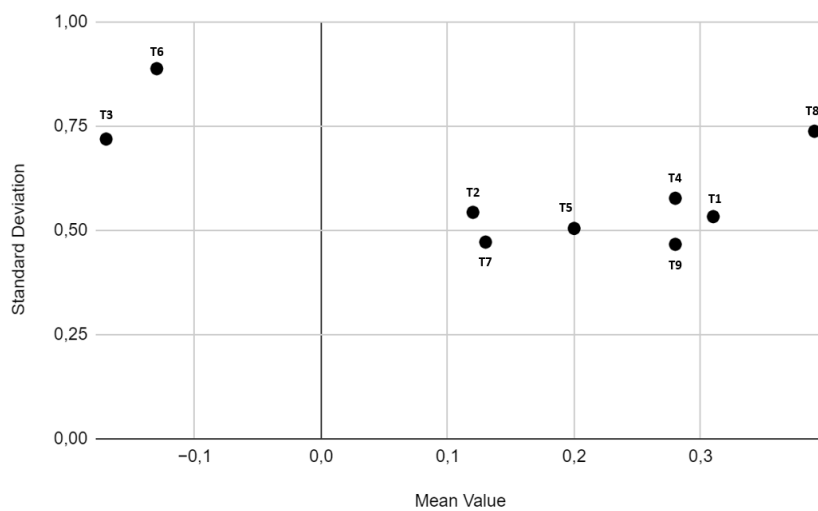
Figure 5: Scatterplot of mean value and standard deviation from touchpoint ratings

4.2 Customer Journey

The results of the interviews provided information about each touchpoint, laying the groundwork for understanding what the customer experiences during their journey and the ratings each touchpoint received. To shed light on the touchpoints, they will be presented in greater detail in this section. Each touchpoint will have figures that will illustrate the mean value of its rating and customer behavior. Bar charts will also be included to illustrate the distribution of each rating. Since the only possible rating per touchpoint per customer is between +2 and -2 with a 0.5 difference, this was deemed the most sufficient way to visualize the distribution. Additionally, quotes from interviews will be integrated to nuance and enrich the rating they each received. Each touchpoint will then be generally analyzed to gain a deeper understanding and uncover possible challenges.

4.2.1 Pre-purchase

Customer Needs and Research (T1)

The customer journey starts when the need to order products from a wholesaler arises for the customer. Their next move will either be to do their research and try to find a suitable wholesaler, or they will receive recommendations from industry colleagues, sales managers of different food or beverage companies, or wholesalers themselves. Ratings from interviews and a short summary of customer behavior can be seen below in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Needs & research touchpoint with ratings.

The case company has dedicated time and effort to improve its visibility on search engines, known as Search Engine Optimization (SEO). From the interviews it became apparent that the company's efforts are beginning to pay off as some of the interviewees had discovered the company while searching for wholesalers online, contributing to the positive rating. Interviewees were either indifferent or positive regarding this touchpoint. *"I found this company by accident via Google search, actually (interview 33, potential customer)." "I found the wholesaler while researching online (interview 35, potential customer)."* Another reason for the rating is that a few interviewees received recommendations from industry peers or sales managers. The company's SEO efforts and word-of-mouth referrals have helped more customers discover the website, resulting in a steady flow of new visitors.

Choice of wholesaler (T2)

After the research is done, the customer moves on to benchmarking the different wholesalers they have found by comparing the different alternatives to the parameters that are important factors for the individual customer. Examples of key factors can be stock, price, shipping, and delivery time. Some customers may also check the user-friendliness of the website and how

easy it is to navigate it. Ratings from interviews and a short summary of customer behavior can be seen below in Figure 7.
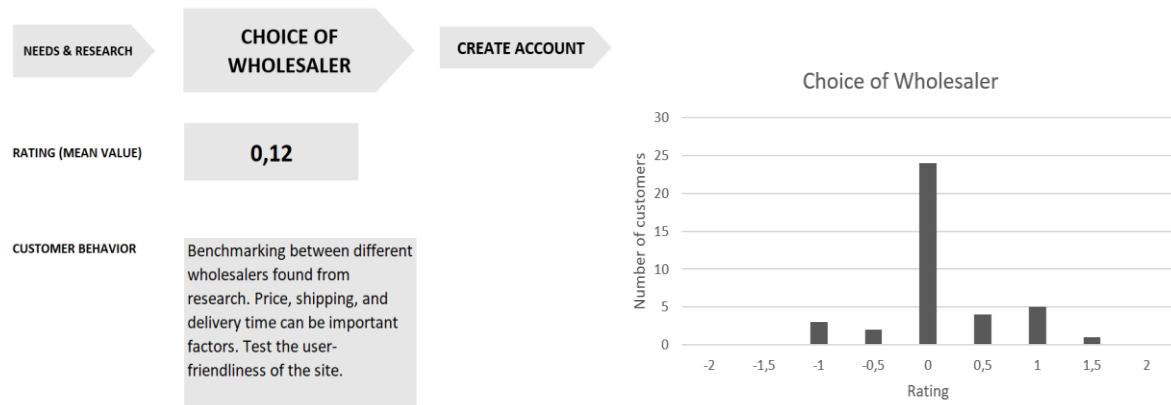
Figure 7: Choice of wholesaler touchpoint with ratings.

Two factors could be highlighted from the interviews, price, and delivery time, which can determine potential customers' choice of wholesaler. To make this part easier for customers, information about these different factors could have been better highlighted on the website for customers to clearly see that there are other prices if they opt for another price group. Which can be chosen by the customers themselves at any time by talking to the customer service. The speed of the deliveries from the case company could also be displayed more distinctly on the website. Here are two quotes from interviews representing delivery and price as important factors: *"Another supplier had better prices (interview 33, potential customer)." "I want my products Monday between 7 and 8 a.m., and therefore I have chosen another supplier (interview 36, potential customer)."*

Create account (T3)

The third touchpoint is when a customer decides to move forward with the case company and is then required to create an account to be able to place a purchase order. Here, the customers enter all their contact information and choose their occupations and preferences. This makes it easier for the wholesaler to track which kind of customer this is and tailor information for each customer. For example, restaurants and offices have different products they normally want to order and therefore get different suggested products on the website. Ratings from interviews and a short summary of customer behavior can be seen below in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Create account touchpoint with ratings.

The process of creating an account is considered smooth and easy to understand by many interviewees, but what becomes concerning about this touchpoint is the lack of knowledge about the company's price groups. The customers seem to be unaware that they have the possibility to choose price groups freely themselves, and for a restaurant, for example, a price difference of 8–10% on all products will have a notable impact on their business. Therefore, it is concerning that many customers do not know which prices they can get and think the base price on the website, which is the lowest price group and has the worst prices, is the only price available to them.

Here are some of the answers from interviewees describing their lack of knowledge in price groups: *"I don't know what price range I have or if I can get a better price (interview 8, potential customer)." "Smooth account creation, but I have no knowledge at all about price groups (interview 26, potential customer)." "I have no idea about the price range, but we were not that price-sensitive when ordering (interview 16, new customer)."*

To gain a deeper understanding of this touchpoint, another tool that has been utilized was Google Analytics. The software makes it possible to determine how many visitors are accessing particular websites, how long they spend on each page, which additional pages they visit after accessing a specific URL, etc. Figure 9 below illustrates the number of users who visited the URL where customers can register an account between February 10th and April 10th, 2023. Furthermore, it is possible to track how many of these customers proceeded to the subsequent steps in the account creation process, as well as the other pages they visited.
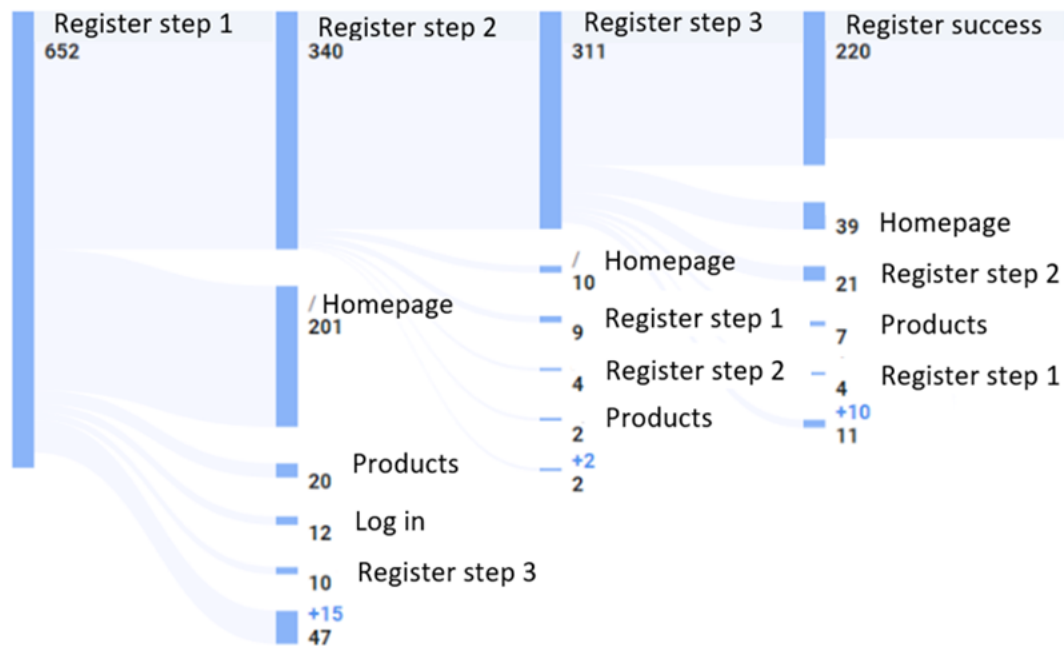
Figure 9: Customers in the account creation process.

A total of 652 potential customers accessed the first step in the account creation process. Among them, 340 selected to move on to the next phase, while 201 decided to go back to the home page. Additionally, 12 potential customers went to the login page, 10 skipped straight to the third stage in the account creation procedure, and 20 browsed the page showing all items that were offered. Subsequently, 311 potential customers proceeded to the third step in the account creation process. Ten of them returned to the URL to complete the initial account creation step. Lastly, 220 completed the fourth and last step of the procedure and successfully created their accounts.

The examination of the create account touchpoint reveals an important stage in the customer journey as it gives the wholesaler useful data for customizing its offerings to varied customer preferences. However, the customers' unknowledge about the different price groups that exist is an issue that demands attention. Failing to inform the customer of this can create dissatisfaction. Had the company instead had an account creation process that informs the customer about this, it could instead have created customer satisfaction, particularly for restaurants and other establishments that demand frequent product purchases. The information obtained from Google Analytics also provides insight into how well this touchpoint performed. While a sizable number of customers visited the account creation URL, a large percentage of

them chose not to move on to the next steps. This suggests that the touchpoint may need to be improved to motivate more clients to complete the account creation process.

4.2.2 During Purchase

Place order (T4)

As depicted in Figure 10 below, the current customers re-enter the customer journey at this point. The customer searches the website, either with some specific products in mind or simply to see if there are any suitable products that may fit their needs. They then open the checkout and accept all the articles that have been added to their shopping cart. After this stage, the customer will go to a page of recommended products based on their specific industry as a company. In the last step, the customer will see the shipping cost, total price, VAT, and delivery day (they can choose a time sometimes), choose the payment method (invoice or pay directly by card or via a third party who handles invoice and payment), and agree. If products are out of stock, customers can choose to send the rest now or wait for all the products to be delivered together. Ratings from interviews and a short summary of customer behavior can be seen below in Figure 10.
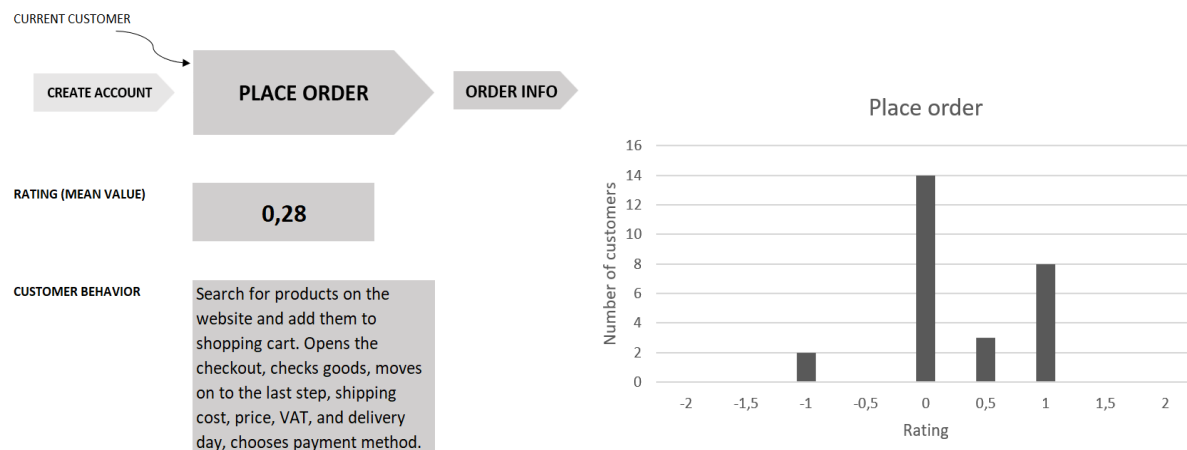
Figure 10: Place order touchpoint with ratings.

Most customers may already know what they want when entering the website and do not want to spend unnecessary time looking for other products. The website has a search function, which makes it easier for customers to quickly find what they are looking for and creates a seamless feeling for them as they move on to place their order. The interviewees were satisfied with their experience when placing their orders and that they can do so with a seamless feeling. Customers who mentioned this in interviews described the process of placing their orders generally as *"a*

very smooth ordering process (interview 34, new customer)." "Works great on the website; smooth and easy to understand (interview 39, large customer)." "Best site I have shopped at (interview 6, new customer)."

Order info (T5)

Right after the customer has placed an order, they will be redirected to a confirmation page on the website. Included on this page will be the order number and delivery date (the date the customer approved when placing the order), etc. Following that, an email containing important details about their order—such as the items, price, customer number, order number, etc.—is sent. Ratings from interviews and a short summary of customer behavior can be seen below in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Order info touchpoint with ratings

Customers were somewhat indifferent towards this touchpoint, showing that as long as the company has the relevant information described above, the customers will not have any particular feeling about this, but at the same time, it can cause dissatisfaction if any information is missing. Most interviewees were indifferent, and most of those who mentioned order information were satisfied with how it works today. One of these customers was very positive regarding the information that was included in this stage, saying, *"Very good with information when the item I wanted was not in stock (interview 37, new customer)."*

4.2.3 Post-purchase

Delivery (T6)

The post-purchase stage begins with delivery, where the customer first receives a tracking link once the order is ready for shipping. The link includes an anticipated delivery date and delivery window, which ought to coincide with the customer's chosen day. The order is then delivered to the customer; the driver may call before delivery or knock on the door and leave the delivery at the curb. Ratings from interviews and a short summary of customer behavior can be seen below in Figure 12.
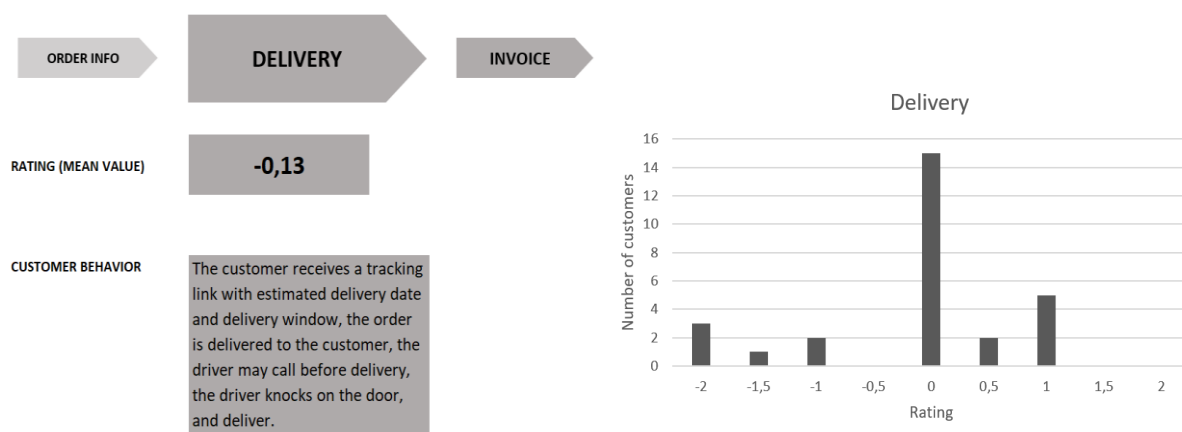
Figure 12: Delivery touchpoint with ratings.

This touchpoint received one of the lowest ratings, but also one of the highest standard deviations. The wide spread of satisfaction could be explained by, and be dependent on which type of industry the customer is in. If a restaurant is to be compared to an office, a restaurant may be more sensitive toward late deliveries than an office will be. It is not that big of a deal if the office receives delivery on Monday or Tuesday. For the restaurant, on the other hand, it could result in a loss of income because they have no food to serve.

The positive side of interviewees that are satisfied with the deliveries mentions: *"I am very happy with the delivery and that I can track it (interview 22, new customer)." "Works well with deliveries, I have nothing to complain about (interview 24, large customer)."* The other part was not so satisfied with the delivery process. *"I ordered on Monday but got my delivery late (interview 19, former customer)." "The delivery time is too long and unreliable because I found out my delivery was delayed via a third party (interview 11, new customer)." "The deliveries did not work, as I ordered on Wednesday and received late deliveries; therefore, the deliveries*

were the big problem, which is why we needed to change the wholesaler (interview 38, former customer)."

The last quote, from interview nr. 38, who was a large customer but suddenly stopped ordering back in 2019. Since then, the company has changed its third-party logistics provider, and in March 2023, its delivery accuracy was 88%. Since the company is now using a different third-party logistics provider, the dissatisfaction with specific deliveries from customer 38 back in 2019 is somewhat irrelevant to this study. However, the fact that the customer was satisfied with everything else, but the poor delivery forced them to change to another wholesaler, is something that is considered to be interesting. Since it demonstrates that for some customers, poor experiences at one out of nine touchpoints may result in them changing to a different wholesaler if that touchpoint is highly valued by the customer.

Invoice (T7)

In this step, if the customer chooses an invoice as a payment method, they will receive it via email. Customers who choose to pay directly when ordering should already have received a payment confirmation. Ideally, the customer should receive the invoice on the same day that they receive delivery of what they ordered. Ratings from interviews and a short summary of customer behavior can be seen below in Figure 13.
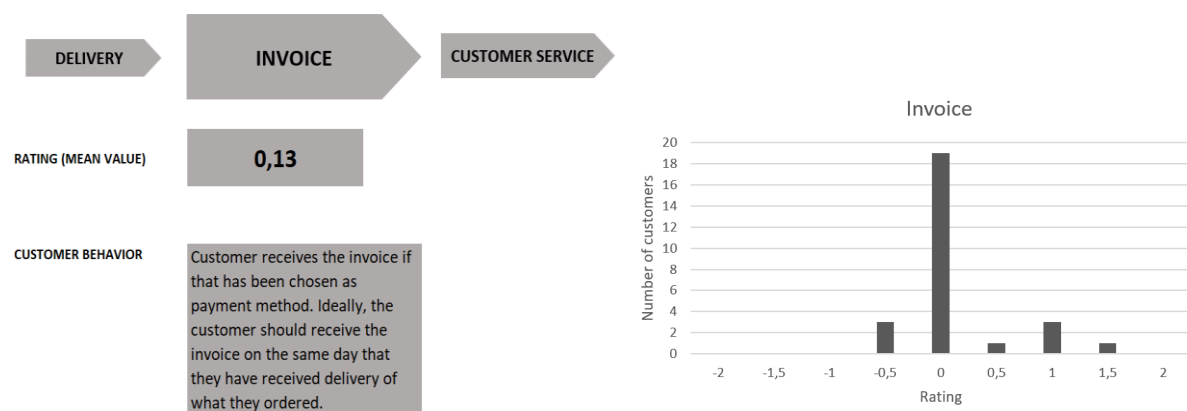
Figure 13: Invoice touchpoint with ratings

This touchpoint was essentially neutral, similar to "order info,". The CEO at the case company gave an explanation during a meeting held on April 17, 2023, as to why they believe that this step never will generate any positive emotions for the customer: "*No one will be particularly happy to receive an invoice or think, wow, what a great invoice.*" Similar to "order info," if the

invoice has all the information needed on it, the customer will be somewhat indifferent. If there is some information missing, it could result in dissatisfaction. Most customers were either neutral or slightly positive about the invoice step. *"Everything worked well with payment and invoicing (interview 9, large customer)." "I fully understand prepayment in my case, and I am satisfied with the invoicing and the information about it (interview 11, new customer)." "I had problems with the information on the order information and invoice, which caused irritation on my part (interview 15, new, customer)."*

Customer Service (T8)

At this touchpoint, the customer has received their order and invoice. They will come in contact with customer service if they have some questions regarding their delivery or invoice, such as, if the customer receives a delivery of a product they did not order or if a product they ordered did not arrive or is missing on their invoice. The customer may also contact customer service for any general questions regarding anything that has come up during the customer journey. Ratings from interviews and a short summary of customer behavior can be seen below in Figure 14.

Figure 14: Customer service touchpoint with ratings

This stage of the customer journey can have notable effects on the level of satisfaction a customer may experience. This is the only opportunity for direct interaction with a company representative. When customer service succeeds in effectively assisting a customer in resolving a problem, the customer's level of satisfaction may increase to a high level. This level could even be greater than the level the same customer would have felt if everything went smoothly with no hurdles along the way. Thus, it is important to help customers effectively and

successfully at this touchpoint. As mentioned in interviews, customers who contacted customer service expressed high levels of satisfaction with the service they received. As a result, these positive interactions at this touchpoint contributed to the high ratings expressed in customer interviews.

Out of 27 interviewees, only indifferent or positive feedback was brought up regarding customer service: *"I got great help from a girl at customer service, but it would have been good to have the product delivered with a good expiration date from the beginning instead of being compensated with a lower price (interview 10, new customer)." "I am satisfied with the contact I have had with customer service (interview 17, large customer)." "I received very good help from customer service with my problems (interview 15, new customer)."*

Loyalty (T9)

The last part of the customer journey contains the loyalty that is built from the customers' point of view towards the company. In other words, how likely will the customer continue to place orders from the company. To decide on this, the customer evaluates their previous experiences into account to decide whether to place a new order from the company or not. To keep the customer updated and maintain contact, the customer will receive newsletters from the company via email with information regarding news about the company, new products in stock, and previous orders made by the customer. Furthermore, discounts can be offered to attract customers who have not placed an order in a long time. Ratings from interviews and a short summary of customer behavior at the loyalty touchpoint can be seen below in Figure 15.
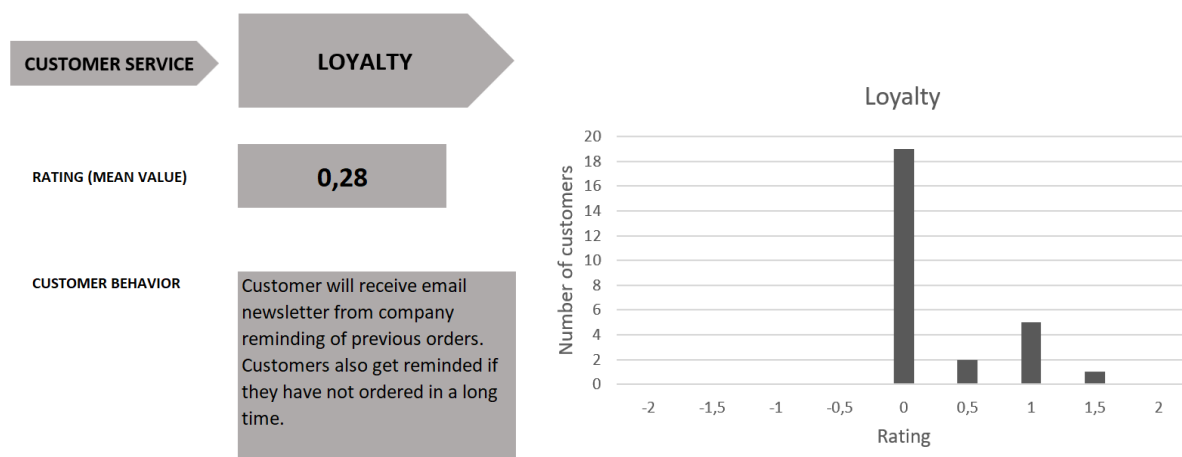
Figure 15: Loyalty touchpoint with ratings.

If customers can go through the customer journey seamlessly, it will create a sense of satisfaction, and with a good overall experience, customers will know how easy it is to place new orders. Customers who may have experienced hurdles along the way but received help from customer service will also have a good experience looking back at their journey. Both will be favorable when the customer evaluates their experience and decide on their willingness to place new orders. At the same time, customers who are dissatisfied with their experiences may choose another wholesaler next time. In interviews, eight customers mentioned something that was loyalty-related. These quotes below exemplified customers who were satisfied with their previous orders: *"Smooth and good (interview 13, new customer)." "I am very happy to have ended up in a better price group (interview 22, new customer)." "Two thumbs up, a very satisfied future major customer, as there are smooth orders and fast deliveries (interview 30, new customer)."*

To better help understand the loyalty part of the customer journey, a cohort analysis that the case company already had in place has been utilized. A cohort is a collection of clients who have something in common. For example, by classifying customers into groups according to the month or quarter they signed up for a good or service, cohort analysis could be used to learn more about customer retention, churn rate, and customer lifetime value by examining cohort behavior across time. This analysis could show whether customers who signed up at a specific period had a tendency of being loyal and making repeat purchases, or if they are more likely to stop using the service after a specific amount of time. Figure 16 below illustrates how many of the company's new customers have continued to place orders, or not, over time.

	P0	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Q1 2020	219	75	75	68	54	58	67	62	56
Q2 2020	272	160	106	87	105	97	69	67	77
Q3 2020	290	134	103	96	90	71	78	77	
Q4 2020	386	176	190	151	133	125	119		
Q1 2021	227	122	122	94	95	81			
Q2 2021	555	306	242	226	232				
Q3 2021	301	139	130	123					
Q4 2021	283	144	113						
Q1 2022	252	125							
Q2 2022	275								

Net revenue	P0	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Q1 2020	2 381 451 kr	1 130 936 kr	1 367 043 kr	1 314 661 kr	1 182 364 kr	1 135 318 kr	1 555 370 kr	1 467 709 kr	1 523 311 kr
Q2 2020	3 096 545 kr	2 256 443 kr	1 279 424 kr	1 117 824 kr	1 357 030 kr	1 419 617 kr	1 097 101 kr	1 218 892 kr	1 490 388 kr
Q3 2020	3 213 599 kr	2 026 278 kr	1 535 310 kr	1 625 514 kr	1 989 085 kr	1 923 611 kr	2 079 268 kr	1 966 387 kr	
Q4 2020	3 438 023 kr	2 194 554 kr	2 289 291 kr	2 234 714 kr	2 299 315 kr	2 377 593 kr	2 627 622 kr		
Q1 2021	2 040 522 kr	2 667 363 kr	2 456 239 kr	3 384 824 kr	5 147 579 kr	5 639 093 kr			
Q2 2021	6 129 281 kr	5 408 756 kr	4 473 322 kr	4 909 705 kr	5 301 728 kr				
Q3 2021	4 914 588 kr	3 450 657 kr	3 241 250 kr	4 053 511 kr					
Q4 2021	3 347 024 kr	2 788 702 kr	3 262 660 kr						
Q1 2022	2 977 299 kr	2 925 999 kr							
Q2 2022	4 470 722 kr								

Figure 16: Cohort new customers at the case company.

According to the data provided, 252 users joined the Q1 2022 cohort (column P0). All these 252 customers thus created their accounts and placed their first orders during this period. In the following quarter, Q2 (column P1), 125 of these customers made additional purchases, resulting in a retention rate of 49.60%. Furthermore, the Q1 2022 cohort made purchases totaling 2,977 MSEK in Q1, while the same customers made purchases totaling 2,925 MSEK in Q2.

The data shows that only 48.94% of the cohort of 252 customers from Q1 2022 made a second purchase in the subsequent quarter. The remaining customers, however, displayed substantial growth potential as those who made further purchases notably boosted their expenditure. For instance, the Q1 2021 cohort's spending in Q2 2022 nearly tripled, increasing from approximately 2 million SEK to 5.6 million SEK. Overall, the cohort analysis indicated that the case company has been effectively developing customers that continue to stay loyal. The data shows that those consumers who kept making purchases from the company had notable growth potential, and when all cohorts were combined, the average order value for those customers who continued to purchase increased by 86%. The considerable increase in their average order value demonstrates how much the company could gain by working more with its customer retention. However, they currently do not work with customer loyalty in the sense of retaining or following up with customers who stopped placing orders. The only thing they have in place today are some automated marketing campaigns with newsletters and offering discounts to customers who have not placed an order in a long time.

4.3 Customer Journey Management

Next, it is time to conduct the CJM steps of implementing the tool, which begins with analyzing the current customer journey. A comprehensive illustration of the complete customer journey map has been constructed and is depicted below in Figure 17. This map outlines each stage of the customer journey, from initial awareness to post-purchase loyalty touchpoints, and provides insight into the customer experience at each stage with the customer satisfaction index. Lastly, the development potential for the three touchpoints mentioned is included. These touchpoints will be elaborated on further down in Section 4.3.

Steps in Customer Journey	NEEDS & RESEARCH	CHOICE OF WHOLESALER	CREATE ACCOUNT	PLACE ORDER	ORDER INFO	DELIVERY	INVOICE	CUSTOMER SERVICE	LOYALTY
	PRE-PURCHASE			DURING PURCHASE			POST-PURCHASE		
Customer Behavior	Customer conducts own research on search engine and/or receive recommendations from industry colleagues, sales managers, and suppliers.	Benchmarking between different wholesalers found from research. Price, shipping, and delivery time can be important factors. Test the user-friendliness of the site.	Enters all their company details, and chooses occupation and preferences. Customers can also choose which price group they wish to belong to when they have created their account.	Search for products on the website and add them to shopping cart. Opens the checkout, checks goods, moves on to the last step, shipping cost, price, VAT, and delivery day, chooses payment method, and agrees.	Customer receives confirmation on the website when the order is placed. Customer receives order confirmation via email, which contains relevant information about their order, such as amount, customer number, order number, etc.	The customer receives a tracking link with estimated delivery date and delivery window, the order is delivered to the customer, the driver may call before delivery, the driver knocks on the door and leaves the delivery at the curb.	Customer receives the invoice if that has been chosen as payment method. Ideally, the customer should receive the invoice on the same day that they have received delivery of what they ordered.	Customer contacts company if something unexpected has happened. For example, if they receive delivery of a product they did not order. There may also be general questions regarding the delivery and invoice.	Customer will receive email newsletter from company reminding of previous orders. Customers also get reminded if they have not ordered in a long time.
Development potential	Increase marketing and SEO to make it even more easy to find the company.	Make it easy for customers to see the delivery time for their address.	Create awareness about different price groups early on when customers visit the website.	Increase efficiency by making it easier to find desired products and clearly state important information when customer places order.	Increase reliability to not have any faulty information.	Increasing delivery accuracy and meeting customer needs	Increase reliability to not have any faulty information.	Increase awareness, such as displaying telephone numbers or email clearly for customers.	Understand what is hindering customers from placing their first or subsequent orders. Uncover possible hurdles.

New customer

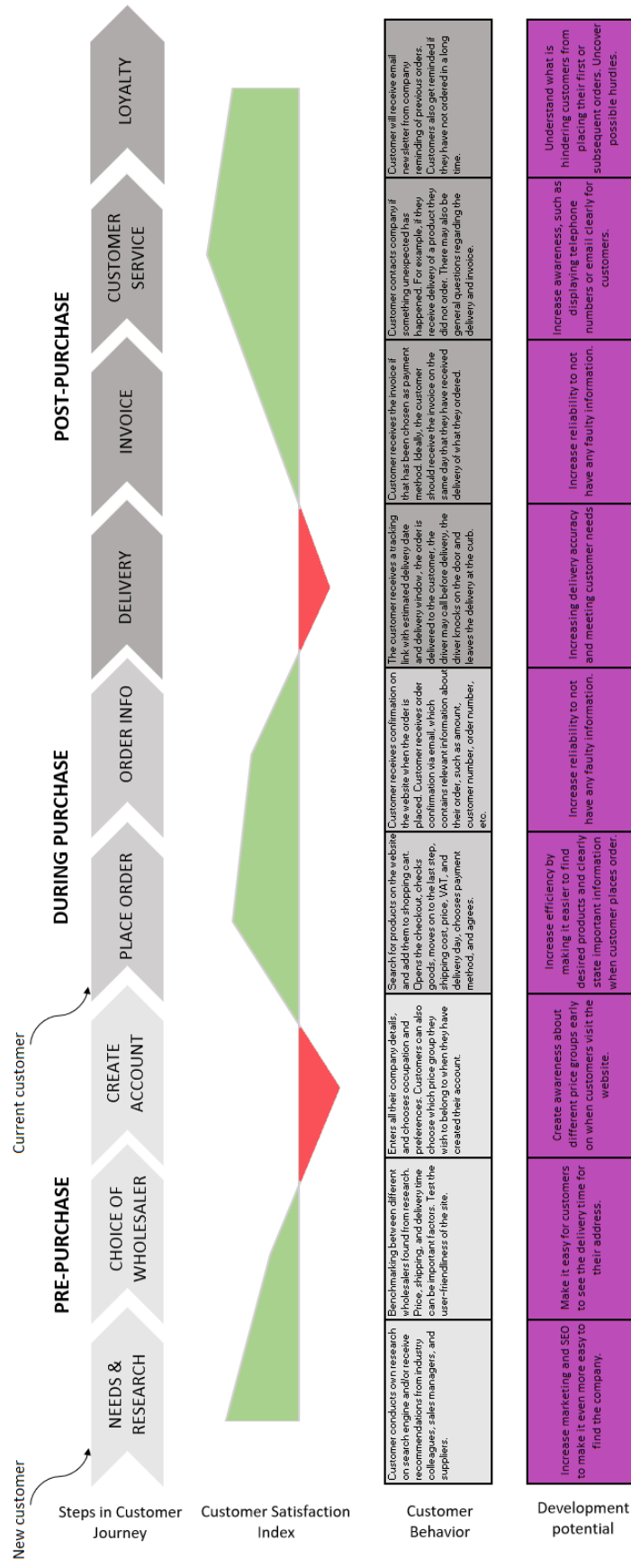Current customer

Customer Satisfaction Index

Figure 17: The current Customer Journey Map with ratings from interviews.

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After analyzing the customer journey of the case company, it becomes evident that the delivery and create account touchpoints are areas in need of improvement due to them having a notably lower rating compared to the other touchpoints. The create account touchpoint had a negative rating of -0.17, indicating that users may have encountered difficulties or frustration during the process. Although this touchpoint is not the customer's first encounter with the company, it is nevertheless important because it may influence the customer's decision to make a purchase. The company may have received a negative rating because it did not give all clients accessible information about the various price groups.

The delivery touchpoint received a low rating of -0,13, indicating that customers are not satisfied with the delivery process. Late deliveries have led to frustration and disappointment, which could result in negative reviews or customer churn. Identifying the root causes of these issues and addressing them could potentially improve the rating for this touchpoint.

Finally, it became clear from reviewing the cohort analysis that the case company had trouble retaining customers beyond their initial purchase. This is a concerning issue as customer loyalty is a key driver for long-term revenue generation. Upon discussing the findings with the Vice President and CEO, it was unanimously agreed that further analysis of the loyalty touchpoint was necessary to uncover potential solutions to increase the customer retention rate. The cohort analysis also revealed that the customers that remain after their initial purchase have a notable impact on the company's revenue growth. Given the importance of the loyalty touchpoint, it was deemed to be the most relevant area to investigate further of the seven remaining touchpoints.

It is important to note that the other touchpoints described in the text are also important and may require improvement. However, based on the ratings and the potential impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty, these three touchpoints should be prioritized when searching for potential implementable improvements.

4.3.1 Create account

The account creation process did not adequately direct consumers in choosing the proper price category or alert them of its existence. Without this information, customers could potentially miss out on valuable features and benefits that correspond with their desired price point.

Based on customer insights gathered through interviews, an improvement was implemented to address this issue. As a result, clients are now asked to choose their preferred price group as a requirement when creating their accounts. This guarantees that all users are informed of the various price categories and their associated perks, enabling them to choose the one that is best for them during this step in the customer journey.

However, multiple sources of information during the study make it clear that the case company is not able to convert all website visitors into paying customers. Only 33% of visitors to the account creation page finished the process and successfully opened an account, according to the Google Analytics data in Figure 9. One further intriguing statistic is that in the past 365 days, the company has gained approximately 2,726 new accounts, of which 1,448 have placed a first order. The percentage here is exactly 53%.

As a result, many potential customers drop off somewhere between perusing the website, deciding to register, and being prepared to make their first purchase. Overall, if all the steps are combined where these numbers are relevant, the 1,448 customers who placed their first order after creating an account could have been a total of 8,261 paying customers if all 2,726 customers who created accounts finished their first order, and if 100% of those who visited the account creation page followed through with the process.

The typical consumer's moment of truth, where they decide whether to purchase from the case company or a rival in place of it, occurs somewhere in the middle of these steps in the customer journey. It is unclear exactly where the choice between using the website to browse, making an account, and completing a purchase is made.

During customer interviews, this challenge was nuanced, particularly by the segment of customers who created accounts but never placed their first order. It emerged from these

interviews that the price seems to be the biggest influencing factor during the customer's moment of truth, but delivery is also perceived as an important parameter for some customers.

The case company has the ability to offer attractive prices across various price groups for all customers. Therefore, it should be a priority to communicate this information to all potential customers. Following recent modifications of the creating an account process, those who start the account creation procedure and are not initially deterred by uncompetitive prices may be more satisfied now. Customers who haven't made an account or are using the website for the first time, however, will only see the lowest pricing category. Although there are no statistics to support this, it is likely that a sizable portion of potential customers are already lost in the search stage of the customer journey due to this issue. Therefore, it is necessary to provide all visitors with information regarding the various price groups as early as possible during their first interaction with the website. This can improve the likelihood of converting website visitors into paying customers.

4.3.2 Delivery

The company's low rating of -0.13 and delivery accuracy of 88% in March 2023 are both considered problematic. As described previously, late deliveries and poor communication are major contributors to the high level of customer dissatisfaction reported in interviews. Without reliable deliveries, the company will be unable to satisfy their customers' needs, resulting in a loss of customers, similar to the one who had to switch due to their negative delivery experiences.

Finding the root causes of these problems and solving them would be the obvious solution, but fully understanding why the deliveries are unreliable is challenging in the case company's current supply chain. The use of a 3PL provider for the whole supply chain complicates the overall comprehension of these delivery issues, as the problem resides more within the 3PL than the company, and the company lacks the authority to initiate an analysis of these root causes and change them. Thus, this is one of the drawbacks of outsourcing the deliveries. Although utilizing the expertise of the 3PL provider can be advantageous, the company becomes reliant on them for the execution of the delivery process, thereby losing full control.

Despite not having full control over the delivery procedure, the company is still responsible for ensuring a positive customer experience. Therefore, the company still needs to make some changes to increase satisfaction from customers. In the absence of immediate authority to make substantial changes, the company is locked to only addressing these issues coming from customers and keeping open communication towards their 3PL provider. Other than that, the responsibility lies within the 3PL provider to make some changes to these issues addressed.

4.3.3 Loyalty

According to customer retention statistics, only 49 percent of customers who submit their first order move on to place a second order. As seen previously in the cohort analysis in Figure 15, the order values of the customers that do remain increase notably over the following periods, amounting to a total growth of roughly 86%. The company's challenge is to build on loyalty and increase customer retention percentage. As of today, the company conducts no follow-ups on the customers that have left and have no implemented processes to work with this segment of customers. Thus, they miss out on opportunities to understand what the customers are missing in their customer journey to remain purchasing customers. In an interview conducted on May 3, 2023, the Vice President of the case company stated, *"We have a lot of new customers coming in; the challenge is how to retain them and build customer loyalty."*

Some of the company's competitors have a more contract-based business model which binds the customers to buying certain volumes. By contracting these customers, the competitors can leverage these extra earnings and create loyalty by inviting customers to events that they personally value, such as sporting events. In the company's case, they rely more on having low margins to give the customers the best price possible without any commitment. Therefore, the opportunities for the company lie in finding what the customers value when ordering and what it takes to make the customers want to place further orders.

It could also be beneficial to create a deeper understanding of what the customers value and try to utilize this information to increase their loyalty. For example, a simple phone call to a customer to check how they are and if they have any feedback for the company is more insightful than receiving an automated newsletter or asking customers to fill in a review. The most interesting customer segment to gather this information from would arguably be the customers who have placed their first order but not a second one. Extracting information from

these customers would lead to insights about if there are any hurdles from the customer's point of view in taking the steps to place further orders. This information could be utilized to serve as a foundation for future developments that can increase the number of recurring customers and to better understand how the users perceive their customer journey.

An additional idea could be to include company-branded products along with a note from the company when placing their first order, which could make the customer feel more welcome and improve their willingness to place additional orders. By doing this, if one of the company-branded products were a sketchpad for instance, aid the company in branding itself when the customer writes something in the sketchpad or simply sees it in front of them that generates an additional thought about the company. Furthermore, if it is possible to offer a discount on the first order welcome package that the customer may utilize when placing a second order, which could also encourage further orders.

Although it is important to find reasons for why customers only place one order, the company cannot forget about the customers who already are loyal to the company, as they are the ones that stand for the current increase in overall order value. These customers should be included in the discussion as to what it is that makes them stay loyal to the company. This information could also act as groundwork when implementing changes to make more customers go past the first order stage.

Furthermore, by offering tangible rewards, like a point system for discounts to be used in further orders, the company could demonstrate their appreciation for customer loyalty and provide an added incentive for continued engagement. However, with the company's current business model being unconstrained for all customers and allowing them to come and go as they like, a reward program would not be suitable at the moment.

4.4 Improvement suggestions

All suggested improvements that the company could implement are not meant to be conducted at once. Some of them will be easier to implement than others, and as for delivery, it will be difficult to purpose any implementable improvements since the problems are out of the company's hands. However, the improvements that are considered to be most important to implement first are presented in a ranked order below:

1. The paramount objective for the case company currently revolves around augmenting the influx of prospective customers surpassing their moment of truth. Customers have shown to value attractive prices, making it a major issue that only logged-in website visitors with an account can access the more appealing pricing groups. Therefore, it is of utmost priority to review and develop an IT solution that enables customers to directly encounter the more attractive pricing groups, while also comprehending the existence of diverse criteria, such as differing free shipping limits for each pricing group. The empowerment of customers autonomously selecting their preferred pricing group embodies a noteworthy asset that should be highlighted. By adopting these measures, the company can bolster its performance in the price comparisons frequently conducted by customers prior to deciding which wholesaler to purchase from.

2. The company needs to understand why customers that have placed a first order choose not to place subsequent ones. To uncover this, the company should begin calling this customer segment, asking them questions about how they experienced their journey, and if something was missing for them to place a second order. Information gathered from this could potentially lay the groundwork for future improvements when the company understands more what kind of hurdles the customer experiences that stop them from placing further orders. Also, by calling customers, the company will close the gap between them and their customers to become more personal in their relationship with their customers.

3. Thirdly, an interesting customer segment is the customers that visit the create account webpage but never completed the creation of their account. The current conversion rate of this is 34 percent. By making additional interviews and gathering insights from these users, new inspiration for improvements could be gathered. Increasing this ratio of customers that successfully creates their account could benefit the company's bottom line greatly, as the cohort analysis shows how remaining customers affect growth.

5. Discussion

This chapter will discuss reflections on working with customer journey management. Findings from the results and analysis will be discussed in relation to the theoretical framework. It will be separated into the case study and general discussions regarding the study's findings.

5.1 Case study

The initial hypothetical map, illustrated in Figure 4, displayed the case company's own perception of the customer journey. Their hypothesis turned out to be quite similar to the reality presented in the results, which were displayed in Figure 17. However, there were some touchpoints where notable differences emerged. These contradictions are illustrated using Figure 18 below.
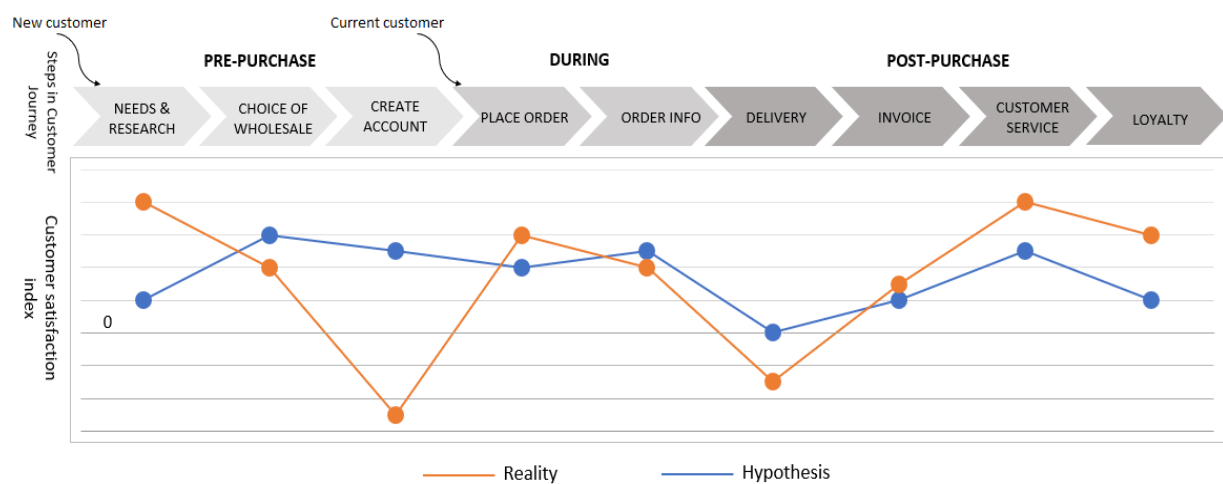
Figure 18: Differences between hypothetical and real customer satisfaction index.

Certain touchpoints displayed exhibited notable discrepancies, and a few had some smaller inequalities. The needs & research touchpoints were a step in the customer journey where the company performed remarkably better. This was due to numerous customers expressing in their interviews how easy it was to find the company's website. The company emphasized that they had invested considerable effort in search engine optimization (SEO) to rank high on Google's search results for relevant queries. The second major difference is found in the account creation process. There were obvious problems here, which were partially resolved, and improvements have also been suggested to develop this further. The delivery step, customer service, and the

loyalty touchpoint all had slightly smaller differences, where both delivery and loyalty were seen as areas in need of improvement in the case study results.

From these discrepancies between the hypothetical and actual customer journey map, the importance of objectivity in CJM becomes evident. As highlighted by Temkin (2010), maintaining objectivity is of utmost importance when implementing this tool, and the case study further demonstrated a clear synergy with this principle.

Other challenges in the case study that should be discussed are how certain parts would be defined during the work. One such element is how the customer journey was initially divided into different touchpoints. This was done in collaboration with the company's CEO to get a division that would be a clear and manageable breakdown, ensuring adequate steps between each subsequent touchpoint. In retrospect, the steps became reasonably large in relation to each other, but it was challenging to clearly display where in the customer journey map the so-called moment of truth was. It became apparent that the precise moment of purchase decision varied notably among the interviewed customers. For some, it already took place at the first need & research touchpoint, while others could take it as late as when placing the order. It would have been too extensive to include the entire moment of truth in a single touchpoint in the customer journey map, but the current segmentation does not distinctly indicate the occurrence of this pivotal moment. This would have been interesting to include, particularly in the context of e-commerce where conversion rates hold notable importance for business outcomes.

During the case study, the authors came to the realization that the touchpoints comprising the customer's journey could have benefited from being weighted to engender a more profound comprehension of the customer journey. Initially, the interview questions should have been formulated in a manner that could have included this, thus ensuring the continuity of data collection only based on real customer insights from interviews. This could have illuminated which stages of the customer journey were of utmost importance for the customer's overall satisfaction, thereby enabling measurement for each individual touchpoint. Subsequently, this could have been combined with the ratings for every touchpoint to provide an overall insight into how well the company performs in the touchpoints that the customer genuinely values the most.

An additional reflection that needs to be raised is the interval of the customer data periods that should be included in each touchpoint's ratings. The study encompassed interviews with diverse

customer segments, including active customers, registered but non-purchasing customers, and those who had previously made purchases but discontinued suddenly. Each of these customer segments has experienced their respective customer journeys over varying periods. For example, those customers who stopped shopping some time ago only experienced their customer journey up to the point where they left the case company. Conversely, active customers possess a journey with the company that more accurately reflects the present customer journey but also incorporates their historical experiences in their assessment. An illustrative example from the case study involved a customer who ceased shopping in 2019 due to delivery issues with the company. In 2021, the company replaced its 3PL partner and now has a completely new logistics chain. So, should the customer from 2019 be included in the assessment for the generic customer journey? This determination should have been made prior to creating the customer journey map and continuously refined during the CJM process throughout the case study. However, for the case study, the 2019 customer was treated on par with other customers in the data collection, consequently influencing the overall rating of the delivery touchpoint.

The focus point for the case company in the upcoming time should be to first try to implement the proposed implementations. Subsequent to this phase, an evaluation of the CJM endeavors and the extent to which the employed tools have contributed value should be conducted. As elucidated by Lemon & Verhoef (2016), this methodology constitutes an iterative process, necessitating continuous efforts. When the new implementations for improvement have been carried out, this will have created a new customer journey, with new experiences and new ratings. Consequently, a new round of data collection becomes imperative to illustrate and assess the evolved customer journey map. Therefore, if the company does choose to continue working with CJM, the next step would be to make a new iteration.

5.2 General discussion

In this section, a general discussion and evaluation of customer journey management as a tool for customer-centric strategic management will be conducted using a SWOT analysis. Subsequently, the outcomes of the case study will be discussed in terms of whether they could have been achieved in a more optimal manner, as well as the generalizability of the tool in e-commerce and how other industries could adapt the utilization of the tool.

5.2.1 SWOT

Strengths

One prominent strength of using CJM is its customer-centric nature. By understanding the customer journey, organizations can gain deep insights into their customers' needs, preferences, and pain points at various touchpoints. This knowledge allows organizations to design experiences that align with customers' expectations, ultimately leading to increased customer satisfaction. By leveraging data from customer feedback and how the customers interact with the organization, informed and customer-focused developments can be made. The case study concluded the focus areas for improvements by solely using real customer insights originating from customer interviews and technical tools to track the customers' interaction with the company. This ensured that the suggested improvements derived from actual customer data, as Lemon and Verhoef (2016) highlight as an important part when investigating how the customer journey performs at a given moment.

Lemon and Verhoef (2016) further emphasize that the tool advocates an iterative process that promotes continuous improvement. It acknowledges that the customer journey is dynamic and evolving, influenced by changing customer behaviors and market trends. The case study also provided insight into how the tool is beneficially implemented with continuous interactions. The proposed improvements for the case company would have been good to be able to evaluate by conducting a new iteration, with new data collection, to understand the impact the implementations had had on the customer journey. This iterative approach ensures that businesses stay up-to-date and responsive to customer needs, driving continuous improvement in their products, services, and overall customer experience.

Furthermore, CJM helps to provide a visual representation of the customer journey, making it easier for stakeholders to comprehend and analyze the entire end-to-end experience. Visualizing the journey helps to identify critical touchpoints, pain points, and moments of truth, providing a comprehensive overview of the customer's interactions with the organization as pointed out by Lemon and Verhoef (2016). In the customer journey map from the results, clear visualizations made it apparent that create an account and delivery touchpoints needed further analysis and improvement. This illustration of the customer journey map will enable stakeholders to have a shared understanding of it, facilitating more effective decision-making and targeted improvements at each stage of the customer journey.

Weaknesses

One of the weaknesses in implementing CJM is the time-consuming work of collecting and analyzing customer data. The data needs to be collected from actual customer feedback and how they interact with the company (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Gathering comprehensive data about customer interactions across various touchpoints can be a resource-intensive task. During the case study, entire working days could be spent calling customers, where the majority neither answered the phone nor had time to talk once the call was connected. Which resulted in many working hours without any value-creating customer insights. Companies should be aware of this ambiguity in answer rates and have the right tools to collect customer interaction data from various stages on their website. Moreover, analyzing this data to derive meaningful insights and identify areas for improvement requires dedicated time and effort by all stakeholders. Therefore, companies must be able to allocate sufficient resources to collect, store, and analyze customer data effectively.

Customer journey maps aim to visualize the customer experience in a structured manner, which is why it is important to recognize that real-world customer journeys are often non-linear and dynamic (Grewal & Roggeveen, 2020). Customers may not follow the mapped-out journey in a predetermined or generic order due to varied individual preferences, needs, and behaviors. For example, from the case study considerations must be taken to customers who prefer paying directly when placing their order, thus, eliminating the invoice stage in their journey as they have already received a payment confirmation upon placing the order. In those cases, the payment needs to be included in the stage where the customer places their order. Another example is the current customers who jump straight to placing their order and skipping the, for them, unnecessary stages that pre-purchase consists of. This challenge highlights the need for flexibility in CJM, allowing for personalized and adaptable experiences that accommodate diverse customer journeys.

Opportunities

In customer journey management, it is important to take a step back and view the entire customer journey as a cohesive entity, as opposed to focusing solely on individual touchpoints, which is something that previous research and numerous organizations tend to overlook (Baxendale et al., 2015; Rudowski et al., 2020). In the case study, this was utilized when it became apparent that the create account touchpoint needed further attention to investigate whether this also affected the adjacent touchpoints negatively. This resulted in the choice being

identified as another step of the customer journey in need of improvements. This demonstrated that if the focus would have been solely on the create account touchpoint, some of these improvements would not have been identified.

Moreover, when the company discards siloed thinking, it will enable enhanced cross-functional collaboration and communication within the company. Since the customer journey spans across different departments and touchpoints, it necessitates breaking down silos and fostering collaboration among various teams, such as marketing, sales, and customer service (Lundin & Kindström, 2023). By working together and sharing insights, teams can align their efforts to deliver a consistent and seamless customer experience. From the perspective of the case company, this could generate opportunities to enhance communication to make departments aware of changes that are being made and how customers perceive those at the different stages. Also, by enhancing communication between the company and its 3PL partner, the company could make them more aware of customer dissatisfaction which was shown in the actual customer journey map. This cross-functional collaboration will not only improve the customer journey but also enhance internal and external communication and cooperation, leading to a more cohesive and customer-centric organization.

Threats

When evaluating touchpoints and the customer journey, it is essential to remain objective and avoid biased assessments (Temkin, 2010). The case study revealed some discrepancies between the employees' perceived customer journey and the actual one. Although the employees were aware that some touchpoints needed improvement, they could never know for sure without taking unbiased customer opinions into account. This also shows the importance of using real customer data to develop improvements that meet customer expectations. It is crucial not to overlook or downplay certain touchpoints based on personal assumptions or preconceived ideas. Objective evaluation allows organizations to identify pain points, gaps, or areas of improvement accurately. Implementing mechanisms for unbiased evaluation, such as customer feedback surveys and data-driven analysis, can help mitigate this challenge.

An organization implementing CJM should prioritize cross-functional commitment and collaboration across all touchpoints (Lundin & Kindström, 2023). However, this becomes difficult when external partners conduct parts of the customer journey. As in the case study, the company works with a 3PL partner and much of the delivery touchpoint issue is out of the

company's control; nonetheless, they are still responsible for meeting customer expectations. Differences in structures, processes, and priorities may impede the company's and its 3PL partner's ability to work together effectively. Therefore, for any organization implementing CJM, explicit communication channels, shared objectives, and trust-building efforts are examples of actions that may be beneficial to consider mitigating the risks that were identified from the case study.

5.2.2 Key findings

The core value of customer journey management is that it encourages a customer-centric mindset throughout the organization, aligning processes, products, and services with customer expectations. By aligning touchpoints more, the organization will be able to create that seamless journey without any hurdles for the customer, aligning with the findings from Gasparin et al. (2022). By also mapping out the entire journey, organizations can pinpoint areas that require attention, such as streamlining processes or enhancing communication channels.

This case study's findings provide insights into the iterative nature of CJM, which corresponds with Lemon & Verhoef's (2016) findings. As this study only conducted a single iteration, an important observation was made. The case company updated the current customer journey, and the previously collected data on customer opinions and preferences became obsolete and less pertinent. This finding underlines the iterative and dynamic nature of customer journeys and emphasizes the importance of the combination of both collecting current feedback to precisely capture the most recent customer sentiments and utilizing knowledge from previous iterations to drive continuous improvement.

Furthermore, the case study also highlighted the importance of remaining objective when rating different touchpoints. Employees may have a natural inclination to view their organization in a positive light, potentially downplaying shortcomings or emphasizing strengths. This subjective bias can result in ratings that do not accurately reflect the true customer experience. Subsequently, this aligns with the observations made by Temkin (2010), who noted that self-assessments conducted by companies often tend to be skewed in their own favor. To foster objectivity, it is essential to collect feedback directly from customers as they are the ultimate judges of their experiences. Additionally, using standardized evaluation criteria will help to ensure consistency and comparability across touchpoints.

Setting a clear time frame for which data should be collected to form the basis of the customer journey map is another important key takeaway. During the case study, a difficulty was revealed with how historical customers and current active customers should be compared. Former customers, who ceased their engagement some time ago, perceive their past customer journey as the current journey when questioned about their experiences with the company. On the other hand, actively engaged customers tend to combine past experiences with their ongoing journeys when providing insights into their customer experience (Grewal & Roggeveen, 2020). Therefore, determining what customer data that should be included becomes an inquiry. The older customer insights might not be as relevant as the current customers since some touchpoints in the customer journey may look completely different now. The challenge lies in ascertaining the relevant time frame, specific to each case, and how it should be precisely defined. Variances are expected across different organizations, with some attributing varying degrees of importance to older customer insights. The case study demonstrated that this was something that should have been thought through and defined before the actual data collection.

The insights from the case study demonstrate the potential benefits of incorporating an importance index for each individual touchpoint within the customer journey. This could have been used to make an overall evaluation together with the ratings and create a comprehensive overview in the customer journey map of how well companies perform in the steps of the customer journey that matter most to customers. However, the case study, as well as existing research theories, do not provide sufficient grounds to address the specifics of how this should have been formulated. Hence, it would be a valuable area to investigate further to advance academic knowledge within the field of CJM.

Furthermore, CJM will help to provide a structured approach for collecting and analyzing customer feedback. The feedback serves as the foundation for data-driven decision-making and targeted action plans. Implementing it also promotes continuous improvement by adapting to evolving customer needs. This aligns with Lemon and Verhoef (2016), who emphasize the importance of taking customer opinions into account as they are the ones frequently experiencing how the touchpoints perform. Continuously monitoring and evaluating the customer journey will allow organizations to identify emerging trends, anticipate needs, and enhance the customer journey accordingly.

5.2.3 Within e-commerce and other industries

During the conducted case study, the application of CJM in the context of e-commerce was found to be advantageous. Within the e-commerce domain, conversion-related key performance indicators (KPIs) hold notable importance. These KPIs encompass metrics such as the percentage of new website visitors who engage in the account registration process or the proportion of newly registered customers who successfully complete their initial purchase. Throughout the case study, these KPIs were effectively integrated with the customer journey map and its associated customer insights to elucidate the factors influencing the company's performance. Notably, synergistic relationships were observed between the conversion rate of newly created accounts leading to subsequent initial orders and the ratings assigned to the touchpoint associated with account creation. An in-depth analysis of such customers was undertaken to discern the underlying factors impeding their initial purchase, thereby offering opportunities for enhancing the overall conversion rate.

In industries beyond the realm of e-commerce, customer journeys may exhibit substantial variations. For instance, in consulting firms specializing in project-based engagements conducted at client locations, diverse projects are often executed utilizing markedly different approaches. Due to the dynamic nature of this touchpoint, it becomes expedient to treat the entire execution of a consulting project as a singular touchpoint, thereby facilitating comparative analyses of distinct customer journeys and enabling the formulation of a generic customer journey map. The key lies in cultivating a comprehensive understanding of the customer journey, enabling well-informed decision-making pertaining to demarcations, and establishing appropriate data collection time frames, while concurrently fostering a profound comprehension of the industry's intricacies. These insights can subsequently be contrasted with pertinent KPIs, thereby unveiling potential synergies. Consequently, organizations can discern how an enhanced customer journey positively benefits their bottom line.

Overall, attaining a comprehensive understanding of the customer journey and its associated industry represents an imperative when utilizing CJM as a strategic tool for organizational management. The success of implementing this tool hinges upon adeptly harnessing the derived customer insights. Within the realm of e-commerce, distinctive correlations with conversion rates were apparent, although it should be noted that different industries may exhibit diverse sets of KPIs wherein the tool can be optimally employed.

5.2.4 Self-assessment & limitations

The interviews and the following analysis were conducted by only two assessors. This was an approach that came with both advantages and disadvantages. It helped in remaining consistent when grading the different customers' experiences and to gain a better overall understanding of the generic customer journey. However, it is essential to highlight the potential drawbacks of this approach.

One concern is that the sample size might be inadequate to be able to draw reliable conclusions. This problem can be explained due to the study's time and resource constraints. The ratings in the customer journey map originated from only 39 different customer interviews across three customer segments. Therefore, this number of interviews may fail to apprehend the dynamic nature of the generic customer journey. By instead incorporating additional assessors for reviewing the customer interviews, the process could have generated a more objective understanding, and thus a more reliable view of the customer journey. Additionally, expanding the sample size might have made the generic customer journey more credible and allowed for more in-depth analysis. Additionally, a larger sample size could have elevated the general understanding of the generic customer journey and created deeper insights into the customers' experiences.

Repeatability in future research is made possible by the +2 to -2 scale for rating touchpoints, along with explanations of what separates the different ratings. The two researchers' opinions occasionally diverged somewhat during the independent review, but never by more than one point. One could contend that the two researchers held comparable perspectives and that their assessments were influenced by group thinking or confirmation bias. Therefore, additional assessors could have assisted in alleviating this and providing a more adequate assessment. However, this could also have increased the discrepancies between different assessors, diminishing the repeatability of the study. Regardless of the size of the assessment group, using a scale with clear instructions explaining the distinctions between ratings is more likely to mitigate rating fluctuations. Failing to ensure this will make it more difficult to ensure consistency in translating customer insights into ratings of the respective touchpoint in the customer journey map.

Lastly, prior to commencing the study, it would have been advisable for the researchers to pay more attention to the iterative nature of CJM. Due to a lack of knowledge and foresight, the study did not include data collection addressing how customers experienced changes to the customer journey that were implemented during the study. This would have allowed for a more comprehensive analysis of how customers perceived the changes and what impact they had on the customer journey. Which could have provided insights into the success of each iteration and pinpointed the areas where improvements had the most notable impact. Additionally, knowing how customers reacted to iterative alterations, could have served as valuable insights for future decision-making and prioritization of developmental areas in upcoming iterations.

6. Conclusion

This research study was based upon a theoretical framework to assist in testing the somewhat understudied area of how a company can implement CJM as a strategic management tool. To test and learn from this, a case study was conducted at a case company operating in the e-commerce industry. The results from this, together with the theoretical framework, analysis, and discussion, have formed the following steps which are concluded to be this study's answer to the first research question "*How can a B2B e-commerce company effectively implement customer journey management to guide development work?*"

1. Understand the customer journey, industry, and business.
2. Sufficiently divide the customer journey into different touchpoints to form the generic customer journey.
3. Define how to interpret and integrate older customer journeys in the overall assessment.
4. Collect data to understand the customer journey.
5. Form the generic customer journey map. It should include:
   - The touchpoints that formulate the customer journey,
   - Customer satisfaction index,
   - Customer importance index,
   - A brief description of each touchpoint,
   - Display the potential for development in each touchpoint.
6. Analyze and prioritize the areas that need improvement to generate feasible improvement suggestions.
7. Develop and implement the chosen improvements.
8. New iteration. Never stop iterating. This is a continuous framework.

To answer this thesis' second research question "*What are key factors to consider for a B2B company operating in e-commerce when implementing customer journey management?*" key factors to be considered when implementing the tool are stated below:

In the initial phase, it is crucial to gain a deep understanding of the given company, its industry, and the current customer journey. This knowledge will greatly assist in making well-informed decisions in the subsequent stages. The second step involves formalizing the customer journey through a series of touchpoints, by using the insights gained from the initial phase to

appropriately identify the touchpoints. These touchpoints should provide concise yet comprehensive information without overwhelming detail, effectively capturing the overall journey. During the third step, prior to commencing the data collection process, it is important to establish guidelines for how to interpret outdated customer journeys. This is imperative to validate and define how the older, less relevant customer journeys should be interpreted.

Following this, the data collection is the subsequent fourth step. Integrating targeted questions into the questionnaire, or any other data collection model that has been chosen, could enhance the understanding of how customers perceive and value the touchpoints within the customer journey.

Step five entails utilizing the insights gathered from the data collection to map the customer journey. The key to success in this phase is to stay objective throughout the whole time. If this mindset is not pure, and subjective opinions are mixed into this process, the core value of being a customer-centric tool risks being undermined. The customer journey map should contain an illustration of the defined touchpoints from step two that formulated the customer journey. The customer satisfaction index is then utilized to illustrate how the organization performs in each touchpoint and how these performances can be put in relation to each other. Thereafter, a brief explanation of all the touchpoints should be integrated to provide a comprehensive overview of the activities taking place in each step. An importance index is also beneficial to include to display how the customers value the importance of each touchpoint.

Thereafter, the sixth step is to analyze the customer journey map. The customer satisfaction index, together with the customers' valuation of the touchpoints, the general understanding of the business, industry knowledge, the implementability of improvements, and the overall picture, are the foundation of how to prioritize the development work in the forthcoming stage. The seventh step only consists of implementing the chosen developments in step six. This undoubtedly involves more work than just implementing the changes, but this tool is not about how developments should be implemented.

Finally, the last step when implementing this tool is to do steps one to seven once again. CJM as a strategic management tool encompasses an iterative working environment. One of the key takeaways from this study is to never stop iterating when utilizing CJM. It is imperative since the data collected from the first iteration, which laid the foundation of the chosen and now

implemented improvement suggestions, may now be obsolete. The improvements have hopefully changed the current customer journey into a new, better one. Thus, new data collection becomes necessary to capture the new generic experience of the customer journey. Thereafter, new improvement areas will arise, that will lead to new improvement suggestions. After these implementations, a new iteration will once again be needed. Customer journey management in a continuous framework, and this conclusion is one of this study's most important ones.

6.1 Future research

The absence of academic research within the area of CJM offers great potential for future research. The case study showed how the tool can have a positive impact on a company's business and how it can generate useful and customer-centric insights to form implementable improvements from. Therefore, this study may serve as a cornerstone for future studies on how CJM can be utilized as a tool for strategic management.

However, the study also encountered several areas that would benefit from additional research. Examining how the tool could benefit from the integration of an importance index when collecting the data for the customer journey map would be interesting. Then, the satisfaction index could be combined with the importance index to generate an overall picture that makes it easier to understand which touchpoints would have been the most valuable for the given company to improve. Additionally, opting to understand how to optimize the integration of insights from older customer journeys would be beneficial. Defining how older customer journeys should be interpreted and how outdated previous insights can be in order not to be classified as obsolete. Perhaps some kind of weighting factor can be integrated to gradually reduce the impact on the overall assessment, depending on how outdated the older customer journeys are.

The case study only found the time to carry out one iteration. Hence, it would be of interest to conduct a study on how multiple iterations would benefit an organization. The exploration of multiple iterations would provide a deeper understanding of the long-term effects and sustainability of implementing CJM as a strategic management tool. Also, studying the benefits of multiple iterations could uncover valuable insights into the optimization of resources,

identification of additional pitfalls, and the overall improvement of the outcome when implementing the tool.

Finally, investigating how the tool should be implemented in other industries would be worthwhile. Within e-commerce, clear connections could be made between conversion rates and the ratings from relevant touchpoints in the customer journey. Therefore, an interesting investigation point would have been how the tool can be utilized and adapted in widely different industries.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview script

Pre-purchase:

Needs and research

How did you get in touch with the company in the first place?

Choice of wholesaler

What is important to you when choosing a wholesaler and why did you choose this company?

Create account

Non-active customer: See that you created an account, but never placed an order. why?

Active customer: How did you experience the process of creating an account?

During purchase

Place order

How do you experience the company's website and the interaction with them when you place your orders?

Order info

Do you think the information you receive from the company, from when you place your order until you receive your delivery, is good and informative?

Post-purchase

Delivery

How do you experience the deliveries?

Invoice

What is your experience with invoicing from the company?

Customer Service

Have you ever been in contact with customer service, if so how do you experience that contact?

Loyalty

What is important for you to want to place a new order from this company?

Appendix 2. Transcribed interviews

Interview	Customer Segment	Date contacted	Notes
1	Former	2023-02-17	Wanted to pay by invoice, but the company demanded payment in advance because of poor credit rating, a bit of a hassle. So the customer solved it with another provider.
2	New	2023-02-17	Have placed one order. A bit of a mess with invoicing, got a reminder that the invoice was sent to the wrong address. Dissatisfied with being charged extra for late payment due to this.
3	New	2023-02-23	Have placed one order. Satisfied with order. Nothing to comment on
4	Former	2023-02-23	Only placed a small order for two spice jars. The shipping was high according to the customer as they receive standard shipping. Long delivery time according to customer. Took a long time due to bad credit rating.
5	Former	2023-02-23	Have placed an order for energy drinks. One time order because someone wanted it. Had no comments regarding the journey
6	New	2023-02-23	Have placed an order. "Fantastically satisfied". Fast delivery, good price and nothing to complain about. "Best site I have shopped at"
7	Large	2023-02-23	Satisfied with everything. Not aware of different price groups, wants to be B-customer.
8	Potential	2023-02-23	Satisfied with everything except that the shipping was too high according to the customer. "I don't know what price range I have or if I can get a better price."
9	Large	2023-02-23	Company is complementary to the main supplier. "Everything worked well with payment and invoicing." Has two companies. Want better prices on both but didn't know they can change the price group.
10	New	2023-02-23	Placed one order, satisfied with almost everything. What was not good was the short date on the Festis, got a discount of 5%. "I got great help from a girl at customer service, but it would have been good to have the product delivered with a good expiration date from the beginning instead of being compensated with a lower price." Not aware of price groups, is a C customer and wants to be an A customer.

11	New	2023-02-23	Placed one order. Ordering was easy online, with no problems as he was used to it before. "I fully understand prepayment in my case, and I am satisfied with the invoicing and the information about it." "The delivery time is too long and unreliable because I found out my delivery was delayed via a third party." Wish there was more direct contact in case of delivery delays.
12	New	2023-02-23	Placed one order. Just switched from another supplier and tested this company. Overall happy with the whole order, thought it was smooth. Nothing to comment on. Being informed about another price group that they had no idea about, ordering over the limit for free delivery usually so they want to be an A customer. Pleased with it.
13	New	2023-02-23	"Smooth and good". Satisfied with the order as they experienced no hassle at all. Nothing to comment on. "I have no idea about the price range, but I want to wait to choose a price range as I don't order very often."
14	New	2023-02-24	Placed one order. The experience was as good as it gets, everything worked well, and all expectations were met. Not aware of different price groups, informed about it, and is already an A group. Some products are expensive, for example, soft drinks cost more here than at some competitors. Wish to get some kind of agreement to get a better price on this.
15	New	2023-02-24	Ordered through a tip from a company that gave them a discount. Would enter a code that could not be registered. "I had problems with the information on the order information and invoice, which caused irritation on my part." "I received very good help from customer service with my problems." Not aware of price groups, is a B customer, and wants to stay there.
16	New	2023-02-24	Have placed an order. Everything arrived on time, was well packed, have nothing to complain about, very smooth. "I have no idea about the price range, but we are not that price-sensitive when ordering."
17	Large	2023-03-20	Very satisfied customer, good deliveries, have nothing to complain about. "I am satisfied with the contact I have had with customer service."
18	Potential	2023-03-20	No memory of them creating an account, probably because they were out and about a bit, it's so long ago that they had no idea what it was about.

19	Former	2023-03-20	Offices that do not order much and between" long intervals. A little dissatisfied with the deliveries. I ordered on Monday but got my delivery late." Mostly that the time was a little unreliable, but otherwise everything else works well with communication, and ordering is done easily.
20	Potential	2023-03-20	Another supplier had better prices, therefore the customer never considered placing any orders from the case company.
21	Potential	2023-03-20	Was in and bought their products earlier at a physical store, bought 3kg cans of pineapple, but shipping was way too expensive at the case company.
22	New	2023-03-20	Was satisfied with order placement, emailed order info, "I am very happy with the delivery and that I can track it." No idea about price groups. Informed about price groups and want to be an A-customer. "I am very happy to have ended up in a better price group."
23	Potential	2023-03-20	Checked what he wanted, but the shipping was too expensive, no idea about different price groups, calls out if he wants to change price group in the future
24	Large	2023-03-20	Thought it worked great with the website. Works well with deliveries, "I have nothing to complain about." Knows about price groups. Have had many previous accounts.
25	Potential	2023-04-14	Wanted to do some research and see the products, no idea about price ranges, not too keen on online shopping.
26	Potential	2023-04-14	Started a business, had a sister's account before, not ready for an order yet. "Smooth account creation, but I have no knowledge at all about price groups."
27	Large	2023-04-14	Asked to be placed in a specific price group by himself. Super smooth account creation.
28	Potential	2023-04-14	They have no memory of creating an account and have not wanted to place an order either.
29	Potential	2023-04-14	They don't remember creating an account at all. They will check the website and get in touch if they have questions.
30	New	2023-04-14	"Two thumbs up, a very satisfied future major customer, as there are smooth orders and fast deliveries"
31	Potential	2023-04-14	Not interested in placing any orders. Smooth account creation though.

32	New	2023-04-14	Had a bit of trouble with the first order as the customer had to pay in advance. Thought it was a bit disturbing. Otherwise very satisfied. Only orders ice so the customer doesn't look around much more on the website than finding the ice. Only have contact via the people who make the ice, "They are my contact to this company".
33	Potential	2023-04-14	Nothing to note in account creation, "I found this company by accident via Google search, actually." Another supplier had better prices. Not relevant to place an order right now but will keep the company in mind if it comes up.
34	New	2023-04-14	Good communication, a very smooth ordering process, nothing to complain about. Had knowledge about the price group as he is in group A and wants to continue with it
35	Potential	2023-04-14	"I found the wholesaler while researching online." Have not placed an order as it is no longer relevant as it was a one-off item, ordered from someone else due to price. Easy to create an account.
36	Potential	2023-04-14	Opened a lunch restaurant in January and have looked around a bit for wholesalers. Delivery time was a little unsure of when you would receive the goods. "I want my products Monday between 7 and 8 a.m., and therefore I have chosen another supplier." Got a tip from an acquaintance who uses this company.
37	New	2023-04-14	The item he wanted was not available, had to change to another. "Very good with information when the item I wanted was not in stock." Good communication when the item arrived, and no problems with the order at all. Recommended by an acquaintance. Will order once every six months or so. Not aware of the price group but will call when it's time to order to review the price group.
38	Former	2023-04-14	"The deliveries did not work, as I ordered on Wednesday and received late deliveries; therefore, the deliveries were the big problem, which is why we needed to change the wholesaler."
39	Large	2023-04-14	"Works great on the website; smooth and easy to understand".

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