

Product Design that Supports Purchase Decisions: a Marketing Perspective for Designers

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<p>In the exceptional year of 2020 with turbulent business to business conditions, this study uncovers how the buyer's needs can be factored into digital product design. Key findings function as a basis to adapt a product and its development to ultimately support purchase decisions.</p> <p>Research results are presented within the scope and perspective of the marketing team due to their relationship and understanding with decision makers in the B2B space. Ideas surrounding the benefits of a closer collaboration between product and marketing teams also comes to light in accordance to background Design Thinking theory.</p> <p>Extensive qualitative research was carried out using semi-structured interviews and an inductive thematic analysis. The study was completed over the course of eight weeks including the planning, theoretical background, research method adoption, interpretive analysis of results, and discussion.</p> <p>Results are presented with thematic maps showing the relationship between identified phenomena from marketers covering: the relationship with the buyer, tailored messaging for decision makers, internal collaboration, buyer engagement with products, and what makes collaboration between marketing and product design teams work. A final thematic map is presented that represents how marketing expects the product to support purchase decisions.</p> <p>The study concludes that there are three perceived areas that enable products to support purchase decisions: (1) taking advantage of internal communication to build an effective backlog, (2) simplifying the product offering and allowing the customer to decide on which functionalities their workers actually need, and (3) usage metrics to provide decision makers with control to see their own employee adoption of the product directly correlating with the value of their purchase.</p>	
Keywords product design, decision maker, marketing, design thinking, human-centered design	

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1 Introduction

Difficulties in communicating business goals from different departments and stakeholders can leave a gap between what software companies develop and what their customers need. This lack of communication between products, services, messaging, and business goals can result in unsatisfied customers and churn, especially in B2B. To remedy these challenges companies are realising the benefits of incorporating Design Thinking into their corporate strategies; embracing a focus on problems from the perspective and experience of the user (Björklund, Maula, Soule & Maula 2020).

In the exceptional year of 2020 with turbulent business conditions, this study aims to uncover how the buyer's needs can be factored into the product's design. Typically, when a product is designed it is for the people that will use it; however, in B2B this isn't as obvious since software and tools can be purchased for employee usage. The product team can benefit from an understanding on what the marketing team does and how they perceive what is needed to help sway purchase decision makers. Improving understanding and communication between both teams will hopefully enhance the product and user experience resulting in happy customers that renew their contracts.

When introducing Design Thinking in a B2B SaaS company it can be difficult to integrate open collaboration with all stakeholders from different departments into single projects (Björklund & al. 2020). By exclusively looking at one relationship (the marketing and product teams) this research narrows the focus to understand why problems occur, the reason miscommunication happens, and how to be mindful of the impact towards the user and their experience, without being too broad.

Results of the study present a starting point to evaluate possible avenues that can enable product design teams to improve their communication and understanding; hopefully, enabling them to apply Design Thinking in a more practical and results oriented way. Whilst this study focuses on one relationship, other stakeholders still learn from its findings.

In the current climate with a mass adoption of remote work due to quarantine measures imposed because of the corona pandemic, the importance of clear and direct communication has never been more necessary. The economy isn't as stable either so products will need to be refined towards user needs substantially to ensure business stays afloat and contract renewals continue.

1.1 Research objective and question

This project aims to outline how the product design team can learn what is needed for a collaboration with the marketing team. For product teams to effectively enact Design Thinking they need to actively reference their users' needs; however, when a decision-maker purchases a product, instead of an end-user (typical in B2B sales) these factors aren't necessarily taken into consideration. Knowing what people will buy and how those decisions are made is vital information for the product team; vital information the marketing team works with daily (Norman 2013).

The main research question:

How does marketing expect the product design to support purchase decisions?

Answering this will clarify the way that marketing perceives the product can support the B2B buyer. The significance of a non-formulaic or maintained collaboration and shared point of knowledge between both marketing and the product team will be reiterated. The outcome of the thesis highlights necessary methods of communication and the promotion of Design Thinking for B2B SaaS companies. Through the effective communication methods gained from this study, key preventative measures can be utilized to engage with a customer base instead of losing it.

1.2 Methodology

Qualitative research was conducted by interviewing a multifaceted marketing team. To ensure the following research questions guided useful results, they were framed with knowledge from the theoretical research. In the results section, the reader will learn how the marketing message supports purchase decisions and some perspectives towards how that could be factored into product design. The discussion then takes a look at how a shared way of working could be supported to factor in the insights from the research.

1.3 Thesis scope

To delimit the vast ways that Design Thinking in product design is adapted within organisations this project solely covers the relationship between the product design and marketing teams. To collect tangible, actionable research within the thesis study's timeline the scope is suitable to only consider this single team relationship. The author acknowledges that expanding the study to cover additional stakeholders may be desirable; however, limiting the scope allows one key area of research to be covered.

This project will not cover the implementation of design documentation such as design systems and libraries. The scope will not cover the entire design process in detail, but only its limitations when the product marketing isn't factored into the product design.

Marketing often contributes to a company's services in many ways, such as onboarding assistance, education, workshops, and seminars. This research will be limited to its involvement relating directly to the product design and not extra requirements for enterprises who need custom solutions, engagement, or success packages.

1.4 Thesis structure

The table below outlines the study's chapters and summarises their contents.

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Contents</i>
1	Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Necessity for research ○ Research objectives ○ Research problem setting
2	Theoretical framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Background information ○ Relevant theory and methods ○ Applicable professional literature
3	Research methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Methodological choices ○ Implementation of methods ○ Data collection, analysis and context
4	Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Results of research ○ Thematic maps
5	Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consideration of results ○ Research validity ○ Ethical viewpoints ○ Conclusions and future work ○ Evaluation of thesis process and learning
	References <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alphabetical list of used sources
	Appendices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Example of thematic process

Table 1. Thesis structure

2 Theoretical framework

This chapter outlines the background area building up a theoretical framework. First, subchapter 2.1 starts with an introduction to design thinking, and how that method is used in product development; thereby, giving the best context and information for both theory and its application in practice. Next, subchapter 2.2 takes a look at marketing and how it fits into the problem area. The material available in this theoretical framework establishes a suitable level of understanding to support the interpretation of research data in later chapters.

2.1 Design Thinking

Design Thinking is a process used to find problems and create effective solutions through innovation. Whilst it can be practiced through a series of steps, its philosophy and framework are remarkably universal; consequently, it's applied to drive innovation being adapted to suit any industry or task (Stanford, Siminoff, O'Neill & Mailhot 2017). This methodology has progressed over the years to accommodate how people interact with design from objects to products; adapting to advances in technology, and considering modern sociology, and business. For example, the necessity to design abstract and nontangible software in the 1960s saw professionals from psychology, computer science, architecture meet with other skilled disciplines; as a result, collaborating to successfully conceptualise how interactions can function with digital systems. It wasn't until the late 1980s when the notion of users entered the space; in brief, this notion framed problem solving around humans as the primary focus (Szczepanska 2017). Human-centered design came forth as a way to avoid products solving the wrong problems; foremost, design should be validated through considering the user and their human perspective (Norman 2013). The usage of Design Thinking models in the actual workplace, however, isn't as easily applied as the theory would suggest. Without a shared understanding by all stakeholders and a good foundation of communication, it is difficult to satisfy timelines and requirements. To establish one method of Design Thinking for users, chapter 2.1.1 will look at the method championed by Norman (2013) human-centered design.

2.1.1 Human-centred design

A designer must understand the actual issues that concern people, this will help them to narrow the area down to the root problem. It's important to also ensure the product will be understandable and usable; hence, it must answer people's needs. This procedure of

solving the right problem and solving it to answer human needs and capabilities is the practice known as human-centred design (HCD); accordingly, this Design Thinking methodology is commonly used to ensure effective product design that supports consumers in the field of information technology (Pease, Dean & Van Bossuyt 2014). The objectives of HCD are realised through two phases: (1) finding the right problem, and (2) finding the right solution. There are multiple models available to implement HCD, but they all abide by this two-phase standard to ensure the right problem is solved the right way. For a model to encapsulate HCD it must follow the common theme of iteration broken up into four steps: (1) observation, (2) generation, (3) prototyping, and (4) testing (Norman 2013).

A popular HCD model used by companies practicing Design Thinking is the double diamond model, developed by the British Design Council in 2005 (Design Council 2020) shown in Figure 1. Each diamond represents one of the two key phases. The first diamond (finding the right problem) involves: questioning a given problem, increasing its scope, splitting up root problems to examine them, and finally connecting them all into one problem statement. The second diamond (finding the right solution) involves coming up with multiple solutions and connecting them into one final recommended choice. In this model a successful path travels through four stages: (1) discover, (2) define, (3) develop, and (4) deliver. Finding the actual problem never happens on the first try, you need to complete each process again and again, this is why the four stage HCD process is encouraged to be iterative. The diamonds illustrate the importance of iteration by showing two paths: (1) the upper halves of the diamonds, and (2) the lower halves. Each time you fail a cycle more insight and understanding can lead to an adept and concrete solution (Norman 2013). To demonstrate the importance of involving other stakeholders for the successful implementation of design thinking it's necessary to think of it using the four aforementioned iteration stages.

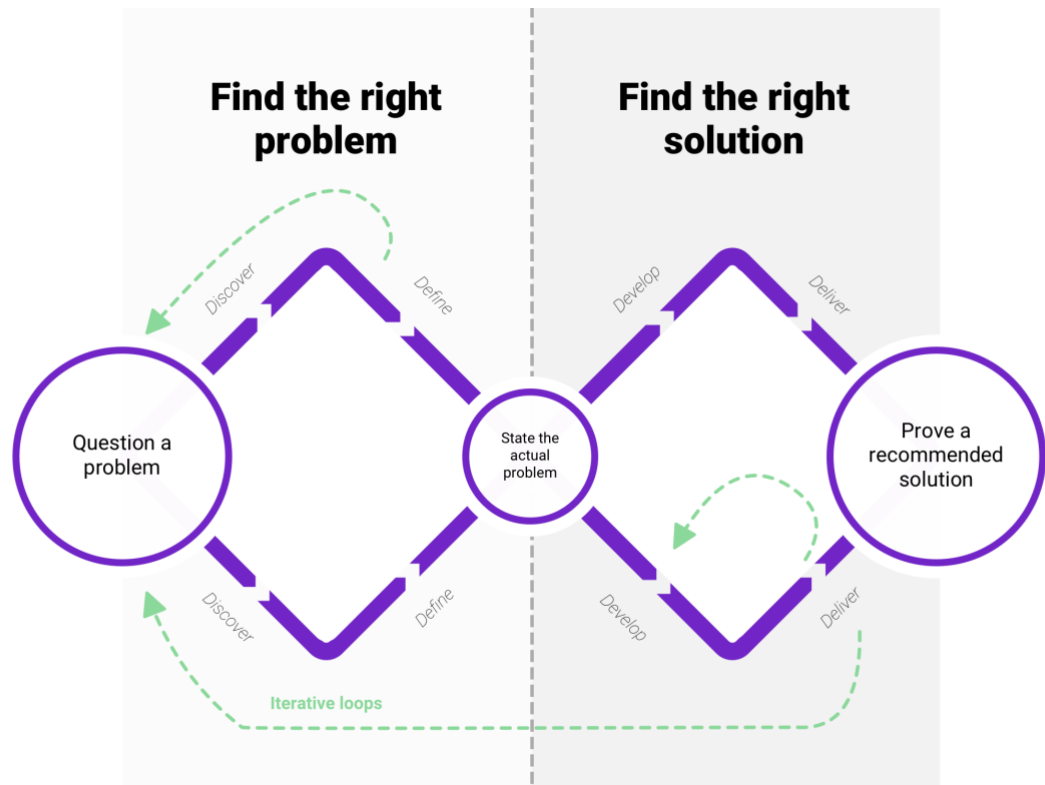


Figure 1. Double diamond model (author's adapted depiction)

Observation

To start, the observation step is the initial research to understand the essence of the buyer's problem. For a designer to understand the customer and the people who will use the product they need to uncover the customer's interests, objectives, and actual needs; typically, this is done through monitoring their daily activities. The user's activities are the focus of what needs to be observed; so unlike in other disciplines (such as marketing) segmentation factors like age, intelligence, social status, etc. aren't important. What is important is that the intended market and who the product is intended for are the ones being observed. When it comes to the real-life implementation with a design team there aren't always the resources to observe directly, this is why the importance of knowledge sharing is a big hurdle in implementing design thinking companywide (Norman 2013).

Idea generation

After design requirements are defined or evaluated from the observation, ideas for the design are worked on. The level of ideation needed for open creativity encourages as many ideas as possible; typically, this is done by collaborating with others, possibly including some stakeholders in a brainstorm (Norman 2013). Again, to ensure the right problem or solution is being solved it is vital that the observation phase was validated, in companies where the requirements are given directly to a design team they are hindered because they have not been able to see the problem firsthand. If another department or

professionals internally have seen the need, it is important that they are either included in the ideation phase, or at least available for consultation.

Prototyping

Now with multiple ideas drawn out they need to be set up for testing. At this stage they can even just be sketches that can be quickly mocked up. To make sure that the correct problem is understood during the actual problem finding phase prototypes help rule out invalid ideas. Interactive and mid-level prototypes can be used when in the solution finding phase (Norman 2013). This stage is pretty exclusive to the design team and doesn't involve stakeholders.

Testing

To gauge if a solution will be successful the prototypes are tested on small target groups suitable for the product. Testing should occur in the same situations that they would use a finalised version. As a lot of thinking occurs when interacting with systems, to get useful feedback test subjects should be instructed to open up about their frustrations and opinions in a natural way. As the process is iterative, it is beneficial to test with a small sample; Nielsen (2000) recommends only testing with about 5 people, it brings sufficient results that can be applied for the next iteration of an updated prototype.

2.1.2 Theory in practice

Traditionally the design and development process has been linear, the downside of development methods that follow this (such as Waterfall) is that once a decision has been made it is already too late to change it. Therefore, to allow the reassessment of decisions and gradual refinement of HCD an Agile method that is capable of accommodating an iterative process is necessary (Norman 2013). That said, the ideal HCD process briefly presented in the earlier section remains difficult to introduce even with Agile development. For example, having limited time and resources can subvert human needs driven design because a project has to stay on a tight schedule. A company that even actively aims to tailor to their user experience may still push features that aren't truly coming from the user but instead just show off new technology or meet competitor offerings (Norman 2013).

For a product to serve existing customers and still deliver to newcomers, different departments have to talk between one another. For example, designers want to ascertain people's real needs so that they can provide for them, whilst marketing is driven by knowing what people are going to ultimately buy. They both serve each other, regardless of if the product serves the right needs, people still need to buy it. Well run organisations

have team members from different parts of the product cycle share their requirements so that they can collaborate to provide a product that satisfies all stakeholders, with or without compromise (Norman 2013).

2.2 Marketing meets product design

It is true that product design shares design and marketing as mutual factors, however, whilst complementary they actually have altogether different focuses. Knowing what people actually need, and how they will use a product is knowledge necessary for design; whereas, knowing what people will actually buy and how their personal buying decisions are made is considered marketing research (Norman 2013). In practice, design benefits from qualitative research methods because they offer an in-depth perspective for understanding how people carry out activities. Qualitative research is also highly targeted and time consuming; typically, only feasible with small sample sizes (Silverman 2018). Marketing on the other hand uses quantitative methods in order to cover a larger canvas in their research campaigns. They use multiple methods from focus groups to surveys and their metrics come in the form of statistics and analytics. Marketing's quantitative method is more difficult to validate when it comes to design as actual needs and desires aren't fleshed out to the level that designers will need to make informed choices (Norman 2013).

It's important to note that both research types are necessary in product development. What people buy and what they need can be surprisingly different, so it is beneficial for design and marketing to collaborate with their research in order to deliver an effective product. Design cannot ignore the marketing conditions when creating a product. To ensure it supports purchase decisions it must factor in the same requirements marketing has already uncovered that satisfy a decision maker (Norman 2013). Therefore, as the two are fundamental and complementary elements needed when selling a product; it is startling that despite this relationship, there are no widely known well-established frameworks that directly connect them through collaboration (Bahrami & Aryana 2019). It's believed by Bahrami and Aryana (2019) that this difficulty comes from the overlap they share; therefore, solving it with a simultaneous approach would be difficult to tackle, especially if they work in separate teams and workspaces. On the whole, contemporary product development is considered to be critical for a competitive edge to survive in the modern-day market; accordingly, to support purchase decisions marketing needs to add influence early in the product development cycle (Figuroa-Perez, Leyva-Lopez, Santillan, Contreras & Sanchez 2019).

To unpack why a collaboration between product design marketing has been separate, it's worth looking at how marketing has historically latched onto building a strong brand as its main focus. Branding at its core is about targeting customers emotionally, hence all major investments used to be made using advertising and fine-tuned communication; as a consequence, the actual product design had become a secondary factor instead of the primary focus to drive sales (Landwehr & Herrmann 2015, 9). The newer phenomenon of design being at the forefront to showcase products was largely advocated by companies like Apple and Dyson who believed that product design is not only an aesthetic selling point, but also an acutely functional one (Benjamin 2012). These success stories began to raise challenges for marketers, as aesthetics were now recognized as a sustainable way to please customers. Research began to show that once a buyer's expectations are satisfied with the functionality of a product, the design would ultimately be what would lead their purchase (Landwehr & Herrmann 2015, 12-13). As a result, Landwehr & Hermann (2015, 15) reason that "products can only be successful when their individual components complement each other well. Balancing all product elements naturally requires excellent coordination and communication within the company". This is easier said than done as cooperation between development, marketing, and design is considered one of the larger threats affecting product development; to summarize, market feedback is fundamental in the design of a product, but without an effort or framework to communicate, it will not function well (Landwehr & Hermann 2015, 13-15).

3 Research methods

Empirical methods were used to solve the research problem, the following chapter explains and justifies why specific techniques were ultimately chosen. To begin, qualitative research was applied as the main method for this study. First, data needed to be collected to begin the analysis, a semi-structured interview style was chosen which is described in chapter 3.1. Second, a thematic analysis approach was decided upon and the 5 phases needed to complete it are elaborated alongside chapter 3.2 in its five sub chapters. Lastly, the research results can be found from the subsequent chapter 4.

3.1 Data collection

To answer the research problems of this study, interviews using qualitative methods were held with marketing professionals as participants; these methods allow for the scientific study of reality, human experience, and communication (Silverman 2018), making them relevant to this study's objective. This choice is a practical decision to learn how people perceive situations, whilst still obtaining enough detail to solve the research problem (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey 2011, 10; Punch 2005, 244-5). Another possibility would be to use quantitative methods and use questionnaires with a larger sample size; however, the purpose of this thesis is to learn how to solve a current problem, not analyse why it occurs. Qualitative methods were also selected as unforeseen avenues and insight are welcomed in this study and likely to be missed if quantitative research and its structured and brief response collection methods were used (Silverman 2018).

The theoretical framework and prior knowledge of the participants' roles was used to formulate the questions for the interviews. The research problem acted as the basis to prioritize and narrow down questions to not exceed the recommended 5-10 question range (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006, 316). To help participants understand the type of responses I was looking for, 'how' was used as a setup; namely, this subconsciously drives their answers to cover the actual processes they experience (Nunnally & Farkas 2016). To gauge how to structure the questions I followed the recommendation of DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006, 93) to research examples of thematic analysis from other works. I sourced four studies and not only was I able to gain a sense of how to frame questions, I could also ponder how analytic claims can later be made. Kitzinger and Willmott (2002) for instance, gave good insight into how to build and name themes to later assist in discussing findings (covered in chapter 3.2.5).

To allow sufficient broad data to be collected for analysis, semi-structured interviews were utilized. This interview style is held with open-ended questions prepared before a session; in general, the nature of open-ended questions allows for digression to arise from the discussion and is actually necessary when following the interviewee's interests and knowledge (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006, 315-316). Semi-structured interviews suit this project above unstructured interviews as they afford added safety to the project timeline, by using open formulated questions you're able to probe for digression and continue to guide responses to stay within scope. In practice when the interviews were held it was difficult to always steer the conversation within scope; however, these moments resulted in useful insight. For example, subjects could get especially emotive and passionate during a deviation from the initial question, allowing the evolution of both the analysis and research question (Braun & Clarke 2006, 84). It's true that structured interviews may be slightly easier to stay in scope; however, they can be rigid, resulting in data that is more appropriate for quantitative research (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006, 314). Indeed, whilst it was hard to leave a pause when it seemed a subject finished talking, they would sometimes continue and elaborate into colourful examples and tangents, reaching closer to the root of the problem area.

It's worth noting that as it is considered essential to establish rapport with participants to ensure responses are truthful (Douglas 1985), I contacted colleagues from the same workplace. Strategically, this helps use the small study timeframe for analysing responses, instead of finding participants with the added benefit of the study's results assisting my actual workplace. Another way to help interviewees feel comfortable was to encourage them through affirmative facial cues when they talk frankly about their experiences (Braun & Clark 2006, 87-88). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, having face to face interviews wasn't ideal; instead, video calls were held. As holding interviews used time of both the participants and the researcher it was important to ensure the collection of data would not be lost. This was achieved by recording interviews with two devices (both a video recording and a second audio recorder) so a backup was readily available. The questions and interview length (Table 2) provide insight on the process and effort.

Interview questions

Warm up

1. Can you tell me about your background in marketing?
2. What are the main responsibilities in your role?

Concerning product purchases

3. How do you see your relationship with the buyer?
 - Clarification: is the buyer the same as the customer, can you describe them?
4. How do you tailor your messaging to the buyer?
 - How does it relate to purchase decisions?
5. How does your work involve collaborating with other teams?
 - can you share some examples?
6. How can the product support you for engaging with the buyer?
 - what kind of challenges have you experienced from that?
7. How might you see a collaboration working so the product design would support you?
8. How can the product best support purchase decisions?

<i>Interview</i>	<i>Participant</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Method</i>
1	A	Oct 12 2020	53 min	Google hangout
2	B	Oct 15 2020	57 min	Google hangout
3	C	Oct 15 2020	45 min	Google hangout
4	D	Oct 16 2020	48 min	Google hangout

Table 2. Interview details

3.2 Data analysis

I consider my analysis to be ‘thematic’ as it is based on Braun and Clark’s (2006) 6-phase thematic process (the 6th phase is the actual writing of the report, therefore, I substituted it by writing this thesis), but it is worth noting that it has been influenced by the ‘inductive’ strategy described by Thomas (2003). The two forms of analysis help to report patterns that are identified in the data, they share presenting summarised results in common. Their benefits and justifications align when the researcher has a set of objectives without the restriction of avoiding interpreting unexpected findings. The decision to follow the ‘thematic’ analysis more strongly is based upon Braun and Clark’s (2006, 83-84) belief that the thematic analysis is already an inductive approach; Thomas’ (2003) method provided a structure and process for naming themes that is explained in chapter 3.2.5, and also how findings can be presented which was used to display results in chapter 4 (Thomas 2003, 8-9).

3.2.1 Phase 1 – Understanding data

The first phase of Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic process is to become accustomed to the data you have collected. To truly be immersed in the content the researcher must re-read their data to allow for the natural understanding of the text, this understanding is necessary for phase 2, where data is organized into meaningful segments (Braun & Clark 2006, 87-88). As the data was collected from spoken interviews, they needed to be transcribed. The transcripts were written by listening to the interview recordings, whilst the process was time consuming it was not wasted. By spending the time to write down responses it truly helped to start forming ideas, make separate notes, and have confidence that the material is detailed enough to analyse. Being responsible for holding and transcribing the interviews allowed for the consistent interpretation of the data. A lot was learned during transcribing which had not sunk in when holding interviews.

An interesting discovery came about after transcribing the first interview manually. I looked for an automated solution with Google Sheets' voice typing feature; in the hope that it would save time transcribing interviews as they played in the background. The plan was that once the software had compiled the text, I could manually validate them when transcribing. Unfortunately reading the text rendered by the software was difficult, as it did not recognize pauses or punctuation. What's more, the actual words transcribed only worked well enough for one subject, possibly due to their American accent. It's conceivable that using the software transcription made transcribing and analysing take longer. For example, discourse markers such as 'um' and 'like' were retained; this level of detail isn't necessary in thematic analysis unless they add to the 'true' original intent of the subject (Braun & Clark 2006, 88). Lastly when manually transcribing an entire interview I had an understanding for each sentence written; however, when cross transcribing and adding to or altering an existing software produced text, there was a need to reconsider sentence structures and fix punctuation, instead of interpreting the data and its meaning.

3.2.2 Phase 2 – Coding data

After transcribing interviews and having a close understanding of the data I had notes with ideas, and areas of interest ready for the coding phase. Codes are essentially a segment of data that are interesting or important; they begin the process to classify raw data in order to give meaning to a phenomenon (Boyatzis 1998, 63). To start finding patterns in my data set I began highlighting sections of the interviews that stood out. Each highlighted

section was then annotated as a code with a label. Keeping track of which codes are similar and which are reoccurring became overwhelming; however, this is understandable as it is recommended that the researcher codes as much as absolute possible from their data set (Braun & Clark 2006). Thankfully codes are only the beginning of organizing your data to denote meaning; they aren't ready to be deduced yet and are merely data sets that might form into a repeated pattern when creating themes. Themes are created in the next phase when interpreting the data starts to make sense (Braun & Clark 2006, 88-89).

3.2.3 Phase 3 – Finding themes

Now patterns and relationships can be established by converting the collection of codes developed from the data into themes. A theme is a unit of analysis that has been interpreted from coded data and is directly related to the phenomenon being studied. It highlights important findings from the data and relates them to the research question by functioning as a proved pattern (Braun & Clark 2006, 82-90).

First, you analyse your codes by grouping them into theme piles, which basically means they belong in a shared area of meaning. Processing and comparing the codes mentally was especially difficult and fruitless as I had generated 220 in total. The best solution that helped was to work kinetically to organize them effectively. As Braun & Clark (2006) recommend mind maps as an option to start finding themes, I tried a few mind-mapping programs (Coggle and Miro); however, when processing so many codes I found mind maps to limit the interpretation. For instance, mind maps start from one central idea, you can use them when you already know how you want to classify data; however, to interpret data the approach almost feels backwards as you should start by recognising which individual codes belong together. Instead, I used one of my daily design tools (Invision) to treat codes as physical elements on a digital whiteboard; now I could move and group them visually into theme piles. It was time consuming to enter codes manually on this whiteboard, but it was worth it I was able to interpret a large amount of codes using motion; similar to using a printer to physically print and cut out codes for grouping them on paper.

Second, the theme piles are connected by structuring an initial state of the thematic map. The map is drawn by linking interpreted relationships between themes. I decided to build thematic maps for 6 of the original questions (an example of one question can be found in the appendix) asked during the interviews. Narrowing down the codes took longer than initially planned as there was a remarkable amount of data to process. In addition, when researching thematic analysis examples to learn how others completed this process (see

chapter 3.1 on data collection), I found that each study had 2-3 researchers performing the analysis. This makes sense as it assists with the code and theme validation, as two researchers can cross check the interpretations. On the whole you have to leave so much insight on the cutting room floor, as thematic maps should display only major themes. Instead of having colourful quotes and insights you have to organise structure and analysis to build the relationships and inner workings of a phenomenon. As a result, the maps communicate the hierarchy, patterns and relationships of the collected themes. By the end of this step a collection of initial thematic maps such as in Figure 2 were collated with candidate themes and sub-themes ready for refinement (Braun & Clark 2006, 90-91) (see appendix for an expanded example).

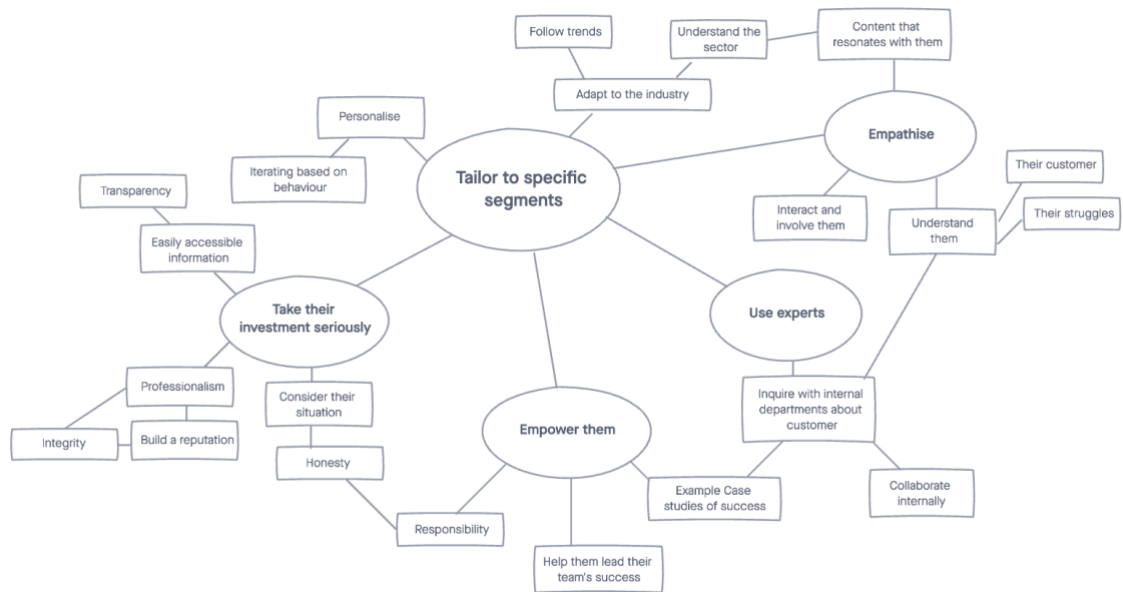


Figure 2. Initial thematic map (example)

3.2.4 Phase 4 – Reviewing themes

In this phase you need to start refining themes by looking at the original data again and deciding what takes more precedence, in other words, which themes are too closely related that they should merge. Ideally the most important categories relevant to the research stay true, smaller themes are absorbed by broader ones and the number of total themes is reduced to the recommended three to eight (Thomas 2003, 9).

To ensure that the earlier work of recognizing similar sets of codes belonging to a theme were not forgotten, I noted which themes were absorbed so it will be easier to describe them during the analysis.

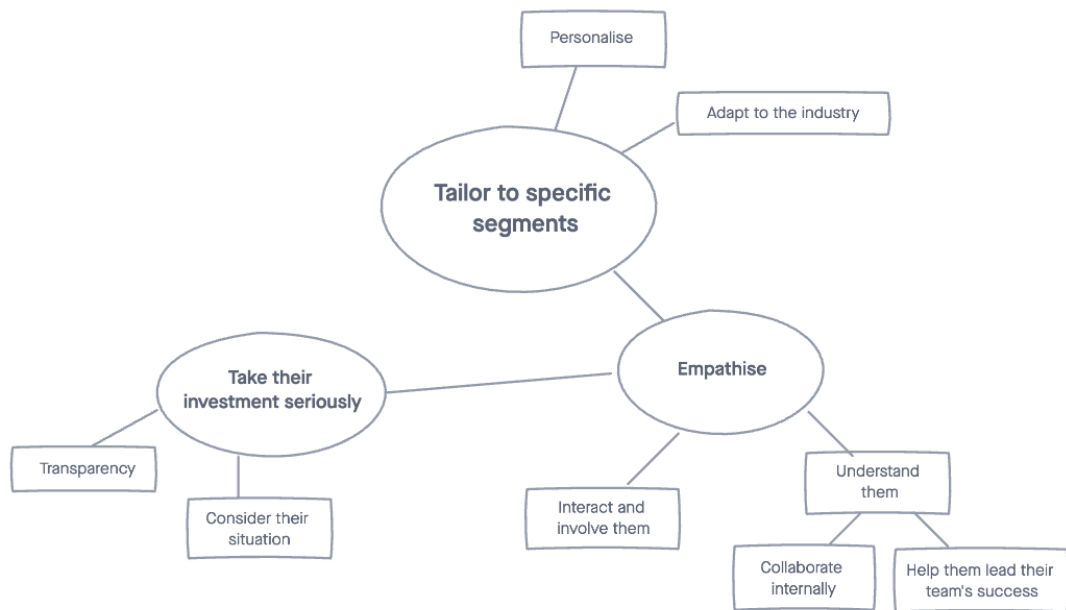


Figure 3. Reviewed thematic map (example)

3.2.5 Phase 5 – Defining themes

A recommended method to start reporting findings is to use the top-level themes as headings, then discuss the findings through sub-themes (Thomas 2003, 8). When it comes to naming the themes and their sub-themes, they should come from the quotes themselves (Kitzinger & Willmott 2002). I performed this phase whilst writing my results in chapter 4. The structure used to present themes follows Williams and Irurita's (1998) reporting style, which incidentally is also recommended by Thomas (2003). This method is particularly useful for readers as it clearly establishes a label, description, and a quotation from raw data, providing trustworthy reporting (Thomas 2003).

3.3 Data context

To help with understanding the results, this section explains the context for the data collected. Namely, as I collected data from marketers from my own workplace when holding my interviews, it's worth elaborating further on what the company does and the products that are available. My company is a data provider that specialises in company information. We deliver ways for our customers to access detailed information about companies and use it in convenient ways to suit their business; from sales prospecting to marketing automation. The company data provided covers several regions in Europe and North America, therefore, offices are based in each of those markets. Currently

information can be accessed directly from our data platform user interface (UI), which has several features to suit different user workflows. We also provide multiple solutions for integrations with customer systems such as CRMs, custom APIs, and automated workflows. Internally we have a large sales team, and we support business with specialist customer engagement, and success teams. The marketing team is also multinational with professionals localising materials in each market. The tech department is comprised of product, support, data, artificial intelligence, and quality assurance teams.

4 Results

The results of the empirical research to understand how product designers can work with the marketing team to ensure the product supports purchase decisions are presented in this chapter. Outcomes are presented within seven sub chapters, each presenting the findings related to the research problem. In 4.1 the background of participants is presented to explain why they are relevant for the study. 4.2 take a look at how the marketing team perceives the buyer in this context. 4.3 covers the process marketing uses to interact and communicate with buyers. 4.4 presents examples of the marketing team's typical collaboration efforts with other teams. 4.5 gives insight on how the product itself can be used as a tool to resonate with the buyer. 4.6 takes a look at how marketing perceives a relationship with the product design team, and how the exchange could help with supporting decision makers. Lastly, in 4.7 some tangible product features are presented that could help support purchase decisions directly.

The analysis was performed using data collected during semi-structured interviews with 4 participants. Participants were notified and gave consent to record the interviews for transcribing and analysis purposes. They were made aware that major details such as names would not be referenced to keep their identity and data anonymous.

4.1 Background

The study participants come from varied backgrounds in marketing, some with focused studies entirely in marketing and others with experience in journalism, communications and sociology. Each has prior experience with several companies promoting products and software in both the B2B and B2C sectors making them highly suited to understanding how a collaboration between design and marketing can best suit the consideration of decision makers.

The interviewees work in different roles and contribute to marketing efforts in different ways. Their relationships with buyers vary as well as the region and market that they occupy. This is useful as it gives a broad perspective for how decision makers experience different interactions with a product and its relation to the marketing team. Participant backgrounds are shown in Table 3.

Marketer	Experience	Role	Responsibilities
A	B2C, Marketing consulting, Social media marketing, Consumer marketing, B2B	Product Marketing	Product communications, Local marketing (Region 1)
B	Marketing strategy, Sociology, B2B, B2C, Web design	Marketing (Region 2)	Localisation, acquisitions, inbound marketing
C	B2C, Content marketing, Communications, Lead generation, B2B	Content Marketing	Content creation, SEO, email workflows
D	Sales, Marketing, B2B, B2C, Branding	Brand and Marketing	Marketing strategy, Marketing oriented revenue, lead quota

Table 3. Participant backgrounds

4.2 Relationship with the buyer

To get a foundation on how marketing perceives the decision maker a question was asked on “How do you see your relationship with the buyer”. The answers underwent thematic analysis resulting a final thematic map (Figure 4).

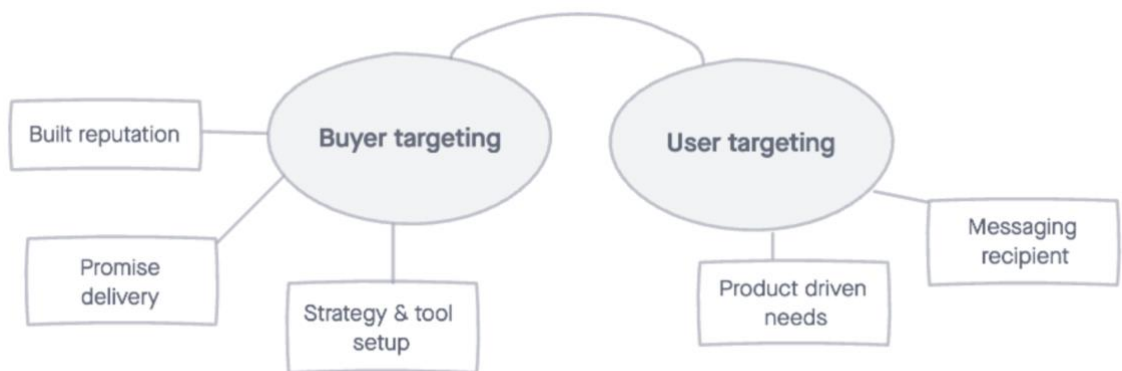


Figure 4. Relationship with the buyer

Analysing this relationship resulted in two main themes: (1) *buyer targeting*, and (2) *user targeting*. Whilst marketing acknowledges the importance of the buyer, they believe that the users of the actual product are a greater driver towards the product purchase; ultimately however, both segments need to be tailored and sold to.

In practice... from a marketing standpoint we're selling to two sets of people, right... we're selling to the decision-makers but at the same time we have tens of thousands of actual users who are the people that are on a daily basis using a product that we've built to solve a very practical problem that they have... (Marketer D)

Next, I shall explain these main themes and sub-themes in depth.

Buyer targeting

Buyers are somewhat separated from the actual product itself; they do not use the system. However, they need to make an investment that will drive their team to success. They are responsible for the purchase and their concerns relate to the thresholds, accuracy, and results being sold to them.

leadership that is it within these companies whether it's marketing or sales leadership whoever needs that information and for them we're pitching the idea and the notion of... you need to be using this [product] to be successful as a company...(Marketer D)

Buyer targeting is made up of three sub-themes: (1) *built reputation*, (2) *promise delivery*, and (3) *strategy & tool setup*. Firstly, *built reputation* relates to the product brand and reputation. A decision maker may have requests for the tool from their own workers who are enthusiastic about the brand, or they've assigned someone to research the space who comes back with reviews and case studies outlining whether the product is a fit for them. Secondly, *promise delivery* is important as customers churn when what they've been sold doesn't do what it should. These expectations for the product impact not only the trust between the solution provider and buyer, but also directly affects the brand's aforementioned reputation. Thirdly, *strategy & tool set up* is a focus for what the buyer is ultimately responsible for. They make an investment that should enable the teams they lead to succeed, if it doesn't work out there are repercussions to their position. Marketing targets how the product will help their team to meet targets that the decision maker is responsible for; convincing them to take the plunge and sign the contract.

User targeting

Users are the direct benefactors from the product purchase, their usage helps to influence the decision maker's purchase and also the later renewal of contracts. They succeed when they understand how they should be using the product and how it can help them in their daily lives.

That's the whole thing... that's the emotional part of buying you know... [the user] who feels like they are succeeding they don't care about the flawlessness or the accuracy... or whatever. They just need to be facilitated

and empowered to do their work properly. I think that's different than the decision maker, they just need to have a nice investment on paper and also have a succeeding sales team that are excited... (Marketer B)

User targeting encompasses two sub-themes: (1) *product driven needs*, and (2) *messaging recipient*. Firstly, *product driven needs* refer to how the user's needs directly drive the features and capabilities that are developed. This group of people are the ones that need the solution to work, otherwise the investment made by the decision maker won't work out. Users face practical challenges at their job and marketing communicates how the product solves them. Secondly, *messaging recipient* relates to users being the main audience marketing cares about. As the users are seen as the bigger driver for getting the customer adoption, marketing focuses their content, workshops, campaigns and promotions towards them.

4.3 Tailoring the message

To map out the process marketing uses to communicate with the buyer I asked participants "How do you tailor your messaging to the buyer". As explained earlier the buyer is seen as ultimately both the decision maker and the user because of their influences, thus it's worth considering them related if not interchangeable with the interpreted results. With the thematic analysis I created a thematic map to interpret their responses (Figure 5).

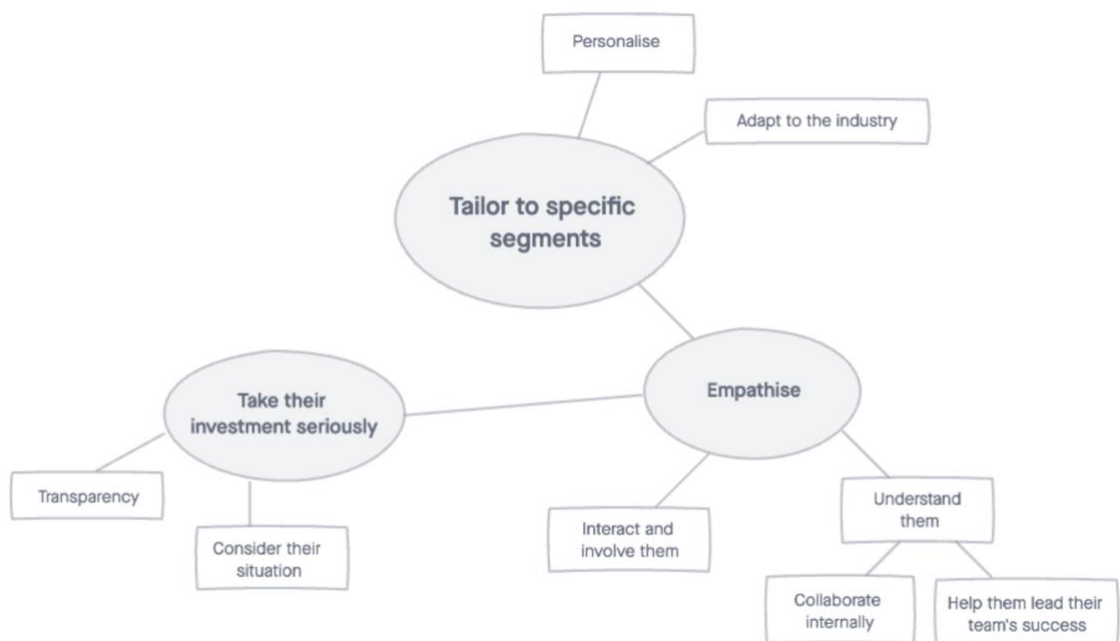


Figure 5. Tailoring the message

Analysing this relationship resulted in three main themes: (1) *tailor to specific segments*, (2) *empathise*, and (3) *take their investment seriously*. Marketing finds it important to recognize the different groups of people that will need to buy their product; as it is necessary to address each one. By customizing messaging to suit each type of buyer the product is framed to impact their position directly and emotionally.

At the end of the day a buyer really wants to have a conversation where the other person understands their situation and their needs... Nowadays the technologies there... you can actually understand their situation... (Marketer D)

Next, I will cover these main themes and go into detail with the sub-themes.

Tailor to specific segments

When marketing generates their content, they have to construct it for a certain audience. By constantly segmenting the audience into smaller groups, the messaging becomes increasingly relevant and palatable to the buyer's interests and needs. This process can be surprisingly targeted, with diligently crafted journey flows and content to suit someone's experience based on not only their needs, but also their tastes and personality.

It starts with creating the different segments and trying to identify groups of people that might have gone through the journey... are they in the same stage? For example,... if they have downloaded both I will send them to a journey or workflow. If they have downloaded one or the other, they'll go to another workflow. And if they haven't downloaded any of those, they'll go to a different one... Then when that's created... switching on and seeing the results and then trying to improve... subject lines... copy, and see how that works...(Marketer C)

Tailor to specific segments is made up of two sub-themes: (1) *personalise*, and (2) *adapt to the industry*. Firstly, *personalise* requires obtaining an understanding of multiple buyer segments. This is an iterative process where the buyer is tracked through their behaviour; for example, they are monitored on the pages they visit on a website, the emails they open, and the content they download or consume (such as eBooks, templates, and other inbound marketing content). Based on their behaviour, content and journey workflows (the order and type of content they see) are adjusted with different states and paths; tested each time to ensure the messaging becomes as efficient as possible. Secondly, *adapt to the industry* requires the marketer to not only understand the space they create content in but also to stay vigilant for when it advances or changes. They need to craft segments based on the different goals or action points that are up-to-date and relevant to an industry. Intensive and summary research is needed to understand competitor and

customer spaces; often, it is possible to systematically recognise the industry's prospects or customers belong to using marketing automation and this helps make research faster for evolving sectors.

Empathise

Marketing's message would fall flat if the content didn't resonate with the buyer. A key part of connecting with them as an audience is to not only understand what they are after, but to also experience and care for those feelings and needs directly. Content needs to be sufficiently informative where it truly benefits them, so they feel heard and that their struggles are relatable and satisfied from the material they consume, or the advertising they are targeted with.

It really starts with the understanding side. Understand that this is a person... these are the challenges that that person is facing... the tribulations... all the different problems that they have... this is what the day to day... their objectives in the role... the goals... the challenges that they face in achieving those goals... this is what it looks like for that person... this is somebody that we're communicating to. (Marketer D)

The *empathise* theme is founded on four sub-themes: (1) *understand them*, (2) *help lead their team's success*, (3) *collaborate internally*, and (4) *interact and involve them*. Firstly, *understand them* is part of the vicarious practices that help to formulate messaging or content that resonates with the buyer. One of the fastest ways to understand the customer in this way is to use the product yourself if it is applicable. In some circumstances if the product is relevant to a department or subset of internal employees it's possible to recognize challenges faced directly with the product yourself. When you understand the objectives and activities directly, you're able to work with the bigger picture, not just what the product can provide, but all the benefits that it affords in other areas of the audience's work too. Secondly, *help lead their team's success* is about understanding and acting upon what decision makers have on their plate. Usually their role is to make others successful at their company, by providing them with valuable resources (such as free inbound content marketing produces for them) they can have a deeper understanding to improve and a direct link to the product and how it too can empower their job. Thirdly, *collaborate internally* is about using internal resources to gain vital understanding surrounding the customer. The sales department is a good example of an internal resource that yields great value; they have direct understanding and experience with buyers, such as who they are and the problems they want to solve. These direct internal contacts can be interviewed, or they may have documentation available, or you could even set up joint projects and initiatives with them. Lastly, *interact and involve them* is about using the marketing products where there is a tangible interaction (in person or

online) such as seminars to provide buyers with the tools they need to excite them; for example, how they can be more productive, or how to refine their work or team with new approaches. This exchange works two ways as there is a lot of direct input and feedback coming from them that reveals who they truly are and their needs.

Take their investment seriously

No matter how perfect your messaging is, unless it is advantageous to the buyer's investment it will not last in the long run. Whilst it is important to research your buyer, segment them correctly, and understand them, if you do not take that investment seriously, they go with a competitor or decline renewal and damage your reputation in the process.

We have to understand that people who are looking at [marketing material] have serious responsibilities. They are being held up for their promises. They are responsible for the promises that they make to their team, so they'll be fired if they make a wrong investment. We have to take that kind of seriously... (Marketer B)

Take their investment seriously is a theme composed of two sub-themes: (1) *Transparency*, and (2) *consider their situation*. Firstly, *transparency* is an integral part of not just the messaging, but also the relationship with the buyer. It is vital that communication is honest when it covers what a product does and doesn't do. Transparency is also achieved when content is informative, useful, and clear; not just fun idle chit-chat, it should help the buyer, not waste their time, or lead them astray. Secondly, *consider their situation* expands from the transparent sub-theme by not just highlighting when a product works as an incredible solution, but also to impart when it is not a correct fit for people. When you consider the situation of a subset of potential buyers the objections and pitfalls should also be covered; signing with mismatched companies will ultimately lead to churn anyway, and it can harm the reputation and brand to the point you could lose potential perfect fit buyers as customers. A typical way marketing can demonstrate when things work and don't is by interviewing customers for case study content. Case studies are an excellent resource to help buyers consider their own situation.

4.4 Collaborating with other teams

To learn how marketing works and collaborates with other departments I asked participants "How does your work involve collaborating with other teams". It's worth mentioning that as the interview was semi-structured probing questions guided the participants to stay in scope and talk about their collaboration when related to supporting

purchase decisions through the buyer. This information can be used as a point of reference and foundation for adapting the collaboration between marketers and product designers. I interpreted the answers again using a thematic analysis and by connecting patterns on a thematic map (Figure 6).

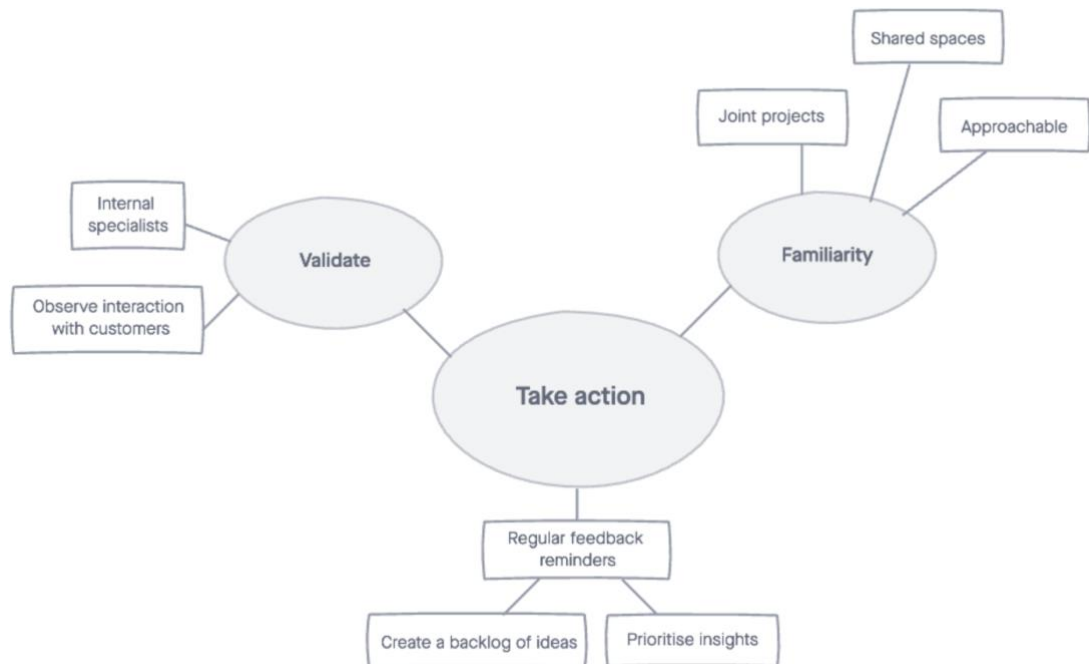


Figure 6. Collaborating with other teams

The collaboration with other teams was narrowed down to three main themes: (1) *take action*, (2) *familiarity*, and (3) *validate*. It's evident that the marketing team already works with multiple departments a lot; they not only create materials for the buyer, but also internal documentation that others (such as salespeople) can use to support their own interactions with customers. The process may not be systematic, but it is inherently working from a collaborative standpoint already.

We have very active salespeople... all the time they bring ideas... they have lots of conversations with customers and we're very active in that sense... That's just so nice if you have... really sparkly people in your organization, that you can use, and that they're real, and that they share their experience... from a marketing perspective that's really nice. We never have to use any actors.... (Marketer A)

Next, I will explain these themes and touch on their respective sub-themes.

Take action

Taking action is how information obtained from collaborating with teams gets used effectively. By shaping feedback and insight into tasks, they advance until they contribute

in a way that helps support the customer and the buyer directly. The trouble with un-organized knowledge debt is that it only helps the person aware of it. By taking action with information it gets shared more thoroughly throughout not just the marketing team, but also the organization and its other departments.

I get ideas and feedback... I go through them and make action points... so that's like my own system of doing things... It's quite easy since I am... able to go through them with the marketing team and with team leaders in sales, customer success and engagement... I can talk with them and see if it is a good idea... (Marketer A)

The theme *take action* is made up of three sub-themes: (1) *regular feedback reminders*, (2) *create a backlog of ideas*, and (3) *prioritise insights*. Firstly, *regular feedback reminders* are a way to support the comments from customers about what affects them on a regular basis. This flow of information comes from internal departments, so by placing responsibility in yourself to check up on people and other teams routinely to seek out feedback you can stay up to date without a pre-established complex systematic communication alternative. Secondly, *create a backlog of ideas* allows for regular communication and collaboration without having to immediately act. Action can still come about from the backlog, but it can be controlled when there is less pressure for other projects and responsibilities. Lastly, *prioritise insights* is important to keep the backlog and feedback up to date and ready for deployment. When collaborating with teams and getting valuable information, it needs to be arranged so that it isn't forgotten about and is ready for action when opportune moments arise.

Familiarity

This theme is how collaboration can be facilitated without the need for structure and processes. It is possible to organically collaborate and interact with other teams when infrastructure and communication is open; it may sound simple, but sharing knowledge is easier when you can get to know people. Collaborating between different departments is less hindered when employees have shared relationships, spaces and comradery.

You can just send someone a message; we have such a non-hierarchal organization... I can just connect with everyone and I think there's only three layers... everybody... then the managers... then you have the board and that's really it. No-one is asking for an extra kind of rank because they want to be your boss, it's just it's just really flat. That makes it super! (Marketer B)

The theme *familiarity* can be further understood from its three sub-themes: (1) *joint projects*, (2) *shared spaces*, and (3) *approachable*. Firstly, *joint projects* are one of the easiest ways to collaborate when the responsibility and output is shared. These projects are easier to come by, involving other employees relevant for the task. Joint projects are

made possible when an organization has less boundaries separating departments and are easier to organize when the structure is flat and non-hierarchical. Secondly, *shared spaces* assist in having interaction with people from other teams. The formality of communication is stripped down when people reside or work from the same location; it doesn't have to be physical especially in times like the pandemic. They can be digital spaces and channels that are created for the sole purpose of sharing and communicating together. Lastly, *approachable* is the number one quality to support collaboration and shared communication. When people, teams, and spaces are approachable teamwork and support is less hindered. It's easier to become familiar with others when everyone is comfortable with a preference for a relaxed attitude, sharing time and resources when asked.

Validate

Validating is demonstrated when seeking a way to prove ideas or created content. When collaborating, the marketing team makes an effort to confirm that what they're working on resonates with the buyer in the right way. This can be done by talking to heads of departments or through direct discussions with the customer.

The whole setup of the marketing team is really awesome actually because we have Global team members who are really good at doing one thing. They are specialists... I don't know anything more effective than [a specialist] is. [They're people] that I would work with... I can ask them anything and they'll find out about it. (Marketer B)

The theme *validate* is broken down into two sub-themes: (1) *internal specialists*, and (2) *observe interaction with customers*. Firstly, the theme *internal specialists* is about having direct people of contact who can answer certain things internally. These highly specialised people often fall into the aforementioned themes of *taking action* and *familiarity*; it's possible to double check that the content you are creating or the event you are building for customers is suitable. Having these direct contacts also saves time and creates a feedback loop, so that information about the customers and buyers that relate to the product is shared continually within the marketing team. Secondly, *observe interaction with customers* is how perceived and researched understanding of the buyer's needs is seen and authenticated firsthand. Shadowing direct interactions with the customer is an effective way to not only empathise but also comprehend their state of mind when interacting with your organization; sales calls are a good way to understand different touch points in their journey such as their needs and concerns.

4.5 Supporting buyer engagement with the product

To understand how the product is used directly when engaging with the buyer I asked the interviewees “How can the product support you for engaging with the buyer?”. Due to the open-ended nature of this type of question (indeed all questions) it wasn’t always easy for this question to be understood by the participants. There were many avenues touched on; however, there was only one consistent main theme that held true for everyone. This theme is presented here as a thematic map (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Supporting buyer engagement with the product

Supporting buyer engagement with the product is perceived through one major theme: (1) *authentic product*. It seems that there is a lot of experience that is carried internally with the product, most salespeople and marketers use it themselves. By promoting that the product is used internally it shows that the company genuinely believes in its value and capabilities.

It’s just really amazing to work for a company that does what they sell. We constantly improve our product by doing our job better, so we make our prospecting better and by doing so we can focus also our sales and our marketing as well on a more narrowed ICP... that makes it... a sign of authenticity.... (Marketer B)

Next, I will go through this theme and its three sub-themes.

Authentic product

Having an authentic product relates to themes presented with earlier questions, it touches on taking the investment seriously, and also by using empathy. The product itself is of course the main component that gets sold when a decision maker signs the contract, however it also contributes directly towards the trust and reputation of the brand. It functions as a sign of authenticity.

Engaging with the decision maker requires... a good knowledge of the product.... You need to know what to highlight and what are the main things that [the audience] might want to do with the product... you can focus some content pieces on that... everybody should try using their product because it's easier and makes it more real... (Marketer C)

Authentic product is a theme comprised of three sub-themes: (1) *capabilities*, (2) *talk from experience*, and (3) *development from customer feedback*. Firstly, the sub-theme *capabilities* involves tailoring of the engagement with the buyer by using its constraints of what it's actually capable of offering. There is a constant pressure in marketing to adapt to the industry which was covered in chapter 4.3 (tailoring the message). If the product isn't ready or capable to perform something people care about in the market, content shouldn't say it does; instead, outlining that this isn't currently possible, or showing a workaround provides more value to the buyer. Secondly, *talk from experience* is the phenomenon where a company is able to use their product also internally. When this is possible it functions as a sign of authenticity as people can communicate, sell, and instruct the customer from experience. It's possible to hold seminars or workshops with customers or potential buyers with internal team members (instead of hiring external specialists or actors) who talk from their own experience with the product and show the ways that they have made it work for them. Lastly, the sub-theme *development from customer feedback* relates to how the product itself can facilitate problem reporting and feature requests directly; for example, using support chat, help documentation, and dialogs for feature requests to engage and respond to the customer. The buyer can be told that the product is shaped by the users and their needs, and they too will have an open channel available to contribute.

4.6 Collaboration of product design with marketing

To understand how product designers could collaborate with the marketing team participants were prompted with "How might you see a collaboration working so the product design can support you?". Throughout the interview, participants were guided to understand that the context of the questions related to teamwork between product designers and marketers. The results found after analysis are presented with a thematic

map (Figure 8).

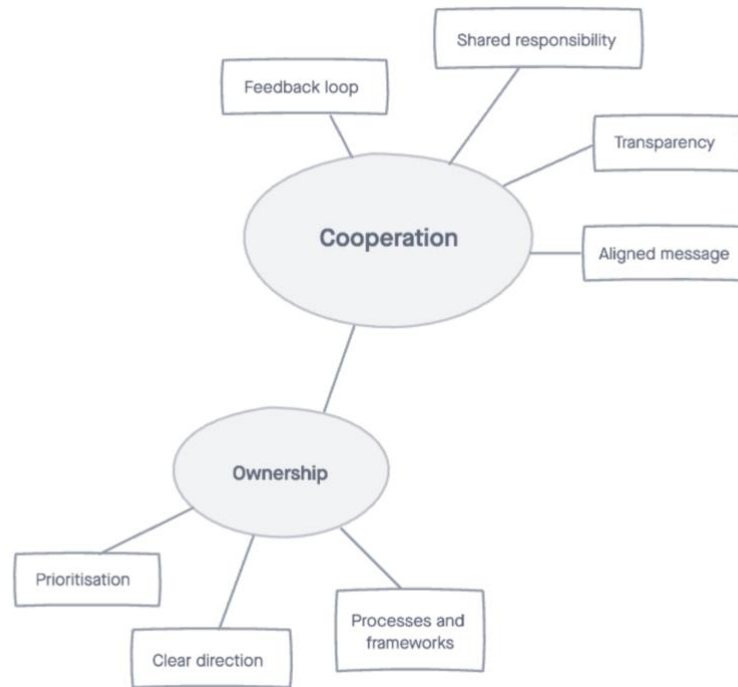


Figure 8. Collaboration of product design with marketing

Advice for how collaboration with the product designers and marketing team could work can be understood using two main themes: (1) *cooperation*, and (2) *ownership*. The results from research presented here relate to organizations with a separation between their commercial and tech operations.

We don't necessarily need to ask customers... "do you want this feature", because we have people on the commercial side, in commercial teams who very well know what the customers want because they interact with them on a daily basis. So, including these people who have the knowledge to these forums, or to the product development process stages, that really will help in the future... (Marketer A)

Next, I will explain these themes and touch on their respective sub-themes.

Cooperation

Collaboration between the product design and its marketing needs to be a two-way partnership that allows both teams to support each other. There is a certain level of information transfer that not only benefits both sides but is intrinsically required for product launches and releases. A bridge between both departments should be established so that buyers and users are not only considered to the fullest, but also that they stay on as customers and are happy with their investment and solution.

It's less a substance issue and... more an internal collaboration issue overall with how... we collaborate across different departments in the company. How do we communicate around things? Is there enough transparency and documentation on what different teams are working on? There hasn't been a clear set process for how the product team overall ships, updates... and then especially there is no clear framework for how... other departments in the team give input into that prioritisation... (Marketer D)

The theme *cooperation* is built upon four sub-themes: (1) *feedback loop*, (2) *shared responsibility*, (3) *transparency*, and (4) *aligned message*. Firstly, *feedback loop* is about bringing insight from the commercial side of the organization into the product design process. The earlier this happens for the development cycle the easier it will be to coordinate with different teams and departments to work as a cohesive unit. This feedback loop should have several contacts that support and share information so that it doesn't become biased. A circular feedback loop would ideally allow information going from both the commercial side and tech sides of business. As a result of the constant communication from the feedback loop marketing material can be prepared already during the design and development process. Secondly, *shared responsibility* is about eliminating barriers and information silos. In companies where the commercial and tech sides of business are managed separately, instilling shared responsibility for projects helps to bring barriers down. Barriers can be both physical and digital; for example, different office spaces or different digital communication platforms (such as separate Slack spaces). It's also worth noting that management can act as a barrier when communication is held back from individuals in singular teams. Thirdly, *transparency* re-emphasises the importance of preventing the blockage of communication; like the management example from *shared responsibility* if top-level management creates distance between people it can disrupt work related work being carried out. For instance, it is especially necessary for marketing to know the direction the product is taking; they need to prepare their content base, and often materials (be they promotional or educational) need to be created in advance. Lastly, *aligned message* is about coordinating the communication directly between the product and marketing team throughout each project and on an iterative basis. This can become quite an investment for companies, one option is to create a role specifically for this purpose (such as a product marketing manager). Whilst it can be easier or cheaper to treat the alignment of marketing or product design as a side project; for the most part, it ends up with inconsistent and rushed solutions.

Ownership

A clear and agreed upon ownership of the product is necessary for marketing to be able to adapt to what will be coming from the development pipeline. When it comes to the

collaboration with designers, the ownership helps with perspective. The messages that are exchanged can be managed systematically, aiding shared responsibility and a mutually agreed upon and owned vision.

It's common for communications to come directly from a product team or even sometimes it can come from marketing... the overall messages... the details they can get kind of lost in there... Definitely having somebody dedicated to the task of just thinking about the communications overall... having ownership over... [who] we're you know... targeting, these are the messages that resonate with these people... (Marketer D)

The theme *ownership* is built upon three sub-themes: (1) *prioritisation*, (2) *clear direction*, and (3) *processes and frameworks*. Firstly, *prioritisation* covers giving attention to the right things at the right time so that it supports the company vision. There is always a backlog of areas that can be designed or developed but they need to be affectively and strategically carried out. This is related to ownership because it needs to be clear who makes these types of decisions, all relevant stakeholders should be aware of the decided prioritization. Secondly, *clear direction* relates to how well not only the development road map is outlined, but also the roles and people responsible. This makes it easier for other departments and teams such as marketing to know who to contact, or who to ask things directly to. With a clear direction marketing can organize important contributions such as localisation (for example translations), support documentation, supportive content etc. Lastly, *processes and frameworks* relate to again, how outside departments and teams can prepare for what is coming, how new features and updates are rolled out, how the release cycle is planned to work etc. Having the process that the team works be transparent makes it easier for others to offer support internally, as well as to prepare and plan their own responsibilities.

4.7 Products that support purchase decisions

To discover how a product itself can support a buyer signing on I asked participants “How can the product best support purchase decisions?”. Whilst every product suits a different need, the results from this question can be interpreted broadly to suit different markets. The final themes presented in the thematic map (Figure 9) from this analysis are the main

areas that contribute towards direct purchase decisions.

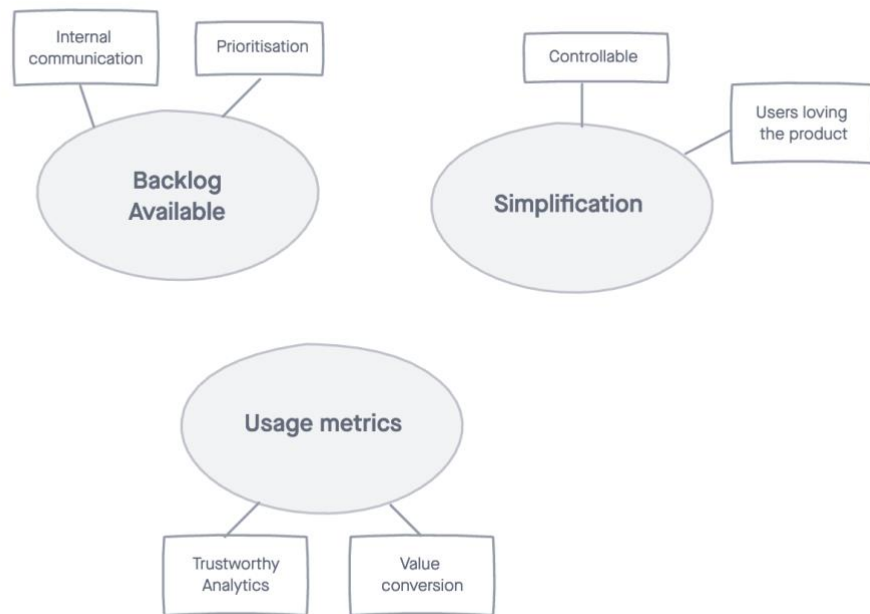


Figure 9. Products that support purchase decisions

Additional areas product design can consider when acknowledging a B2B buyer or decision maker scenario uncovered three main themes: (1) *backlog available*, (2) *simplification*, and (3) *usage metrics*. Relationships between the main themes weren't correlated as they stand on their own individually.

If the user's love the product that message will trickle to the leadership as well I'd see it as a larger risk that we sell to people that are very excited about the idea but then the actual implementation to the users doesn't work out, I see that as a larger risk long-term... that basically... the users aren't seeing the value... (Marketer D)

Next, I will explain these themes and touch on their respective sub-themes.

Backlog available

The high-level objectives that a product team needs to be targeting is typically ran from a backlog. In order for the backlog to support purchase decisions it should be available for other departments (such as marketing) to not only know, but also influence. This relates to better internal communication from the organization, and there are many areas of influence with different stakeholders that can contribute and improve the product backlog to suit what buyers are looking for.

Purchase decisions could be addressed by... kind of all the backlog stuff with the product actually... I feel that we're again pretty well aligned currently on where we want to head, and then it's just a matter of building these things out... A very clear marketing factor would be... to check out the backlog... (Marketer D)

The theme *backlog available* is built upon two sub-themes: (1) *internal communication*, and (2) *prioritisation*. Firstly, *internal communication* relates to building the work styles and transparencies talked about earlier in results. By having these clear ways of communicating the product development backlog can be kept in good shape. Feedback and comments from customers can be shared systematically and better choices will hopefully be made as a result. Secondly, *prioritisation* is necessary for the backlog to be in the right order with what is most important. As discussed in earlier questions the product development should be in line with the direction the industry is going in (something marketing has a firm grasp on), with the backlog being in good shape the majority of use cases necessary for purchase decisions will be taken care of.

Simplification

It can benefit customers to fine tune the product so that it does a few things extremely well instead of many things unexceptionally. What can be difficult when selling in the B2B space is that you have customers who need different or highly custom solutions. The decision maker can be empowered when they have a way to control the usage of the product, if they could limit the functionalities relevant to what their workers actually need (also a plus if it makes the pricing model more scalable) they'll feel more confident that the tool will be simple and clean for their company to adopt.

...Simplifying things, and I think it is more a question of communications because I think the product has many of the right elements... maybe needs to be simplified a bit... people don't want too many features for the regular users because they get confused. There are too many things to click, and that is something that has been taken into account... something... to be focused on... (Marketer A)

The theme *simplification* is built upon two sub-themes: (1) *controllable*, and (2) *users loving the product*. Firstly, *controllable* is in reference to the direct need faced with the buyer's position, or the person they have allocated to be responsible for managing the tool/product. Larger customers especially need to ensure that the product they purchase is kept simple by being wholly under their control. They want to ensure that their workers only have access to what is necessary so that the solution keeps them productive instead of distracted. Second, *users loving the product* is about narrowing the scope of what they are able to do so they can get the upmost value. A simple product that facilitates users on

the whole to do other tasks that helps them succeed, that is right where the value lies, and it translates right back to a successful investment.

Usage metrics

Often metrics are seen as an internal way to measure how well customers adopt a product. By framing and presenting these metrics in some way for the buyer to not only see, but also control the product can function as a channel to indicate the correlation between a customer's employee usage and their overall business success.

Now pricing is based on different features that you select to use, and... the number of users that you have in the product. Whereas if I'd look at things from... let's say I am the head of marketing at a company yeah... I'm more interested in paying for things like... well I mean obviously the value that I get out of it. But maybe one easier factor would just be the amount of data that we're getting and using in our own processes from the system...

(Marketer D)

The theme *user metrics* is built upon two sub-themes: (1) *trustworthy analytics*, and (2) *value conversion*. Firstly, *trustworthy analytics* is about not only having the metrics available for the customer of how much their employees use the system, but it is also related to calculations surrounding value. For instance, measuring the productivity output from the product and how it translates monetarily could be an area to look into. This would vary on the product you're building, time saved could be established as a metric, or customer acquisition. The trouble with being innovative with ways to present metrics to customers is that they must be trustworthy, mathematically sound, and most of all believable. Secondly, *value conversion* can relate to the way the pricing model works. Instead of paying for functionality, the number of users, or custom solutions; the cost could be directly related to how much the users benefit from the software. This would also make it easier to scale for smaller companies with less resources to pay for a more enterprise level product price point. They pay for what they need and use. As a result, there may be cheaper contracts, but the likelihood of churn would theoretically be lower, because they would only pay around what they actually use.

5 Discussion

The discussion considers the results of the overall study presented in earlier chapters. First, I connect my research with the research problem and offer my thoughts in section 5.1. Second, I form a conclusion by summarising the answer to the research problem in section 5.2. Third, I outline the relevancy of my results, suggest development ideas for future research to expand the study, and evaluate the process of my learning, research and thesis in chapter 5.3. To finish, I examine the trustworthiness and the ethical viewpoints of my study method in 5.4.

5.1 Purchase decision factors

To solve the research problem of: *How does marketing expect the product design to support purchase decisions?* the thematic map shown back in figure 9 is presented as a representation of my analysis into marketing's expectations. To reiterate and comment on what was found in those results, the three main themes can be discussed in detail: (1) *backlog available*, (2) *simplification*, and (3) *usage metrics*. To support these findings, I will use themes from other studied areas that participants talked about (connecting related findings from the remaining thematic maps), then expand my own understanding; thereby, introducing the perspective of a product designer demonstrated in Figure 10.

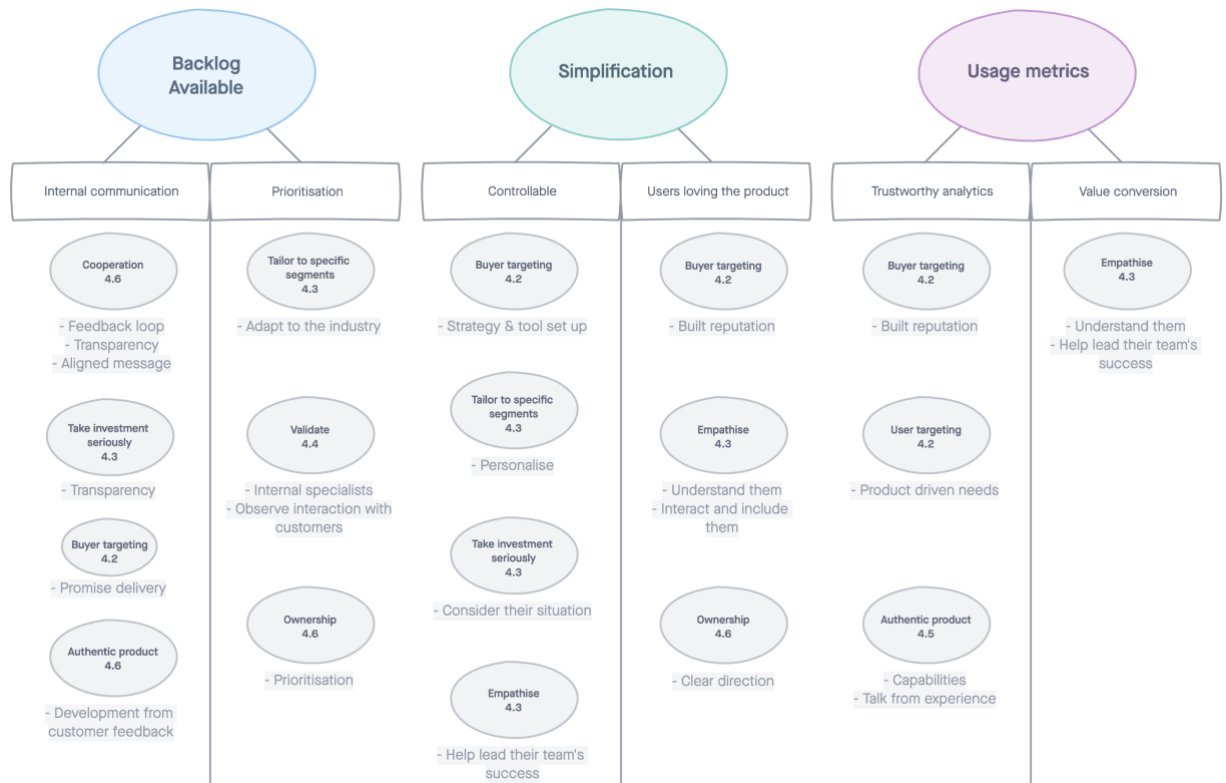


Figure 10. Purchase decision factors

5.1.1 A well-maintained backlog

It was clearly evident that *backlog available* was a prominent theme upheld by all participants; to reiterate, the backlog is a collection of all the incomplete work the product team needs and intends to work on. To summarise, marketing feels its maintenance holds a major influence surrounding how the product is able to support purchase decisions. These beliefs encompass both of the backlog's sub-themes: (1) *internal communication* and (2) *prioritisation*. The results show they play an important role directly when considering the buyer; fortunately, these requirements run parallel to and can be addressed by product design when using agile methods. The process of prioritisation for instance is performed in what is called backlog grooming, a fundamental feature of agile development methods where all requests, design and development tasks can only move forward after making it through the backlog prioritization process (Mohanarangam 2020).

Internal communication

When considering the first requirement or sub-theme of *internal communication* (a well-functioning internal communication practice), several key points from thematic maps in chapters 4.6, 4.3, and 4.2 can be brought to the discussion.

Firstly, *cooperation* a theme from section 4.6 where participants insisted a closer relationship with marketing would be necessary is relevant. To address *cooperation* and its concerns for a suitable backlog it's a matter of discussing the applicable sub-themes: *feedback loop*, *transparency*, and *aligned message*. The feedback loop came from an area of frustration for participants, stressing that stakeholders such as the marketing team are not considered early enough into the development process; therefore, not having a chance to influence it. This struck me as interesting as talk about the feedback loop was still presented in one direction, the marketing team saw that they need more information in order to do their work; alternatively, I see that it serves both parties when contributing to perspectives and projects of each other's teams. In fact, the very name and definition of feedback loop implicitly highlights that it should be multi-serving, so every stakeholder involved gives and receives a benefit towards the backlog. Transparency was also raised to be highly significant for marketing; accordingly, when the product roadmap isn't communicated or is too vague, they are left in the dark and have to rush to prepare materials for releases when it is too late. I can see this point and depending on the management structure this problem can truly be exacerbated. A transparent backlog can indeed serve as a way to provide the organization with a window for the product team and what they are working on, with the added benefit of showing what is on the table. An *aligned message* is the requirement that expresses the need to ensure marketing and

product design is coherent with one another. This notion certainly is not surprising, and I can agree with it completely. It's often jarring when you come across products that seem separated from the brand, using the product backlog to ensure they align on an iterative basis seems efficient. Instead of trying to align styles and features retrospectively, they can be done during the process; thereby, staying consistent to build trust and help buyers make confident purchases.

Secondly, *take investment seriously* arose from section 4.3 as a theme when participants all reiterated the necessity to consider the responsibilities of the decision maker. Particularly relevant is a recurring sub-theme of transparency. Here, in the context of the buyer's responsibility it is important that the sales department for example, can see the product backlog to avoid over selling. This concern is unexpected, as of course the nature of sales is to oversell; however, it is true that the backlog could provide a credible way for them to close more deals. In addition, this is again expressed in section 4.2 with *promise delivery* as an important factor when interacting with the buyer, and to be realistic and considerate of their situation. This research suggests that something as little as having a transparent backlog can provide for supporting not just the buyer but also the brand, as product sales and marketing materials have a reference point to make promises; thereby, those promises have a lower likelihood of being broken.

Lastly, *authentic product* which was formed in chapter 4.5 touches upon the development of customer feedback. This finding came from how the shaping of the product, is seen as a way to involve customers and build features based on their feedback. This authenticity helps with not only the brand and the buyer's needs, but also in adding to the product backlog. For the product design team, having a systematic way to process feedback and align it with goals can certainly have a preventative effect to limit developer and design dept. This dept arises when work needs to be completed more than once, or work (such as designs or code) is produced but not implemented for the customer and by extension the buyer.

Prioritisation

When considering the second sub-theme requirement *prioritisation* (considering use cases to organize tasks based on importance), several key points from other thematic maps in chapters 4.3, 4.4 and 4.6 can be used to further understand.

Firstly, *tailoring to specific segments* a theme from section 4.3 raised the sub-theme *adapt to the industry* which is distinctly meaningful to ensure purchase decisions are built into the backlog prioritisation. The experience that marketers shared in common here was that

they need to adapt to changes in the evolving spaces customers and competitors reside in. This knowledge is highly relevant to prioritising what is currently important for customers, and even what will be in the future. For these purchase factors to be considered by the design team it's also useful to have a good understanding of the product space; for example, knowing what customers have used with competitors and the design patterns and features they are familiar with. I believe that these results suggest there is an opportunity for synergy in sharing knowledge to not only prioritize the backlog, but also to build more meaningful designs that support the users; which by extension, supports the decision maker as shown in chapter 4.2.

Secondly, *validate* which had prominence in section 4.4 has two sub-themes that are relevant to prioritisation: *internal specialists*, and *observe interaction with customers*. In its original context, marketers explained how they validate their content internally using specialists who directly interact with customers. This knowledge could enhance the effectiveness of the backlog's prioritisation tenfold; accordingly, the product team could consider enabling a skilled product manager to organize a routine method of enquiring with specialists that the items in the backlog have been ranked effectively. Observing interactions with customers is also something to make room for, as it allows for a deep empathetic understanding of what is important for the customer. To consider purchase decisions directly, having a way to sit in on sales calls, or shadow interactions with the buyer would certainly expand a product team's ability to not only design but also prioritise what is important for the buyer.

Lastly, in chapter 4.6 *ownership* had a similar sub-theme of *prioritisation*. In that chapter the ownership discussed in interviews points out that the product team needs to factor the company vision as well as visions from other stakeholders in their backlog. It seems like a lot of work to be applying all these avenues to shape the perfect backlog prioritisation. I'd theorize that over time this would improve, but measures do need to be taken for a product team if they are to factor in decision making in product design. As mentioned earlier the importance of using an agile methodology would greatly assist in getting used to working effectively with other stakeholders, such as the marketing team; not to mention, the iterative nature of using HCD in agile will gradually improve quality in a prioritised backlog.

5.1.2 Simplicity

One of the key challenges that participants expressed is making the decision maker feel confident that the product they buy encourages productivity instead of stifling it. This

suggests that by simplifying what users can do with a product, design can help to expressly motivate the decision maker. This theme as presented earlier has two sub-theme requirements: (1) *controllable*, and (2) *users loving the product*. These results do highlight a viable way to consider the decision maker in the design; however, it is still quite broad, particularly it would depend on the actual product being sold. There are of course many factors. Naturally, in the context of selling data and user flows supporting sales prospecting and marketing automation like with the marketers from this study, this option makes sense. I do believe that Design Thinking methods like using HCD (covered in the theoretical framework) would help to validate this theme of *simplicity* for a B2B product. At least, it would serve to evaluate the importance of simplicity and what that would mean for problems decision makers are trying to solve with the tools they purchase for their strategies.

Controllable

To go through the first sub-theme belonging to *simplicity: controllable* (a means for an admin type user role to manage the regular user accounts), I will use relevant themes from areas researched and presented from the results chapters 4.2, and 4.3.

Firstly, *buyer targeting* a theme from section 4.2 raised the sub-theme *strategy & tool set up* which ties in directly to simplifying the capabilities users have access to. As I mentioned earlier the idea of simplicity in and of itself can seem very broad; however, as expressed by the study participants, you can investigate what decision makers are actually responsible for. Once you understand this, you have a better understanding of what consequences concern them when it comes to bad investments. This gives the relevant information needed to actually address making the product simpler; in other words, refining user flows (tasks that the user can complete within an app). The process of refining these user flows can be designed to be controllable by an admin user in the product; thus, allowing for varied types of buyer personas or segments that perhaps the marketing team has already recognized as relevant (covered in chapter 4.3).

Secondly, *tailor to specific segments* explained in chapter 4.3 brought up the sub-theme *personalise*. In the marketing context, a participant gave one example of using a website to segment visitors to tailor content sent to them via e-mail. This is an idea that the product team could consider adopting if relevant. Adaptive user interface (AUI) measures currently exist for adapting interfaces to show less or more to suit particular user types or behaviour; in general, this process is semi-automated by using machine learning (Kortschot, Jamieson, & Prasad 2020). This idea could prove useful if adapted for active admin users (typically assigned by the decision maker to be responsible for the tool's

adoption). This way the customer themselves lead and hold control, keeping the complexities of AUI for the B2C market.

Thirdly, *take investment seriously* another theme found in section 4.3 has a relevant sub-theme of *consider their situation*. As covered in the results, this sub-theme stresses how the customer should be made aware when the product is not a good fit for them. The product design cannot account directly for this; however, if sufficient support and user experience microcopy (text found in the user interface) could explain what user flows should be used for (in a similar vein to marketing's case studies from 4.3) the admin user would have a better idea on what they should toggle on for their users.

Lastly, *empathise* which is again from section 4.3 had the sub-theme built from shared responses from participants to *help lead their team's success*. Here the decision maker is the one who should be helped with their leadership as that is essentially what they are doing by purchasing the product. Similarly, the suggestion in the previous paragraph the UI could guide admin users on how to simplify the experience for their workers; thereby, streamlining their efficiency.

Users loving the product

To discuss the second sub-theme belonging to *simplicity: users loving the product* (making sure the product allows users to get their work done positively), I will use relevant themes from areas researched and presented from the results chapters 4.2, 4.3 and 4.6.

Firstly, *buyer targeting* that arose in section 4.2 outlined *built reputation*. This sub-theme involves the phenomenon where it is the would-be direct users, or a manager assigned to research possible tools who is bringing the product to the attention of the decision maker. This is highly related to the branding work done by the marketing team; however, in these cases it is the product itself that works as the showcase. The capabilities, design, and examples of other companies succeeding through its use is what entices this form of word of mouth promotion. For the product design team to factor this in, based on these results they would need someone to make note when decision makers sign based on this principle. Investigating the areas of the product that resonate this way would support factoring the attributes relating directly to supporting the decision maker vicariously.

Secondly, *empathise* presented as results in chapter 4.3 has two sub-themes that are worth exploring related to user satisfaction: *understand them*, and *interact and involve them*. Understanding the buyer was expressed by participants as the method to speak the same language as the buyer. To truly build a product with a user experience that

resonates with the decision maker, the team would understand why they are making the choice to purchase. As covered earlier, the actual decision maker will not be using the product themselves; therefore, there is more nuance as it is not necessarily what the product design does that is important, but it is the employee activities it actually supports for the company making the purchase that need to be learned. Interacting with the users is again, something the design team could do more of. At least observing and understanding them, in the same way outlined by HCD would be useful; particularly, when fixing the backlog, or deciding upon successful design patterns that the user succeeds with.

Lastly, *ownership* as covered in section 4.6 has a relevant pain point of *clear direction*. Here the issue raised by participants is that when the product team lacks a clear direction where it is going, it can be difficult to prepare necessary materials that effect end users. For example, if a product needs to be localised for a different marketing this could mean more than just translating. Perhaps there are considerable changes that need to be made; for example, with a data company there might be legal issues concerning information available in the product. In order to keep users happy, these things need to be factored in, as explained earlier the decision maker is often directly influenced by their end users. If problems grow great enough, they will not renew.

5.1.3 Usage metrics

The recommendation made for presenting usage metrics to the customer through the product is a meaningful one. Currently, at least in my company, we do keep track of which users are active and what features they utilise. I'd imagine that in the B2B space, it could be potentially risky to offer this information, especially if companies are renewing contracts when in reality, they have a low user adoption. The participants in this study made the claim that the transparency is a more meaningful factor despite the risk. Essentially, usage metrics would also translate to trust; thereby, acting as a key factor to support continued purchase decisions. The *usage metrics* theme as presented earlier has two sub-theme requirements: (1) *trustworthy analytics*, and (2) *value conversion*.

Trustworthy analytics

The first sub-theme belonging to *usage metrics: trustworthy analytics* (a means for an admin type user role to manage the regular user accounts), can be explored with relevant themes from areas researched and presented from the results chapters 4.2 and 4.5.

Firstly, *buyer targeting* found in chapter 4.2 raised the sub-theme of *built reputation*. Built reputation is again relevant here, similarly to how I explained in 5.1.2. In the context of usage metrics, study participants expect a would be admin user (for example in my product's case a sales or marketing manager) would see that they'd be able to showcase how well their team is doing (in my case stats of all their closed sales, and how many are based on my product's company data). This would be so exciting for them, that they would contact their decision maker and advocate for this product in particular. From this I can now understand how these analytics might impact this relationship between the decision maker and the person they have assigned to be responsible for the purchased product's use. I do stress caution however, as this isn't necessarily a universal truth for all products in the B2B space. Here the takeaway for product teams is that by understanding how usage will impact your customer it will be possible to see if there is a connection towards trust; thereby, if it is a relevant development area for the applicable buyer.

Secondly, *user targeting* also from chapter 4.2 had the sub-theme *product driven needs*. These user needs which the marketing team and hopefully the product team knows (if not the results on collaboration and communication 4.4 and 4.6 can help) are the ones that should be connected with the analytics. In order for them to be trustworthy, they should be presented honestly, although depending on the needs the product satisfies this might be difficult to articulate. I do believe that it is relevant however, as often dashboards are used for these types of analytics and unless the figures directly relate to usage needs and goals that dashboard isn't going to be helpful.

Lastly, *authentic product* found in section 4.5 has two sub-themes worth covering: *capabilities*, and *talk from experience*. Capabilities was stressed as staying true to what the product is actually capable of. In the context of trustworthy analytics, they shouldn't claim to represent things the product isn't directly responsible for. They should be realistic and express things clearly. Talk from experience on the other hand is relevant for companies that use their product internally as well. If you're going to start testing analytics and how they support people, you may as well test with your own company using the product first if that is possible. This authenticity is what the study participants claim helps support purchase decisions.

Value conversion

The second sub-theme belonging to *usage metrics: value conversion* (considering how much users benefit with the pricing model), can be discussed using a theme found in chapter 4.3.

When considering how to begin some form of value conversion, *empathise* found in chapter 4.3 raised the sub-themes *understand them* and *help lead their team's success*. Despite already highlighting these sub-theme findings in 5.1.2 I felt there were relevant to bring up again here. Understanding what end users need to get done, and how their success impacts the people who lead them is key when considering a value-based pricing model. One participant pointed out that this would make costs easier to scale; however, whilst I can see this would be true, I doubt it is easy to quantify. There are lots of different pricing models that a product can go with, the important thing to consider here for product design is to understand how the impact of cost would directly relate to the decision maker. In the case of a data company, a large enterprise customer would use a lot of data and therefore pay more; alternatively, a small start-up could use fewer data points and thereby still be able to afford the service making the purchase decision easier.

5.2 Conclusion

By considering the thematic analysis results and the discussion from 5.1 my conclusion brings a succinct answer to the research question.

Research question

How does marketing expect the product design to support purchase decisions?

This study demonstrates that from the marketing team's perspective product design has three main areas that can directly support decision makers when buying. Firstly, taking advantage of internal communication to build an effective backlog. This interplay of knowledge and shared responsibility is advantageous as it will function as a transparent way for an entire company to not only know the backlog but also prioritise it to support what customers looking-to-buy need. Secondly, simplifying the product offering, or having the ability for the customer to decide on functionalities necessary for their workers will support it being sold. This simplification involves needing an iterative way of working found in HCD methods in order to stay up to date with what is important to the customer, and to ensure they are succeeding with the product. Lastly, usage metrics allow for the buyer to not only have the power to see if their employees are using the product, but also prove to them why what they are paying for is fair and valuable for them.

5.3 Relevancy of results

The results and discussion presented in this thesis can function as a guide, but not a demonstrable model applicable for all products and scenarios. This is due to the fact that I sourced participants from the same workplace; therefore, the results are highly relevant for my own work as well as products that share a similar space to mine.

The timeframe to complete the thesis was very tight, which meant that the research method chosen was able to be utilized but not to the full extent necessary for studies outside the scope of a bachelor's thesis. For example, in a larger thematic study the possibility to interview more participants occurs concurrently during the analysis of results. This means that the interview questions are altered based on the patterns and themes that emerge. It is also common for subjects to be interviewed multiple times with refined questions for the sake of narrowing down the problem area and research questions during the actual analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006).

The decision to limit research to the marketing stakeholder was also due to the timeframe limit; however, now that I have completed this research, I believe continued studies surrounding product design and marketing would prove beneficial. Particularly getting insight directly from product design team members in a future study. Naturally, in this study I applied my own experience and thoughts in the discussion, but in order to develop a model that can be followed to design for purchase decisions collecting data from product design would be necessary.

It would also be interesting to see future research that compares the differences of factors that design impacts between B2C purchases and B2B ones. I would hope that the results from this research can inspire readers to have a perspective around this problem area and explore it themselves.

When it comes to my own learning, I have not only accomplished more than I expected but I also developed skills I wasn't anticipating. For example, carrying out qualitative research analysis to a high-level standard. Whilst I would have liked to interview more participants, the time it took to actually process and interpret the data was too time consuming. At times during this thesis process, it was often frustrating as a lot of effort wasn't apparent as tangible progress; for example, the analysis and background studies meant I was learning a lot and building material towards my thesis without it actually manifesting on the page. Having a short time period to write the thesis, meant that I

wanted to have close to weekly correspondence with my advisor; hence, it was difficult as written work wasn't always available immediately for feedback and advice.

I would attribute the success of completing my thesis on time to both my initial project plan, and my thesis advisor. They both functioned as yard sticks for me to make sure I was completing work on a consistent basis, acting as extra energy on top of my own motivation and passion for the subject and project. I would definitely recommend other students to take advantage of their advisor's advice, as well as putting in that extra effort with their initial project plan to ensure they can complete their thesis satisfied with the results.

5.4 Validity and reliability

Typically, in this type of research validity can be performed easily when you have multiple researchers. Each researcher cross checks the coded themes and sees if they relate them to the same sections of the interview transcripts (Thomas 2003). As this wasn't the case for my research, I used the stakeholder check method recommended by Thomas (2003). This is where any party who is interested in the research can assess and comment on the findings. Just by having an advisor and a thesis session these needs are met, I also involved participants early on in the analysis process to ask if the coded sections from their interviews were valid. Based on feedback from stakeholders, the content of this thesis has been adjusted.

Research ethics regarding the study participants were met by informing them about what the research was for, and the method that would be used to analyse their responses. A verbal agreement was made that I had permission to record interviews for the purpose of transcribing, and also that their names would be omitted to keeping their identity private.

The reliability of the results based on the theoretical and empirical methods are met by collecting references from trustworthy sources using Google Scholar, IEEE Xplore and the Haaga-Helia library. Research methods in particular had a high theoretical foundation following standards and applying techniques found in qualitative research methods and studies.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Theme finding

Example of thematic mapping process (phases 2-4 of thematic analysis)

