



How to increase sales through interior design retailers for storage solutions

Case Study Kabinetti Oy

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Bachelor of Business Administration

Thesis

2023

Abstract

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Degree Bachelor of Business Administration
Report/Thesis Title How to increase sales through interior design retailers, case study Kabinetti Oy
Number of pages and appendix pages 26 + 9
<p>This thesis will explore the market opportunities for case company Kabinetti. The company Kabinetti operates as an importer and manufacturer in furniture design industry sector in Finland. The case company, Kabinetti sells its products business to business. The aim of this research is to assess and evaluate how Kabinetti can increase its sales through its retailers.</p> <p>This research seeks knowledge of what can be improved in order to increase sales in the next following years. The goal of this research is to understand and predict what will the retailers want in the next following five years.</p> <p>This thesis consists of two parts, theoretical framework, and following part two of the research consisting of competitor analysis and interviews. The theoretical part of the thesis includes the following concepts of social media marketing, B2B sales, furniture design trends. Digital Marketing channels will be introduced and studied.</p> <p>The interviews and competitor analysis focus on understanding and identifying the key opportunities to enforce growth. The second part of the research includes interviews with retailers and a competitor analysis providing a great wholesome understanding of marketing in this case study specific industry. Following interviews with retailers to understand and evaluate future demand and trends of storage solutions.</p> <p>For the case company Kabinetti the author recommends increasing diversity in their product selection and enhancing their social media marketing. By listening to the retailers Kabinetti can ensure to answer the customer needs better in the future.</p>
Key words Furniture design industry, sales, retailers, storage solutions, B2B sales

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1 Introduction

This is a research-based thesis done for the Degree Programme of International Business for Haaga Helia University of Applied Sciences. With the major in specialization being in Customer Relationship Management and Communication. This following chapter will be introducing the background to the topic and the research questions for the thesis. As well as going through the objectives and limitations of the research and outlining the key concepts.

1.1 Background to the topic

This thesis will explore the market opportunities for case company Kabinetti. The company Kabinetti operates as an importer and manufacturer in the furniture design industry in Finland selling its products to other professionals in the same field. The company sells its products business to business which means that retailers buy from Kabinetti and sell to the end customer. The aim is to assess opportunities for Kabinetti to increase its sales. This will be done by finding out what the retailers are interested in buying in the future.

The research seeks knowledge of what can be improved and developed to increase sales in the next following years. The goal of this research is to understand and predict what will the retailers want in the next following five years. It is essential to have a look at what the furniture industry trends are now, as well as which direction are they moving into. This thesis will investigate different aspects of the company Kabinetti, their sales processes, marketing, product offerings and services that can influence sales.

In addition, this thesis will discuss how business to business marketing through digital platforms can enhance sales. Today marketing has shifted mainly to digital platforms, which is why digital marketing is crucial for companies to be part of. Digital Marketing enables companies to communicate directly with their target groups and be part of their lives. (Patoli 2021.)

1.2 Research question

The purpose for this thesis is to gain an understanding of the industry specific trends and demands for storage solutions in the next following five years as a timeframe. The aim of this thesis is for the case company Kabinetti to gain knowledge about what their buyers want in the following years. As well as what they can do to ensure these needs and being met. This research is conducted to predict and gain information what the demand for storage solutions will be in the future. The goal is for the case company to be able to adapt itself accordingly to future demand. As well as identifying the potential competitors and opportunities in the market.

The research overall seeks to look at opportunities for growth, competitive advantages, and retailer's needs. Assessing and comparing Kabinetti's products to other competitors in the business-to-business market and identify what can be improved, while outlining current trends and demands in this sector. In addition, providing insight and a framework for Kabinetti or other similar companies.

The research question (RQ) of this thesis is "How to increase sales through interior design retailers for storage solutions?". The RQ has been divided into the following investigative questions (IQ):

IQ 1. What kind of competitive products do the main competitors in Finland have?

IQ 2. How should the storage solution systems be developed in the future?

IQ 3. What are retailers looking to buy in the future?

IQ 4. How can Kabinetti ensure to answer buyers needs in the future?

The table 1 below demonstrates how these investigative questions are implemented in the research, the theoretical framework of this thesis and how the research methods are implemented.

Table 1: Overlay matrix

Investigative Questions	Theoretical Framework	Research Methods	Results (chapter)
IQ 1. What kind of competitive products do the main competitors in Finland have?	Competitor Analysis, Market overview	Internet research, secondary research	2,3,4,5
IQ 2. How should the storage solution systems be developed in the future?	Furniture industry, B2B sales & marketing	Secondary research, interviews	2,3,4,5
IQ 3. What are retailers looking to buy in the future?	Furniture industry overview, retailers	Interviews, secondary research	1,2,4,5
IQ 4. How can Kabinetti ensure to answer buyers needs in the future?	Trends in the industry, B2B Marketing	Interviews, secondary research	1,2,4,5

1.3 Demarcation

This thesis will explore the marketing and sales opportunities in B2B sector for the case company, Kabinetti. Theoretical framework will include briefly Kabinetti's value chain. The research will assess and evaluate growth opportunities for Kabinetti in Finland, following with a conclusion and recommendations for the case company, while acknowledging the limitations of this research. The scope of this study is narrowed down to market opportunities in Finland. Author recognizes opportunities for further research on the topic.

1.4 Benefits

This research is tailored for the case company Kabinetti. The design of the research is to support and give insights to the case company. The case company will be given solid research that demonstrates a clear overview of the furniture design industry, its competitors, as well as what challenges and other factors should be considered in the future to succeed. This market research can also benefit businesses who want to understand more of the market opportunities and structure in the

furniture design industry in Europe. Moreover, stakeholders may benefit from this research if they want to invest in Kabinetti or similar companies.

The author of this thesis will be introduced to furniture design industry. Writing the thesis for a commissioning company will provide great experience for the author on how to collaborate with a business and gain knowledge of a new field. Working with a commissioning company can even lead to professional opportunities in the future.

1.5 Key concepts

B2B means business to business interactions and transactions between two companies. One company selling or trying to sell products or services to the other one. (Kotler, Armstrong, Opresnik 2018, 190-200.)

B2B Marketing all forms of marketing activities and strategies created by companies in order to promote and sell products (Decker 2023.)

Digital Marketing is one of the most creative ways to interact with the target audience. Digital marketing provides a more personalised opportunity to connect with potential customers with its tools. In order to reach marketing goals, digital marketing uses technologies, digital media as well as traditional methods. (Chaffey & Chadwick 2022, 5-8.)

Furniture Design Industry is a fast-paced labour industry. The furniture industry demands innovative and technological set of skills, including a sense for style and trends. (European Commission 2023.)

Retailers buy from wholesalers or manufacturers and function as intermediaries who then sell to the end consumer. (Baines, Fill, Rosengren & Antonetti 2017, 283.)

Social Media is important for businesses to be part of in today's world. Currently around 4.9 billion people are in social media. (Statista 2023.) For businesses social media allows companies and organizations to interact and engage with large audiences, increase brand awareness, promotion, advertising, and sales. Social media has shaped the world of many businesses, having to start selling and promoting its products out in the digital world. Social Media enables companies to communicate directly with their target consumers. In addition, it gives the opportunity to learn about the habits of these potential consumers through data that is collected online. (Dwivedi, Ismagilova, Rana 2023.)

1.6 Commissioning company

Kabinetti is a daughter company of a bigger enterprise called Hahle group. The company is an importer and a manufacturer from Finland. The company was founded in 1964 in Finland. Hahle is a middle sized Finnish company that had a revenue of 18million in 2021. (Finder 2022.) Hahle has a daughter company that operates in Estonia. (Hahle official website 2023.)

Hahle enterprises have several daughter companies that all belong to the furniture design industry. The company currently employs around 200 people in Finland and is a leading importer and manufacturer of furniture design related products and equipment. Most of the products are made in Finland in the company's own factories. Kabinetti sells primarily its products to retailers in Finland, with Kabinetti's own logos and trademarks. (Kabinetti official website 2023.)

Hahle group also imports some of its products from overseas from other European distributors. Kabinetti products are made in Finland, however some parts for the cabinets are imported from Austria. The selling takes mainly place in Finland between Kabinetti and Finnish retailers. Kabinetti products are known for their high quality and tailor-made solutions offered to customers. (Kabinetti official website 2023.)

2 Furniture Design Market Overview

The theoretical framework is introduced and explained in this chapter. The research will be based on following this theoretical framework and discussing its key concepts.

The figure 1 below is the theoretical framework for this thesis. It consists of three main categories that are the core of this thesis.

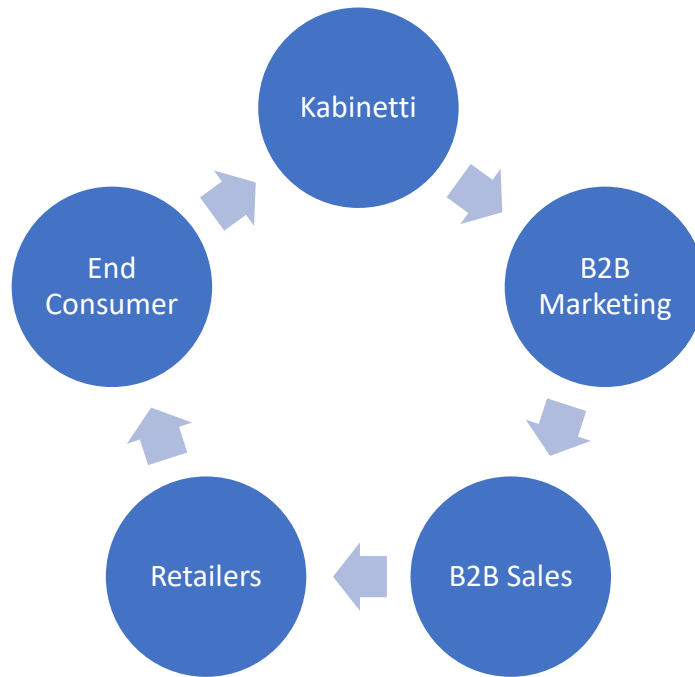


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

2.1 B2B Marketing & Sales

Planning and developing B2B Marketing and Sales skills is crucial for businesses who function in the B2B sector. In B2B Marketing the target audience is businesspeople. The goal for any form of marketing done is to increase brand awareness and sales. Companies often benefit from using digital and social media tools such as content creation, search engine optimization and CRM systems. (O'Brien 2022.)

Over the past decade social media and overall digital media platforms have changed and shaped the world of marketing for good. Companies have joined social media in platforms such as LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook to stay relevant and up to date. Being active in these platforms is essential and creates a great way for a company to communicate with their target audience as well as getting to know them. (O'Brien 2022.)

During B2B sales processes, CRM systems (customer relationship management systems) are often used to manage leads and handle sales processes more efficiently. This technology helps salespeople to have easy access to leads and to keep data relevant for the sales process. This data saved in the CRM system helps salespeople to evaluate and assess the readiness of a sale. Overall CRM systems provide a great platform to follow up on leads making the sales process easier. (Salesforce s.a.)

Due to the growing competition in digital platforms, it is necessary for companies to be able to create high quality and consistent content marketing for their target audience. This is a great way for a company to gain insights of their target audience as well as creating a relationship with one another. Following up with current industry trends on social media is important when creating content. A company must be active and reactive to current events when operating their social media accounts. By growing online presence through multiple platforms, will result in increased brand awareness and this way companies have a better chance of making more sales and profits. (Riserbato 2021.)

There are several differences between business to consumer (B2C) and business to business (B2B) sales. When looking at B2B sales processes these are often considered much more complicated than B2C ones. Normally when operating in B2B markets the sales are bigger and there are less buyers than in B2C markets. (Kotler & al. 2018, 190-194.)

All parties who take part in the purchase decision-making process can be found in Kotler's decision-making unit that is called the buying centre. This model founded by Philip Kotler is demonstrated below. (Kotler & al. 2018,190-194.)

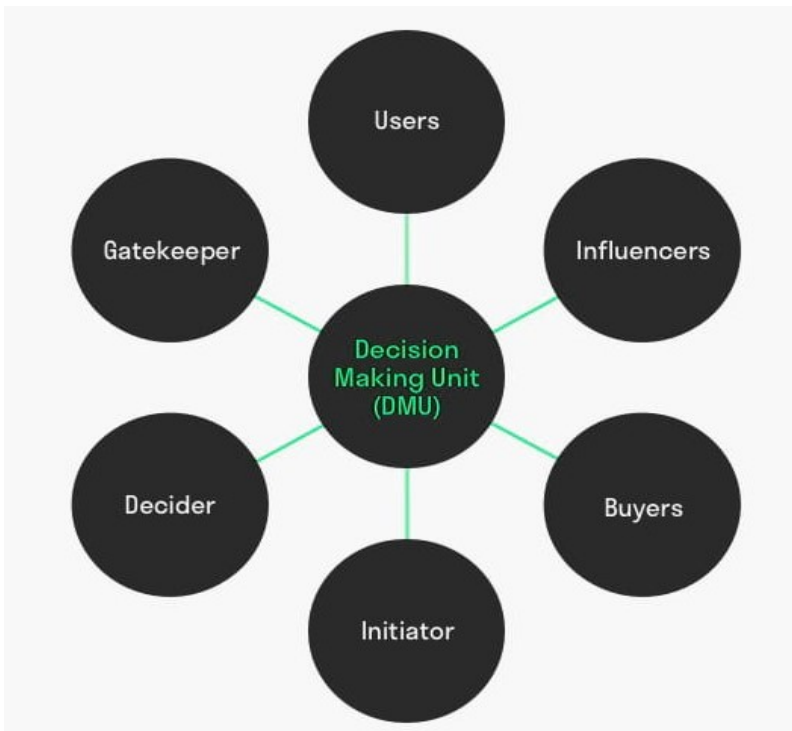


Figure 2. Van Vliet, V. 2011. Toolshero website.

As one can spot the DMU (Decision Making Unit) consists of six vital parties that all effect how the sales process may go. This model can help businesspeople to understand how complex the business-to-business sales process can be. It is a great model to follow when trying to identify different roles and decision makers during a sales process. (Kotler & al. 2018,190-194.)

2.2 Retailers

Wholesalers sell B2B to retailers, who in turn sell those products to the end consumers. Often these retailers that work as the intermediary between wholesaler and end consumer, buy specific products that the consumers want. Retailers job is to understand and predict what the end consumers want to buy currently as well as in the future. Understanding the demand and purchasing the products that are most demanded by the end consumers is crucial. Retailers can use consumer data to predict what products will be in demand. (Champion 2023.)

Today the consumers are more sophisticated than ever and demand personalized solutions and easy access to goods weather the purchase takes place online or in a physical store. Retailers give consumers access to these products. The buying experience should be made as easy and

efficient as possible to maintain a solid customer base. Retailing often happens through multiple channels for example online and in physical stores. (Hudson 2020.) For example, the self-scanning kiosks are a good way to make the customers shopping experience faster and easier. (Baines & al. 2017, 283-296)

There are several factors for retailer shops to consider such as location, opening hours and availability of products and services in order to make their customers satisfied. These factors will in the end effect how the customer will experience and view the buying process. If the retailers want their customers to come back, they must pay attention to the quality and easiness of the buying process. E-commerce is very popular among B2C as well as with B2B buyers. When operating B2C it is good for the seller to consider how much the customer is willing to pay for shipping costs. Retailers need to make profits of the goods they have bought from the wholesaler, which is why they need a pricing strategy as well to identify their suitable target customers who are willing to pay the set price. (Baines & al. 2017, 283-296)

2.3 Furniture Industry in EU

The European Furniture manufacturers are known to react fast to changes as well as demand, which is why they are known to be successful all over the world. The best high end furniture designers come from the EU. One could consider Europe easily as the leading figure for furniture designs. The furniture industry in EU makes annually around 95 billion and is currently employing around one million people. (European Commission.)

It suggested that EU furniture companies keep their core focus on investing in development of technologies, design, and innovation overall. Following up with trends and what societal needs are, is crucial. (European Commission.)

The European furniture industry has faced some obstacles during the past years. One of the biggest competitors and threats for European furniture companies are the Chinese companies that have entered the markets. Countries outside of European Union tend to have lower cost of production which allows them to produce more and faster than the European competitors. Due to the high demands of the European Union on sustainability, quality standards and social ones there are more operational costs operating in EU than for countries operating outside of the EU. (European Commission.)



Figure 3. European office furniture industry revenue (Mordor Intelligence 2022)

The Figure above demonstrates the steady increase of demand in office furniture. Due to the increase in employment currently there is a demand for office related furniture such as cabinets and desks. Europe is currently the second largest furniture manufacturing region in the world. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the furniture industries growth has suffered. The future demand will be in sustainable, comfortable, and eco-friendly furniture. (Mordor Intelligence 2022.)

2.4 Trends in Interior Design

After the Pandemic, healthy lifestyle, mindfulness, and overall wellness are trending. Using sustainable designs has gained huge popularity over the past few years and continues to do so. One's own health as well as the health of our planet seem to be reflected on the current and coming trends in interior design in 2023. Usage of vintage and antique furniture and designs is increasing during the recent years and expected to rise. The demand of local and handmade items is huge at the moment. The eco-friendlier the better. People want to buy items that last for years. (Decorilla 2023.)

Earthy style and organic like colours are in style currently. Different shapes in furniture such as round tables are increasing in interior design recently. Especially round sofas, tables and lamps are popular. Open space interiors are not as popular as they used to be, and divided spaces especially for homes are in demand. Living room spaces have become more about socializing rather than having the television as the centre. (Decorilla 2023.)

Colours such as pink, peach, and coral shades are expected to be the colours of the following year. Metal and stainless-steel surfaces and colours such as bronze, copper, silver and gold are becoming more demanded. As well as the application of natural materials like stones, plants, and wood in design. (Taylor 2023)

Looking at the past two centuries of interior design one can see the evolution of interior design and think of what factors may have influenced it. The old is mixed with the new in interior design during

the 2000's. Vintage designs were combined with modern items. This decade was dominated by industrial, cotemporary and minimalist design. (Livspace 2022.)

In 2010's social media was constantly growing, and people were using their phones a lot more than before. This time in interior design was much focused on combinations of natural and soft colours. Scandinavian design and minimalism were a popular trend. (Livspace 2022.) White beige and greys were the main colours in each room. (Orentas 2022.)

3 Research Methods or Project Management Methods

This chapter introduces and explains the research methods of this thesis. The research design, data collection methods and the overall structure of research is presented. In addition, the reliability and relevance of the research and sources used is discussed.

3.1 Research Design

The research design for this thesis is exploratory research. The author finds that the research question “What do interior designers want from Kabinetti in the next following years?” is a very broad phenomenon and has very little previous studies. The nature of exploratory research enables the author to have a flexible research process and gain a wholesome understanding of the phenomenon of interest. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2012, 170-175.) Exploratory research is informal and adaptive to change. Usually, sample size in exploratory research is small. (Burns, Veeck & Bush 2017, 94–95).

This research has been conducted using the mixed methods research approach. The mixed methods research strategy was chosen by the author as the most suitable technique to conduct this case specific research in question. To gain the most out of this research both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods are applied. (Burns & al. 2017, 144).

Quantitative data is often associated with measurements of units. Quantitative data is in a numerical form. Statistical methods are applied to analyse this specific type of data. (European Commission.) These statistical methods include charts and graphs. These enable the presenting and analysis of this type of data. (Saunders & al. 2012, 472)

Qualitative data is usually not expressed in numbers, but in words. It tends to be more philosophical and complex than quantitative data. Ways to analyse qualitative data are deductive or inductive approaches. (Saunders & al. 2012, 544-546.)

The Figure 4 below demonstrates the research design phases of this thesis.



Figure 4. Research Design

3.2 Sampling

Non-probability sampling was the chosen method to choose the participants for the interviews. The commissioning company chose the participants for the interviews for this research. The interest was to interview already existing retailers to gain more insight into the investigative questions. The retailers interviewed were people who work in the furniture design industry market in Finland. Overall, eight people participated in the interviews. The interviews were one to one telephone calls. The number of participants is small, since each of the interviewee was carefully selected by the commissioning company. The commissioning company in cooperation with the author believe that these interviewees will give a good understanding to the phenomenon of interest. All participants were highly motivated to take part in the interview since they are experts in this field of furniture design markets. (Saunders & al. 2012, 260-265.)

3.3 Interview Design

The questions used in the interviews for this research have been created together by the author and the commissioning company Kabinetti. The interview form was semi-structured. Since this research is an exploratory research conducting semi structured interviews was found the most useful way to proceed. (Saunders & al. 2012, 377.) The author benefitted from the use of the interview guide during the interviews. Due to the sample size being small, semi-structured technique was founded the most suitable one. Semi-structured interviews have a similar interview guide but allow

each interview situation adaptable for change. For example, additional questions and the order of questions can vary depending on the situation and natural flow of the interview process. (Saunders & al. 2012, 374-375.) There were 25 interview questions in total in the interview guide, which were divided into five key topics. (see Appendix 1). The interview guide consisted mainly of qualitative questions that is a common feature for a semi-structured interviews. One section of the interview guide had a quantitative question, where the person interviewed had to answer on a scale from 1-5. (Saunders & al. 2012, 400). This type of data that has a scale is considered ordinal data and these scale values can be analysed as numerical data. (Blumberg 2008.)

Table 2. Interview schedule

29th of August 2023	30th of August 2023	1st of September 2023
Person A	Person E	Person G
Person B	Person F	Person H
Person C		
Person D		

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Data collection of this thesis can be divided into three main phases. Primary and secondary data have been used in this thesis. In phase one, the data has been collected from articles, readings, and literature relevant to the topic. All materials used for this research have been carefully assessed and evaluated by the author as high-quality sources. During the phase one of research the data was collected between the timeline of April and August 2023. (Saunders & al. 2012, 260-265.)

During phase two secondary data was collected for the competitor analysis. Competitor analysis is useful to gain a clear analysis of the company's key competitors and their qualities. It is important for a company to understand who the competitors are in its own market sector. (Barringer & Ireland 2016, 170-178). Two of Kabinetti's competitors appointed by the commissioning company have been included in the competitor analysis. The goal was to gain insights to key differences in the products between the competitors. The competitor analysis answers the first IQ of this thesis. This data was collected during the month of August 2023. (Saunders & al. 2012, 260-265.)

Phase three consists of the interviews held and analysed for this research. Primary data was collected from the interviews. The interviews were conducted by phone. The author made notes during each interview call to collect all information said during the interviews for accurate results and analysis. The language used for the interviews was Finnish, since all participants shared the same mother tongue. These interviews were later translated to English. There were eight participants in the interview and durations of each interview varied between 10-30 minutes. The interviews were

held during August and September 2023. The phase three of this thesis answers all IQ's of this research. (Saunders & al. 2012, 260-265.)

3.5 Data Analysis

The data collected was analysed using thematic and content analysis approaches. The secondary data collected for part one and two of the thesis was analysed by content analysis and the primary data collected for part three was analysed through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis approach seeks to find common key themes and similarities that can be collected from the data. (Saunders & al. 2012, 535-554.)

The Interview data was collected by note taking by the author and later translated from Finnish to English. The interview was analysed using thematic approach to identify common themes within the research. The notes taken by the author helped to have clear overview of the answers and reach conclusions. A transcript summary was made of the interviews to draw final conclusions and recommendations for the commissioning company. (Saunders & al. 2012, 554.)

3.6 Reliability and Relevance

This thesis was done for a commissioning company, Kabinetti. The core focus of the research was to find relevant and reliable answers for the investigative questions. The author found that by applying both quantitative and qualitative methods in this research the results will be more accurate and relevant. Sources have been selected from high quality academic selection that are relevant to the topic. In addition, google scholar has been a tool to filter high quality sources for the research. All sources have been evaluated and critically assessed before they have been applied.

This research can be found relevant especially for the commissioning company and anyone in the furniture design industry looking to gain insights regarding the future demand and trends in the furniture markets. The primary sources of information come from experts working in the furniture design sector and can be considered reliable and relevant.

Secondary sources of information are gathered from articles and other academic literature sources can be considered reliable due to authors careful assessment and evaluation of sources.

One must bear in mind that some sources can be subjective especially regarding articles written by authors. However, they are found relevant for this research topic. The results and conclusions of this research aim to be as objective as possible. However, it is good to take into consideration that research that uses a lot of qualitative data interpreted by the author can end up being subjective to

some extent. The investigative questions in this research mostly look answers in the future which is a good factor to take into consideration when reading the thesis.

This thesis focus has been limited to the Finnish market opportunities in furniture design industry. The research done is open for further investigations towards international market opportunities. Limitations of data collection methods are acknowledged. No ethical issues took place during this research-based thesis process.

4 Results

This chapter contains the results of the thesis. It consists of subchapters that contain phase one and two of the research. The first subchapter presents the competitor analysis conducted for this thesis. The second part of research contains information of the interviews conducted and the results.

4.1 Part one of Research: Competitor Analysis

This subchapter contains the competitor analysis conducted of Kabinetti's key competitors for this research. These competitors have been selected by the commissioning company Kabinetti. The competitor analysis itself contains the origin of each company, its retailers, services and social media platforms that the companies use for marketing and advertising purposes.

The table 1 below presents the competitor analysis between the three companies.

Table. 1 Competitor Analysis

			
Active Retailers	130	250-300	50-100
Certification Marks	Finnish Key Flag	Finnish Key Flag	Finnish Key Flag
Product Warranty	10 years	25 years	25 years
Place of Production	Polvijärvi, Finland	Karijoki, Finland	Kauhajoki, Finland
Tailor-made products	Available	Available	Available
Social Media Platforms	Instagram, Facebook, YouTube	Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Pinterest	None

Looking at the number of retailers on the table 1. above, one can spot that Mirrorline has the most retailers in the country. Kabinetti has the second largest number of retailers with 130 active ones and Lakeus Design the lowest number, between 50 and 100 retailers. Having several retailers can be beneficial for a company because it increases the availability, visibility, and access to its products for the target customers. (Baines & Antonetti, 2017, 296-297.)

As one can see in table 1, there are several similarities between the three companies. All three companies have their production in Finland and have earned the Finnish Key Flag Symbol that is given to authentic Finnish companies. The Finnish Key Flag Symbol is given to companies who

employ people in Finland and have their manufacturing and services in Finland. The Finnish Key Flag Symbol has been proven to have an impact on consumers purchase decisions, especially among Finns. It is extremely useful for companies that operate in Finland to apply for this symbol. (Suomalainen työ 2023.)

Product warranty for Kabinetti is 10 years, while Mirrorline and Lakeus Design both have 25 years as product warranty. This was one of the key differences between the three companies. Jeff Frank argues in his blog that furniture warranties are part of a marketing scheme to prove that the product is a high quality one. (Frank 2023.) Warranties function as a promise to the customer that the purchased product will work till the given warranty timeline. Consumers usually find a sense of trust when a product has a warranty of several years. When a company is looking to increase its sales increasing, its product warranty can help to attract customers. (Leung 2022.)

Each company produces tailor-made products for its customers. Due to this it was not found useful to show or demonstrate what type of products specifically the companies produce, since it can vary accordingly to customer's needs.

Looking at the social media activity between the three companies one can notice that Lakeus design is not part of any social media. Lakeus Desing is also the smallest company of the three. Social Media in B2B business sector can help companies increase their brand awareness, offer client support, and distribute content. When launching a social media campaign there a digital analytics tools that help measure the campaigns success. Social media campaigns increase engagement between the company and the target customer. (Schaedel 2021.)

After careful investigation on different social media platforms, one can find that Mirrorline is the most active of the three companies in social media. Mirrorline has a following of 3721 on Instagram while Kabinetti has only 690 followers. In addition, Mirrorline has added more reels and high lights on its Instagram account than Kabinetti. (Instagram.) Both Mirrorline and Kabinetti have videos on YouTube that function as installation guides for their products. Mirroline has in total 40 subscribers and 30 videos on YouTube, while Kabinetti has only three videos and one subscriber. (YouTube s.a.) The only company active on Pinterest is Mirrorline.

4.2 Part two of Research: Interviews

This subchapter is part two of the research and is an overview of the interviews held. Results and insights are presented from the interviews. Each one of the five topics of the interview guide is discussed in its own subheading.

4.3 Strengths, weaknesses and innovation

The first section of the interview guide consists of four questions. These questions aim to gather information on Kabinetti's core strengths and weaknesses. As well as asking the retailers what additional services and product innovations could be made in the near future. (see Appendix 1).

When asked the question "What are the core strengths of Kabinetti's products?" one of the respondents mentioned that the overall services are fast and efficient, and deliveries are always on time. Another one of the respondents mentioned that the brand is well established and known in the markets, which helps sales. In addition, most respondents considered Kabinetti a company that produces high quality products. Many retailers considered Kabinetti's products as easy products to sell. One of the core strengths that most retailers mentioned was that Kabinetti produces its products tailored to each customer need. As Kabinetti products are manufactured in Finland one of the interviewees stated that this is highly appreciated by Finnish customers

Assessing the weaknesses of Kabinetti through the retailers gave a lot of insight for potential improvements. Most of the retailers interviewed mentioned that Kabinetti's prices are quite high. One of the interviewees suggested that if Kabinetti can find a better way to justify its pricing, buyers would be more at ease when purchasing.

Many respondents thought that Kabinetti's product selection is too small and narrow. A retailer interviewed feels that Kabinetti products selection lacks options and does not have a chance to stand out from its competition. Some retailers are seeking more variety in colours, materials, and the technical functionality. There is a clear demand for modified measurements for the sliding door and cabinets parts according to the retailers interviewed.

When discussing opinions on the installation guide for the products there is a division of opinions between the retailers. Most thought the instalment instructions are brilliant, however, one retailer thought that they are not functioning for consumers and can only be understood by professionals in the field. It seems that the instructions are simple and work better for some than others who would benefit from more detailed installations instructions.

4.4 Product selection

This section of the interview was conducted to gain insights about what sort of products and product qualities retailers will be looking for in the future. The five questions in this section seek to investigate what additional product lines could be interesting for the retailers and how Kabinetti's current products can be improved (see Appendix 1). In addition, it tries to find out how could Kabinetti react and adapt to interior design trends in the future, while meeting with consumer demands.

Retailers were asked the following question: “How would you like Kabinetti to develop its products in the next five years?”. (see Appendix 1). The interviewees thought that there is a decline in the demand for sliding doors. Two of the respondents explained that at the moment consumers mainly want sliding doors for the entrance hall areas in their homes. When it comes to other areas of the home for example bedrooms, consumers currently prefer hinged cabinets and doors.

One retailer interviewed feels that Kabinetti is reacting too slowly to ongoing trends and encouraged Kabinetti to take risks to keep up with the competitors. Some retailers mentioned in this section of the interview that Kabinetti’s products stand out from the competition due to their high quality however lacking in diversity. Two of the respondents proposed that Kabinetti would start to produce more ready-made luxurious walk-in closet concepts for consumers. Details, such as, adding spotlights inside closets were demanded by the retailers. Furthermore, each retailer was looking for new solutions and diversity in product selection from Kabinetti in the next following years.

The graph below demonstrates how each interviewee has answered on a scale one to five, to each product option. There were in total six product options and each were assessed on a scale from one to five. In this scale, number one represents no interest and five represents that the person is very interested on the product.

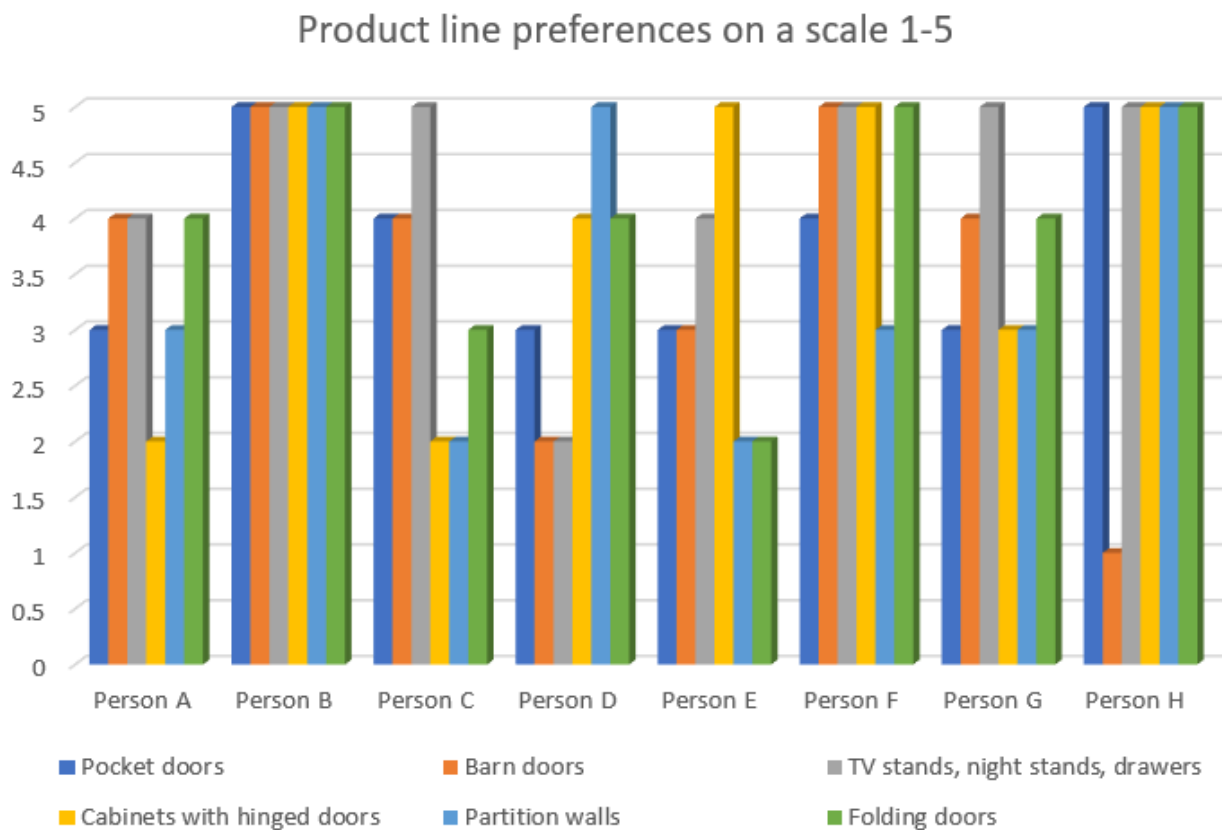


Figure 5. Product line preference

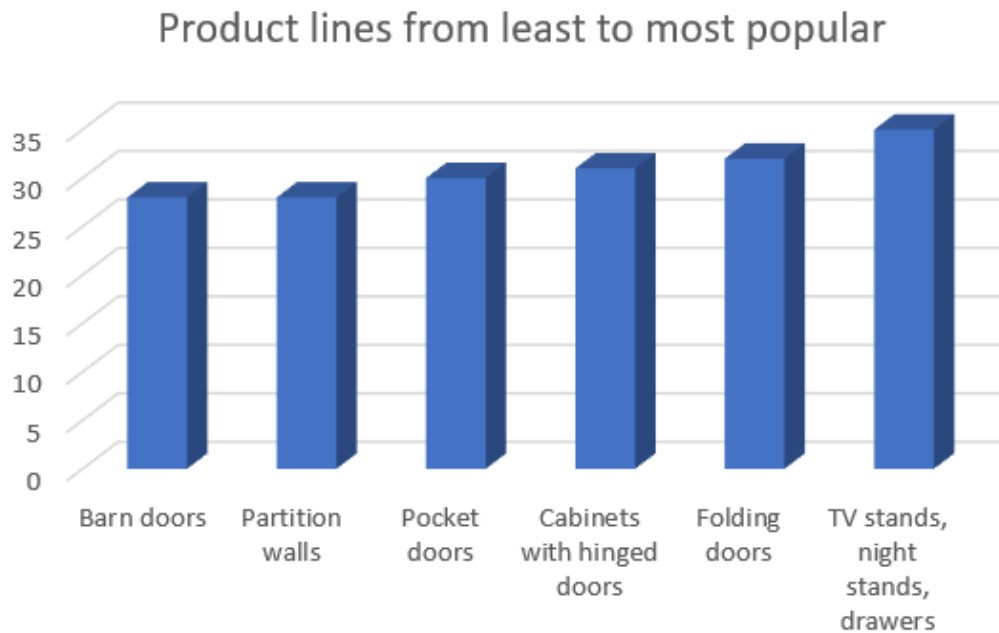


Figure 6. Product lines from least to most popular.

Looking at the graph above one can see that TV stands, nightstands and drawers were most wanted products by the retailers interviewed. The least desired product of these six options was barn doors. Overall, when analysing the graph, the differences between the product preferences among retailers was not huge. The only product option to score a one as level of interest was barn doors. However, the gaps between each product preference remain quite small.

4.5 Marketing and branding

Marketing and branding of Kabinetti is assessed here with open qualitative questions. The retailers give insight into what they see as important steps and platforms in terms of developing marketing and branding activities. This section on marketing and branding consists of six questions. (see Appendix 1). Each question aims to signify what platforms the retailers would like to see Kabinetti active on and how could Kabinetti stand out from its competitors on social media.

One retailer interviewed mentioned TikTok as a crucial platform for Kabinetti to consider participating in. Many retailers wanted and requested to see more videos in the future on social media. One retailer explained that no one seems to have before and after pictures and videos on social media and this could be an excellent way to stand out.

The interviewees were asked in this section questions on how Kabinetti's marketing could be improved. One interviewee mentioned that they had not come across Kabinetti profile on social

media. Another interviewee thought Kabinetti's competitor Mirrorline is producing good content on Instagram and advised Kabinetti to do the same. Most respondents had a shared opinion that Kabinetti should increase its activity on social media platforms, especially Instagram and produce more content. In addition, Kabinetti was advised to consider where it can approach its clients who are not on social media. Instagram was considered the most important social media platform among the respondents.

Seven out of eight of the respondents thought that Kabinetti's sales materials are good. One interviewee thought the sales materials are boring and tasteless. Three out of eight respondents have Kabinetti as a brand, visible in their marketing activities. The rest are using their own trademarks or do not find Kabinetti as a crucial brand name to market.

4.6 Sales

This is the fourth section of the interview guide. This section provides questions regarding Kabinetti's sales activities. There are overall seven questions in the sales section. (see Appendix 1.) The retailers were asked to elaborate what do they find easy and what could be improved in the sale process.

The eight interviewees were asked how they would assess the RP-Designer programme used in the sales processes. All eight interviewees said that finding prices and technical information is easy. Four out of eight interviewees were happy with the RP-Designer programme all in all. Three of the retailers wanted the RP-Designer programme to adapt its images to 3D and increase in quality. One of the interviewees thought the RP-Designer programme should be free of charge for salespeople.

When discussing developments for future years to increase sales, one interviewee said installation videos and simple guides are important and recommended Kabinetti to take example from IKEA. Reducing prices in the following years was also requested by two of the retailers interviewed.

The answers to the question: "How Kabinetti can enhance and improve its customer service and support systems?" were mostly positive. All the respondents said everything is working well and most of them did not have anything to add. One of the respondents mentioned that reliability and accessibility of customer support is important for clients.

4.7 Sustainability

Last section of the interview has three questions in total. The retailers were asked how Kabinetti would be able to improve its overall sustainability by changing its packaging materials to more environmentally friendly ones and whether reducing the use of plastic packaging materials would be a good idea. Some of the respondents found this section on sustainability difficult to answer. There seems to be a consensus that packaging materials should keep the items and products secured and undamaged. What packaging materials Kabinetti uses, did not seem to matter among the interviewees. One interviewee did recommend looking on different type of plastics that could be less harmful for the environment.

Eight out of eight interviewees thought that environmental certifications could please the end consumer and increase sales for Kabinetti. In addition, eight out of eight of the retailers interviewed did not personally consider environmental certifications important, but regarding sales thought it was a good idea.

5 Conclusions

This chapter provides the answers and conclusions to the research question and investigative questions. Key findings and conclusions are drawn from the research. Recommendations for the case company Kabinetti are also discussed as well as possibilities for further research on the topic. Authors reflection on her learning and overall experience is discussed.

5.1 Key Findings & Recommendations

This subchapter answers the research question of the thesis through the investigative questions. Key findings and conclusions are discussed as well. The research question of the thesis “How to increase sales through interior design retailers for storage solutions?” was split into investigative questions, that will be now addressed.

The first IQ of the thesis was: “What kind of competitive products do the main competitors in Finland have?”. After conducting a competitor analysis and interviewing the retailers, one can conclude there is a lot of competition in the furniture design industry. Interestingly companies producing sliding doors and storage solutions have very similar products. The key difference between these manufacturers is pricing. To conclude Kabinetti’s competitor’s products mainly differ in pricing and in product selection diversity.

The main competitive advantage some of the competitors have, is more variety in product selection and better social media marketing performance. One retailer interviewed mentioned that Kabinetti stands out from its competitors due to its high-quality products. Most retailers recognized Kabinetti’s products of their great quality. This factor is probably Kabinetti’s strongest competitive advantage.

Kabinetti’s main competitors in Finland have better social media marketing techniques and are more widely known and recognized as a brand. Kabinetti lacks in brand recognition and engagement with its customers on platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. Kabinetti should increase its activity and quality of content on these platforms as well as participate more in following ongoing trends. One retailer thought Kabinetti does not react fast enough to customer needs when it comes to producing new trendy items. The author recommends Kabinetti to create a solid social media marketing strategy in order to increase in brand awareness and ultimately increase sales.

The second IQ of this thesis was the following: “How should the storage solution systems be developed in the future? “. No one can foresee to the future, however after interviewing eight retailers of Kabinetti some conclusions and ideas can be drawn. Many retailers mentioned that they feel

Kabinetti could add more options to its product selection. The interviewees were looking for more bold and new trendy solutions. It was clear that the retailers would like to see ready-made closet solutions with luxurious effects such as lighting inside the closets. In addition, the designer programme RP-Designer should develop its image quality, according to the retailers. There were requests for developments of the RP-Designers images to 3D images to improve the quality. The current images in the RP-Designer programme seem to lack in quality, according to some of the retailers interviewed.

The third IQ was: "What are retailers looking to buy in the future?". After carefully listening and finding similar arising themes from the interviews made, it seems there is a declining demand for sliding doors. Hinged doors seem to be more popular according to the retailers. The retailers did recognize that sliding doors are still demanded, however, only for the entrance hall areas. Kabinetti could take this into consideration and perhaps start changing their production towards hinged doors and more bold colours and materials that have been requested by the retailers.

A few retailers were not happy with the design of the closet baskets as, they would let out things from the holes that are too wide. The closet baskets for storage have too big holes according to the retailers and should be developed, more functional baskets are needed, that will not let smaller items to fall. According to one retailer interviewed IKEA has better closet baskets. Kabinetti could consider development of the closet baskets to more functional ones that please the end consumers.

The research showed that several of the retailers thought Kabinetti's has set too high prices for its products. This may be one of the factors to consider changing in order to increase sales. In terms of quality all retailers were satisfied and convinced that Kabinetti's products are high of quality.

Finally, to answer the last IQ of the thesis "How can Kabinetti ensure to answer the buyers needs in the future?". Kabinetti should follow ongoing trends and react to them. Social Media is a great tool to find out what the end customers are looking for. By listening to the retailers Kabinetti can ensure to answer the customer needs better in the future.

5.2 Recommendations for future Research

This subchapter recognizes the opportunity for further research, as well as, acknowledging the limitations of the research.

Opportunities for future research exist. One aspect for further research could be in looking at international market opportunities for the case company and finding out what sort of products the big players in the furniture design industry manufacturing and selling. In addition, researching what is the future for sliding doors and storage solutions internationally. As well as, evaluating as assessing the market demand and developments for sliding doors, cabinets, and storage solutions internationally.

5.3 Reflections on thesis process

This thesis process was extremely insightful and an adventure to a new sector. The author gained a lot of knowledge and information about the furniture design industry. In addition, learning the case companies value chain and how different entities are connected in business-to-business sales and marketing.

The most challenging part of this thesis was part one, that consists of the theoretical framework of the research. Due to the topic having very little previous research it was difficult at times to develop and write the thesis. Finding relevant and reliable academic articles and books to read was also challenging and time consuming for the author. However, these skills of researching and finding suitable literature have been developed and improved.

The second part of the thesis was easier for the author. Especially, holding the interviews was extremely interesting for the author and this was a great experience. The findings gained from the interview held were the most vital ones for this research. The most crucial and relevant information and answers for this thesis was gained through interviewing the retailers. These interviews helped the author to answer and provide recommendations for the case company, Kabinetti.

Finally, the thesis turned out way better than the author could have expected. The author learned a lot and had to challenge herself multiple times during this research process. New skills and learnings were made that will be extremely valuable in the future.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview guide in Finnish

VAHVUUDET, HEIKKOUEDET JA KEHITTÄMINEN

- Mitkä ovat mielestäsi Kabinetti-tuotteiden vahvuudet?
- Mitkä ovat mielestäsi Kabinetti-tuotteiden heikkoudet?
- Miten Kabinetti-tuotteiden laatu voisi mielestäsi kehittyä tulevaisuudessa?
 - liukuovet
 - kaapistot
 - asennettavuus
- Mitä palveluita toivoisit Kabinetin lisäävän tuotteisiinsa tulevaisuudessa?
 - Työmaalogistiikka, asennuspalvelut, oma jakeluauto, muuta?

TUOTEVALIKOMA

- Miten toivoisit Kabinetti-tuotevalikoiman kehittyvän seuraavan viiden vuoden aikana?
- Mitä uusia tuotteita tai tuotelinjoja toivoisit näkeväsi Kabinetin valikoimassa tulevaisuudessa? 1=ei kiinnostava; 5=erittäin kiinnostava

○ pocket door	1 2 3 4 5
○ ladon ovi	1 2 3 4 5
○ huonekalumaiset runkoratkaisut	1 2 3 4 5
(kirjahyllyt, tv-tasot, yöpöydät, laatikostot)	
○ saranaovelliset kaapit	1 2 3 4 5
○ kiinteät jakoseinät	1 2 3 4 5
○ Taitto-ovet	1 2 3 4 5
○ Muuta? _____	
- Miten Kabinetti-tuotteet eroavat kilpailijoiden vastaavista tuotteista?
- Miten Kabinetti-tuotteet voivat mielestäsi parhaiten vastata tulevaisuuden **sisustustrendien** muutoksiin?
- Miten Kabinetti-tuotteet voivat mielestäsi parhaiten vastata tulevaisuuden **asiakastarpeiden** muutoksiin?

MARKKINOINTI JA BRÄNDI

- Miten Kabinetti-tuotteiden markkinointi ja brändäys voisi mielestäsi kehittyä tulevaisuudessa?
- Miten arvioisit Kabinetti-myymälämalleja, tuote-esitteitä ja muuta myyntimateriaalia?
- Mitä Some-markkinoinnin kanavia toivoisitte Kabinetti-tuotteiden käyttävän?
- Näkyykö Kabinetti-brändi teidän nykyisessä markkinoinnissa?
 - Jos ei, miksi ei?
- Näkyykö Kabinetti-brändi teidän nykyisessä sosiaalisen median markkinoinnissa?
 - Jos ei, miksi ei?
- Millä tavoin Kabinetti.fi tuotteet voisivat erottua muista vastaavista some-markkinoinnissa?

MYynti

- Mitä markkinatilanteen muutoksia näette Kabinetti-tuotteiden kohdalla?
 - Miten Kabinetti-tuotteet voivat mielestäsi parhaiten vastata tulevaisuuden markkinatilanteen muutoksiin?
- Miten Kabinetti-tuotteiden asiakaspalvelu ja -tuki voivat mielestäsi kehittyä tulevaisuudessa?
- Löydätkö tarvitsemasi tekniset tiedot helposti?
- Löydätkö hinnat helposti?
- Miten parantaisit Kabinetti-tuotteiden myyntityökaluja tulevaisuudessa (RP-designer)?
- Mitä teknologisia edistysaskeleita Kabinetti-tuotteisiin voisi soveltaa tulevaisuudessa?
 - Virtual reality, nettikauppa yms.
- Mitä muita näkökulmia tai ehdotuksia sinulla on Kabinetti-tuoteperheen kehittämiseksi tulevaisuudessa?

YMPÄRISTÖYSTÄVÄLLISYYS

- Miten Kabinetti voisi vähentää tuotteidensa pakkausmateriaalien ympäristövaikutusta?
 - Pakkausmateriaalien kierrätettävyys?
 - Muovin vähentäminen?
- Miten Kabinetti voisi vähentää tuotteidensa kuljetuksesta aiheutuvia ympäristövaikutusta?
 - Hiilineutraalit jakelut?
- Kaipaatteko ympäristösertifikaatteja Kabinetti-tuotteille?

Appendix 2. Interview guide in English

Strengths, weaknesses, and innovation

- What do you consider to be the core strengths of Kabinetti products?
- What do you consider to be the weaknesses of Kabinetti products?
- How could Kabinetti improve the quality of its products in the future?
- (E.g., Sliding doors, cabinets, installation)
- What additional services would you like Kabinetti to develop?

(E.g., Installation services, personal delivery etc.)

Product selection

How would you like Kabinetti to develop its products in the next following years?

What type of new products would you like to see in Kabinetti product collection? **1=not interesting; 5= extremely interesting**

- Pocket doors
- Barn doors
- Tv stand, nightstand, drawers
- Cabinets with hinged doors
- Partition walls
- Folding doors
- Something else?
- How do Kabinetti products differ from the competitors products?
- How could Kabinetti best respond to new interior design trends?
- How could Kabinetti best respond to changing consumer needs?

Marketing and Brand

- In your opinion, how could Kabinetti branding and marketing be improved?
- How do you find Kabinetti's sales materials?
- What social media platforms would you like to see Kabinetti be part of?
- Is Kabinetti brand visible in your current marketing activities?
If not, why?
- Is Kabinetti brand visible in your current social media marketing?
If not, why?
- How could Kabinetti stand out from other similar companies in social media?

Sales

- What changes do you see in the demand for Kabinetti products in the furniture design markets?
 - How can Kabinetti products adapt to future needs and demands?
- How can Kabinetti enhance and improve its customer service and support?
- Do you find the necessary technical information easily?
- Do you find the prices of the products easily?
- How would you like to see the sales tools improve in the future? (RP Designer specifically)
- What technological improvements could Kabinetti adapt to its products and services in the future?
 - E.g., Virtual reality, online store
- Do you have more suggestions how Kabinetti could improve its product family in the future?

Sustainability

- How could Kabinetti reduce the environmental impact of its product packaging in the future?
 - Recycled packaging materials?
 - Reducing plastic?
- How could Kabinetti reduce the emissions resulted from its product deliveries?
- Do you consider environmental certifications important for Kabinetti?