TECHNOLOGY-MEDIATED INTEGRATION OF SALES AND MARKETING

Jyväskylä University
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ABSTRACT

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The sales-marketing interface in organisational settings is fragmented, inefficient, distant, and full of mistrust, which poses continuous challenges to operation alignment and leads to missed opportunities for improved profitability and performance. The incentives for enhancing collaboration between sales and marketing are increasing, as recent research indicates that a well-functioning interface can help organisations sidestep several challenges, such as resource inefficiency, budget misalignment, and data silos. However, persistent issues, including ineffective communication, high power distances, restricted information exchange, unclear roles, and lack of shared goals and budgets, highlight the need for a collaborative environment between these functions, which could be fostered by implementing technological solutions to streamline evolving operations.

    This thesis explored how diverse digital technologies impact the sales-marketing interface and whether these technologies influence marketing and sales employees' roles and shared responsibilities. Due to the narrow existing research domain, a qualitative approach was employed, with primary data collected through interviews with marketing and sales directors and managers to gain thorough insights and perspectives from both sides. The theoretical framework of the research guided the formation of interview questions, data analysis, and interpretation of the research findings.

    The qualitative analysis of interview data shows that digital technologies have significantly enhanced the integration and collaboration between marketing and sales teams. The findings highlight that several digital tools and systems have facilitated key improvements, confirming several existing findings regarding technology's role as an integrating mechanism in sales-marketing collaboration while offering new insights into trust building and common goal formation through data and measurability. In addition, the research introduces new perspectives and expands the current understanding of technology's impact on employee performance, task visibility and role clarity, and feedback diversity and transparency.

Keywords
    Sales-marketing interface, Cross-functional collaboration, Cross-functional integration, Technology integration, Digital tools

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TIIVISTELMÄ

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Myynnin ja markkinoinnin rajapinta on pirstoutunut, tehoton, etäinen ja täynnä epäluottamusta. Tämä asettaa haasteita yritysten toimintojen yhtenäistämiselle, heikentäen yritysten yleistä suorituskykyä. Viimeisimmät tutkimukset osoittavat, että toimiva myynnin ja markkinoinnin rajapinta voi auttaa yrityksiä välttämään erilaisia haasteita, kuten resurssien tehottomuutta, budjettien vääristymistä ja tietojen eriytymistä. Digitaalisten alustojen uskotaan tehostavan tätä rajapintaa, luomalla uusia yhteistyöprosesseja myynti- ja markkinointitoimintojen välille.

Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli selvittää, kuinka erilaiset digitaaliset teknologiat vaikuttavat myynnin ja markkinoinnin rajapintaan, sekä kuvata, miten nämä teknologiat vaikuttavat myynnin ja markkinoinnin työntekijöiden rooleihin ja vastuunjakoon. Tutkimuksessa käytettiin laadullista lähestymistapaa ja aineisto kerättiin haastattelemalla myynti- ja markkinointijohtajia molemminpuolisten näkemyksien taltioimiseksi. Tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys ohjasi haastattelukysymysten muotoilua, aineiston analysointia ja tutkimustulosten tulkintaa.

Tutkimustulokset osoittavat, että digitaaliset teknologiat ovat merkittävästi parantaneet myynti- ja markkinointitiimien integraatiota ja yhteistyötä. Tulokset korostavat, että useat digitaaliset työkalut ja järjestelmät ovat helpottaneet myynnin ja markkinoinnin yhteisiä prosesseja. Tämä vahvistaa aikaisempia havaintoja teknologian roolista integroivana mekanismina myynnin ja markkinoinnin yhteistyössä. Lisäksi tutkimus tuo uusia näkökulmia ja laajentaa nykyistä ymmärrystä teknologian vaikutuksista muun muassa työntekijöiden suorituskykyyn ja tiimien väliseen palautteenantokulttuuriin sekä luottamuksen rakentamiseen ja yhteisten tavoitteiden muodostumiseen datan ja mitattavuuden avulla.

Asiasanat
Myynnin ja markkinoinnin rajapinta, Teknologiaintegraatio, Digitaaliset alustat, Digitaaliset järjestelmät

Säilytyspaikka
Jyväskylän Yliopiston Kirjasto

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1   INTRODUCTION

The sales-marketing interface in organisational settings is currently characterised as fragmented, inefficient, distant, and full of mistrust (Dewsnap & Jobber, 2000). The dynamics of this relationship have posed continuous challenges, and researchers have spent decades analysing the perceptions of the relationship and the root causes for conflict (Biemans et al., 2022; Cespedes, 1993; Dewsnap & Jobber, 2000; Hauer et al., 2021; Kotler et al., 2006). While challenges prevail, Chernetsky et al. (2022) highlight that developing the sales-marketing interface holds immense potential for organisations and their stakeholders. This potential is believed to originate from the complementary nature of the relationship between marketing and sales, which, if leveraged correctly, can help streamline the critical operations of customer-facing marketing and sales functions (Biemans et al., 2022; Chernetsky et al., 2022; Kotler et al., 2006).

Organisations that have succeeded in enhancing the collaboration between marketing and sales have, for instance, reported enhanced overall business performance and increased revenue (Chernetsky et al., 2022; Hauer et al., 2021; Kotler et al., 2006; Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy, 2007; Rouziès et al., 2005). Moreover, enhancing the collaboration between marketing and sales has also been proven to help companies sidestep significant challenges, such as wasted resources, budget misalignment and data silos (Biemans et al., 2022). While these advantages incentivise companies to improve the sales-marketing interface, many are discouraged by the current wide-ranging obstacles.

The current obstacles in the sales-marketing interface arise from the absence of effective two-way communication, communication barriers due to high-power distances, limited sharing of market-based information, poor understanding of each other's roles, low interest in common strategy formation, absence of shared goals and budgets, and the lack of critical feedback, to name a few (Biemans et al., 2022; Chernetsky et al., 2022). These challenges underscore the need to address organisational, managerial, and cultural barriers and cultivate a collaborative environment between marketing and sales functions through innovative solutions (Biemans et al., 2022). Kotler et al. (2006) further stress that addressing these issues is vital for overall organisational success.

As traditional marketing and sales approaches evolve, implementing technological solutions is believed to hold the potential to streamline marketing and sales operations (Hauer et al., 2021). Technological solutions can be considered catalysts for new ways of working and forming new collaborative processes between sales and marketing functions (Huang & Rust, 2021). However, currently, insufficient evidence supports this, as digital tools and systems have not been fully adopted or analysed in sales-marketing coordination (Biemans et al., 2022).

The sales-marketing interface literature to date heavily focuses on the wide-ranging challenges and the current perceptions of the relationship between marketing and sales (Biemans et al., 2022; Cespedes, 1993; Chernetsky et al., 2022; Dewsnap & Jobber, 2000; Hauer et al., 2021; Kotler et al., 2006). In contrast, only a few studies have explored the effects of facilitating forces, such as digital technologies, on the relationship. In a recent extensive literature review covering 25 years of sales-marketing interface research, Biemans et al. (2022, p.9) outline the role of technology among four critical factors that need to be further explored, stating that "future research should focus on untangling the positive and negative effects of digital tools on sales-marketing interactions and perceptions."

Following the recommendations by Biemans et al. (2022), this research will examine the impact of technology on the sales-marketing interface. Since the identified research gap is extensive, this study aims to map the current situation and explore the topic deeper. The research will begin by examining the sales-marketing interface domain and the role of technology in marketing and sales processes and provide an overview of the academic literature to date. An in-depth understanding of the sales-marketing interface will serve as the groundwork for the researcher to explore the impact of new mediators on the research phenomena through empirical research.

1.1   Research question and approach

The research questions are drawn from the research problem, and they consist of a main research question and a secondary research question:

Q1: How do diverse digital technologies impact the sales-marketing interface?

Q2: How do digital technologies modify marketing and sales employees' collective roles and shared responsibilities?

The empirical study of the research is hoped to yield valuable insights that contribute to the existing research gap. Following the procedures recommended by Biemans et al. (2022), this research will adopt a qualitative method as the current research on the topic is limited and lacks a solid foundation. In addition, the research utilises the interview method, and interviews will be conducted with both marketing and sales managers or directors to gain thorough insights from both sides.

The thesis is divided into five sections, including the introduction, theory, data and methodology, findings, and conclusions chapter. The introduction chapter discusses the research topic and gap, after which the research questions are presented. The theory chapter introduces key concepts and discusses the literature on the sales-marketing interface and technology's role in the sales-marketing interface. The methodology chapter discusses the data collection and analysis in detail. Lastly, the findings section presents and illustrates the research findings, followed by the conclusion chapter, which provides theoretical and managerial conclusions and recommendations for future research.

Artificial intelligence applications such as Grammarly and ChatGPT were used in the research to polish the study's structure, tone, and grammar. Microsoft Teams' live transcription feature was additionally used to gain text transcripts from research interviews.

2 THEORY

2.1 Key Concepts

Several terms and concepts have been used to describe the relationship between marketing and sales (Kotler et al., 2006). Terms such as interface, integration, cooperation, collaboration, interaction, and alignment are often used interchangeably (Chernetsky et al., 2022).

Dewsnap and Jobber (2000, p. 1) were the first to introduce the term sales-marketing interface, which they defined as "collaboration, measured in terms of mutual understanding, team working and shared corporate vision". The term sales-marketing interface has since become relatively established and is, to date, one of the most used terms in academic literature when referring to the phenomena (Chernetsky et al., 2022). Five years later, Rouziès et al. (2005, p. 3) formulated a similar definition: "sales-marketing interface is the extent to which activities carried out by the two functions are supportive of each other". A year later, Dawes and Massey (2006, p. 3) offer a new perspective and characterise the sales-marketing interface as "perceived sales-marketing relationship effectiveness". This definition considers the quality of the sales-marketing relationship in terms of effectiveness.

A decade later, Malshe et al. (2017, p. 145) define the sales-marketing interface as "understanding the interdependence between sales and marketing in order to develop and implement marketing strategies successfully." This definition first introduced the term interdependence. The most recent definition to date is by Biemans (2023, p. 2), which presents a two-part definition stating that the "sales-marketing interface focuses on (1) the interactions between sales and marketing personnel and (2) their perceptions of each other and their relationship." All the definitions mentioned above bring their diverging interpretations to the term. Table 1 compiles definitions for the sales-marketing interface.

Table 1 Definitions for the sales-marketing interface

Representative research	Definition
Dewsnap and Jobber, 2000, p. 1	"Sales-marketing interface is collaboration, measured in terms of mutual understanding, team working and shared corporate vision."
Rouziès et al., 2005, p. 3	"Sales-marketing interface is the extent to which activities carried out by the two functions are supportive of each other."
Dawes & Massey, 2006, p. 3	"Perceived sales-marketing relationship effectiveness."
Malshe et al., 2017, p. 145	Sales-marketing interface is to "understand the interdependence between sales and marketing in order to successfully develop and implement marketing strategies".
Beimans, 2023, p. 2	"Sales-marketing interface focuses on (1) the interactions between sales and marketing personnel and (2) their perceptions of each other and their relationship."

This research follows the original definition of the sales-marketing interface presented by Dewsnap and Jobber (2000). The definition is well-rounded and allows various interpretations and perceptions to develop around the concept without overly guiding or limiting the researcher's abilities.

2.2 Extant research on the sales-marketing interface

There is a consensus that the relationship between sales and marketing functions is complementary, reinforcing the thought that the positive success of one function positively influences the other and vice versa (Dewsnap & Jobber, 2000). This interdependence is thought to lead to close cooperation and tight interdepartmental relationships; however, research indicates that instead, numerous challenges exist within the relationship (Biemans et al., 2022; Chernetsky et al., 2022; Kotler et al., 2006; Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy, 2007; Rouziès et al., 2005).

In recent years, the process of streamlining the sales-marketing interface has gained much attention, as studies show that interdepartmental relationships significantly impact business performance (Biemans et al., 2022; Chernetsky et al., 2022; Hauer et al., 2021; Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy, 2007; Rouziès et al., 2005). While improving all interdepartmental relationships within an

organisation can be deemed beneficial, the sales-marketing interface is especially critical due to the direct financial impact of these functions (Chernetsky et al., 2022). Parallel research by Biemans et al. (2022) highlights that a poorly coordinated sales-marketing interface could lead to wasted resources caused by overlapping work efforts, budget misalignment, and data silos. The research goes on to state that the combined impact of these challenges can have serious adverse effects on company prosperity.

Enhancing the sales-marketing interface enables companies to sidestep significant challenges while fostering additional advantages (Biemans et al., 2022). Research by Kotler et al. (2006) concludes that enhancing the relationship between marketing and sales brings advantages to both teams, the organisation, and its stakeholders. Additionally, Arnett et al. (2021) state that increased collaborative effort, such as the exchange of insights and feedback, have the potential to create a smooth customer journey from beginning to end. Research by Biemans et al. (2022) also discovered that close collaboration could help eliminate blind spots and uncertainties. Research also suggests highly integrated marketing and sales teams can forecast and react to changing market demands (Hauer et al., 2021). While these advantages incentivise companies to enhance the sales-marketing interface, many are discouraged by the current wide-ranging obstacles.

Exploring the differential characteristics of sales and marketing functions can be insightful and offer a contextual background that helps understand the wide-ranging challenges and potential integrating mechanisms. A synthesis of research on the sales-marketing interface by Chernetsky et al. (2022) reviews 89 articles covering 37 years. This research thoroughly explores the sales-marketing interface domain and categorises the themes emerging in the research into four categories. The research has categorised the themes as follows: (1) culture and processes, (2) power and structure, (3) human capital, and (4) interpersonal relationships. This categorisation and thematisation will be used and examined in detail in the following sections.

2.2.1   Culture and process

Several research in the sales-marketing interface domain have identified cultural and process differences between functions as a leading cause of conflict (Beverland et al., 2006; Hughes et al., 2012; Kotler et al., 2006; Rouziès et al., 2005). According to Beverland et al. (2006), functions develop distinct internal cultures that mirror their values, processes, and operational principles. While these internal cultures can benefit functions by guiding performance and creating unity, they can simultaneously create a lack of relatability towards other organisational functions and their distinct cultures (Beverland et al., 2006). Kotler et al. (2006) stress that teams may grow distant from one another due to separate cultures, building figurative walls that discourage cooperation and communication and promote distrust. This, in turn, is problematic for several reasons. Firstly, creating and implementing a sustainable feedback culture in a

divided organisational environment can be challenging (Beverland et al., 2006). Secondly, Rouziès et al. (2005) argue that if cultural norms do not facilitate information sharing or encourage teams to adapt their ways to enable cooperation, integration between teams is virtually impossible.

Organisations are still learning how to harness the benefits of internal cultures without suffering from the disadvantages. Beverland et al. (2006) examine the different characteristics of marketing and sales cultures, arguing that a crossover of cultures could bring closer interdepartmental cooperation. The authors state that a conjoining organisational culture could potentially bridge subcultures and provide the necessary force to foster cooperation. Hughes et al. (2012) highlight that today's successful organisations are defined by their ability to navigate and manage diverse cultural and subcultural contexts effectively. Beverland et al. (2006) further stress that an organisational culture that encourages open two-way communication and shared values, beliefs, and goals provides an organisation with better opportunities to advance collaboration. However, one could argue that demanding an organisational culture to align with the requirements of the sales-marketing interface may not always be feasible from the perspective of the rest of the organisation. Therefore, finding ways to mitigate the individual challenges stemming from subcultural division is essential.

In addition to organisational culture, national culture plays a pivotal role in shaping the sales-marketing interface. According to Chernetsky et al. (2022), national cultures characterised by low individualism and large power distances can be reflected in the organisation's operations and appear as a lack of active two-way communication. The authors further highlight that certain authoritarian management styles promote competition among colleagues and incentivise employees to avoid cooperation. Consequently, this can present challenges when attempting to enhance marketing-sales collaboration in such circumstances. According to Beverland et al. (2006), when the influence and impact of national culture are strongly visible on the organisational level, modifying individual processes independently from the prevailing cultural norms becomes challenging.

In summary, culture and process-related challenges in the sales-marketing interface are caused by an absence of shared organisational culture, lack of relatability towards other functions, communication barriers and inefficient two-way communication, lack of trust, absence of a feedback culture, promotion of internal competition among employees, and poor overall coordination. However, the literature also suggests that the discussed challenges can serve as an integrating mechanism if their effects can be mitigated.

2.2.2 Power and structure

Scholars such as Cespedes (1993), Dewsnap and Jobber (2000), Kotler et al. (2006), and Rouziès et al. (2005) have emphasised the significance of the organisational structure, line and top management involvement, and the composition of sales and marketing teams on the sales-marketing interface. According to Rouziès and

Hulland (2014), the organisation and its structure define several guidelines and principles for functions, including determining common rules, roles and obligations. The organisational structure can also affect the company's internal equality and factors related to fairness and inclusion, which are linked to strongly influencing interdepartmental collaboration (Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy, 2007).

Kotler et al. (2006) state that the organisational structure plays a key role in determining whether it promotes equality among employees and functions or enables inequality and discrimination. On a functional level, equality is essential, as Rouziès and Hulland (2014) argue that marketing and sales must perceive each other as equals to collaborate effectively and voluntarily. However, due to various internal processes, inequality may occur within an organisation without being noticed. Kotler et al. (2006) state that when an organisation allocates additional resources, such as budget, access to training, and knowledge transfer, to one function over another, it essentially rewards that function with greater authority and power. This can lead to perceived status differences within the business environment. Additionally, this can foster feelings of unfairness and coercion, leading to negative biases and general dislike toward each other (Rouziès & Hulland, 2014). The unequal distribution of power and perceived status escalates conflict and fosters distrust within the sales-marketing interface (Kotler et al., 2006).

In response to this issue, Beverland et al. (2006) suggest that line managers should be responsible for eliminating stigmas, harmful stereotypes, and status barriers between functions. On the other hand, research by Biemans et al. (2022) states that organisations should instead focus on providing similar resources and knowledge for all functions, with particular emphasis on collaborative functions. Additionally, Dewsnap & Jobber (2000) suggest that organisations should administer an equally strategic voice and influence for all functions. Whether the responsibility lies with management, or the organisation remains to be determined.

Chernetsky et al. (2022) also raise additional power and structure dynamics challenges, highlighting that employees rarely can influence the organisational structure or processes even when they recognise shortcomings or suggestions for improvement. Instead, these structural updates and changes must be initiated from the top down, resulting in the potential for employees' opinions and perspectives to be immediately overshadowed (Rouziès et al., 2005). This lack of employee influence in decision-making is also referred to as centralisation, and Dewsnap and Jobber (2000) argue that centralisation stands in the way of marketing and sales resolving common conflicts and improving cooperation. According to Rouziès et al. (2005), centralisation is also linked to reduced connectedness and tension, whereas a de-centralised system is linked to increasing cross-functional communication and resource exchange.

Liaison units between sales and marketing have been established to respond to organisational structure-related challenges (Cespedes, 1993). Liaison roles, such as key account managers, trade and field marketers, strategic

marketers, and strategic sales managers, first and foremost assist in the flow of information from one function to another (Chernetsky et al., 2022). Additionally, Cespedes (1993) stresses that liaison units operate beyond the traditional sales and marketing borders while also signalling both marketing and sales functions that a severe need for improved collaboration is needed. However, if the integration of these units into current organisational structures and processes is not seamless, their ability to streamline operations diminishes (Biemans, 2023). In addition, implementing liaison units increases costs and therefore is not feasible for all organisations (Rouziès et al., 2005). Finally, while these units offer valuable contributions, it is important to note that they may not comprehensively address all the mentioned power and structure-related challenges. Therefore, seeking versatile solutions and facilitators to these challenges can prove beneficial.

In summary, power and structure challenges in the sales-marketing interface are caused by unequal distribution of power and resources, favouring one function over another, inadequate management of functions and function collaboration, lack of trust, conflict, and disadvantageous organisational structures.

2.2.3 Human capital

Themes such as role clarity, training, joint projects, goals, and rewards are related to human capital according to the categorisation by Chernetsky et al. (2022) and their impact on the sales-marketing interface is discussed in the following paragraphs. Firstly, the differences between marketing and sales functions are often apparent; however, according to Kotler et al. (2006), the roles and responsibilities of the employees in these functions can be unclear and vary significantly across organisations. For instance, some organisations outsource several sales and marketing processes, leading to potential confusion among team members about each other's roles and responsibilities. Kotler et al. (2006) additionally state that larger companies with complex organisational structures and high employee turnover often experience an increased absence of role clarity.

Job clarity and role clarity are also referred to as formalisation. Formalisation is the extent to which a company effectively determines the boundaries and scope of each organisational position. (Dewsnap & Jobber, 2000). Several research (Biemans et al., 2022; Dewsnap & Jobber, 2000; Rouziès et al., 2005) highlight that higher levels of formalisation can enhance employees' collaboration and reduce ambiguity, increasing integration among teams. According to Cespedes (1993), misunderstandings and disputes related to overlapping duties are minimised when employees are familiar with their own, each other's, and collective responsibilities. Furthermore, formalisation can improve information flow and lead to more accurate and structured information exchanges (Rouziès et al., 2005). This, in turn, helps create a more positive workplace atmosphere and enables teams to work together more cohesively towards common goals (Dewsnap & Jobber, 2000).

Job rotations have been introduced as a partial solution to some human capital-related sales-marketing interface challenges (Rouziès et al., 2005). Job rotations can be implemented for both employees and managers with the primary intention of providing both a better understanding of the counterpart's activities (Biemans et al., 2022). In addition, job rotations can enhance cross-functional communication by lowering the barriers to interaction as employees become more acquainted with each other (Rouziès et al., 2005). Scholars such as Cespedes (1993) believe short job rotations are exceedingly beneficial for sales and marketing employees. Cespedes argues that especially marketers could benefit from field exposure after embarking on a new industry or organisation. However, on the flip side, job rotations entail opportunity costs of the trade-off as proficient employees need to be transferred to new tasks where their performance may not match the level achieved in their original roles (Rouziès et al., 2005).

Additionally, the differences between marketing and sales can drive collaboration further apart, especially if these differences are translated into diverging team objectives and goals. Rouziès et al. (2005) have long urged organisations to acknowledge the influence of goals and rewards as mechanisms affecting interdepartmental behaviour and integration. Similarly, Beverland et al. (2006) point out that goals guide functions' processes and operational principles, and they have the power to bring teams together or drive them apart. According to Sleep et al. (2018), when reward-based goals between marketing and sales differ substantially, they can incentivise functions to focus on team-specific tasks rather than cooperation and collaboration. Therefore, the researchers argue that if an organisation utilises performance-based bonuses, observing how these goals affect the collaboration between marketing and sales is especially important.

To help alleviate these challenges, several research suggests that marketing and sales should, at least to some extent, link their objectives and goals together and align incentives (Chernetsky et al., 2022; Dewsnap & Jobber, 2000; Hauer et al., 2021; Rouziès et al., 2005). Additionally, Hauer et al. (2021) state that incentive alignment can bridge functions by predisposing two or more units to the same risks, costs, and performance benefits. Sleep et al. (2018) also argue that in addition to shared goals, joint projects and project rewards can help strengthen collaboration and build a sense of joint responsibility.

In summary, human capital challenges in the sales-marketing interface are caused by a lack of role clarity, job ambiguity, scarcity of shared projects, misalignment of goals and objectives, rewarding mechanisms that do not encourage collaboration, and the absence of shared risks between functions.

2.2.4   Interpersonal relationship

Effective communication and trust are both essential in shaping functional interdepartmental collaboration (Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy, 2007). The role of communication and the different dimensions of communication have been heavily researched in the sales-marketing interface domain, and several studies show that effective communication fosters trust and respect among functions and

helps break down departmental walls (Arnett et al., 2021; Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy, 2007; Malshe et al., 2017). The frequency and quality of communication have also been linked to improving trust (Beverland et al., 2006; Kotler et al., 2006). However, Rouziès et al. (2005) argue that while communication is primarily beneficial for sales-marketing collaboration, in certain situations, overcommunicating can impact employees' performance and eat away from other responsibilities. As a result, the authors argue that the quality of communication is far more critical than the quantity of communication.

The communication between marketing and sales can primarily be formal or informal. Formal communication refers to exchanging business emails, reports, market intelligence, weekly or bi-weekly meetings, and anything happening on a reoccurring basis or requiring planning (Arnett et al., 2021). Informal communication, on the other hand, is unplanned and spontaneous. According to Rouziès et al. (2005), formal and informal communication are necessary for the optimal integration of marketing and sales functions. The authors additionally argue that if teams face uncertainties, unstructured problems, or challenges regarding the dynamic of cooperation, these issues can be sorted out more efficiently using informal communication channels.

In addition to communication, understanding and accepting other functions' diverging orientations play a critical role in the sales-marketing interface. Specifically, these differences in orientation have historically contributed to several issues within the sales-marketing relationship (Kotler et al., 2006). According to Rouziès et al. (2005), some differences in orientation between sales and marketing surface from differential priorities and demanded skills and abilities from the employees within these functions. Le Meunier-FitzHugh and Piercy (2007) further point out that employees' strategic visions also differ substantially, where sales operate on a push-driven approach and focus on the short-term and in contrast, marketing takes a long-term approach and a more analytical and pull-driven strategy. In addition to short-term versus long-term orientation, Rouziès et al. (2005) raise customer versus product, field versus office, personal relationship versus analysis, and results versus process as defining orientations which impact collaboration and coordination.

Lastly, the significance of trust has been examined, and research shows that when sufficient trust exists among departments, it becomes easier for functions to accept and respect the decisions, recommendations, and strategies of the opposite function (Beverland et al., 2006; Kotler et al., 2006). According to Beverland et al. (2006), trust formation can be influenced by several processes; all the discussed topics and challenges directly or indirectly affect trust between marketing and sales functions.

In summary, interpersonal capabilities-related challenges in the sales-marketing interface are caused by differences in perception and orientation, communication shortcomings, and insufficient or total lack of trust.

2.3 Extant research on the role of technology in the marketing-sales interface

For many organisations, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the introduction of new technology and modified several previous processes to take place in the digital environment (Lauzi et al., 2023). This also happened to marketing and sales teams, and both functions adopted new digital tools to enable business continuity in the digital environment. Marketing and sales also adopted common technology; however, according to Biemans (2023), the use of increased technology and its effect on the sales-marketing interface still needs to be explored.

Sales-marketing interface literature to date supports the conception that technology could improve sales and marketing cooperation (Banerjee & Bhardwaj, 2019; Biemans et al., 2022; Dawes & Massey, 2006; Hauer et al., 2021; Huang & Rust, 2021). For example, Huang and Rust (2021) argue that technological solutions could be considered catalysts for new ways of working, which could help form new collaborative processes between sales and marketing. Similarly, Hauer et al. (2021) state that technological solutions could simplify and enhance collaboration by breaking down barriers between marketing and sales. Additionally, the introduction of shared platforms and tools could create a centralised space for both teams, leading to improved communication and project management. Banerjee and Bhardwaj (2019) go on to suggest that a centralised space would improve data sharing and assist in building shared and aligned strategies around common goals. On the other hand, it has also been speculated and suggested that various digital platforms could disrupt and reduce employee performance as they divert employees' attention away from their core duties (Aguenza, 2012).

In any case, traditional marketing and sales approaches are evolving, and to investigate what new perspectives technology brings to marketing and sales cooperation, it is meaningful to take a closer look at the various technologies used by marketing and sales. This approach aims to determine whether implementing technological solutions holds the potential to streamline marketing and sales operations. Technology encompasses various tools and systems within specific fields, with significant differences between the technology used in marketing and sales processes and those in industrial settings and factories. The scope of technology in different fields can also vary and include diverse elements and components. (Probert et al., 2013). As a result, it is critical to define and characterise what is encompassed under the broader concept of technology within the context of sales and marketing processes and this research. This study has identified various digital tools and systems with sales and marketing processes, which have been classified into five categories. The categories include technology utilised in (1) customer acquisition and relationship management, (2) sales process optimisation and enablement, (3) data-driven decision-making, (4)

collaboration and communication, and (5) conferences and meetings. These categories will be examined in detail in the following sections.

2.3.1 Technology in customer acquisition and relationship management

Several customer and buying processes have evolved and moved to a digital landscape, and as a result, a wide range of tools and platforms have surfaced to enable acquiring and managing customer relationships online (Steward et al., 2019). Marketing automation software and CRM software are among the most recognised platforms that offer these features.

Marketing automation software, as the name suggests, allows organisations to automate various marketing processes. Additionally, marketing automation systems enable lead nurturing through advanced features such as behavioural targeting and the administration of personalised content for different customer segments (Salesforce, n.d.). These features essentially make customer acquisitions more sophisticated while offering the ability to improve and advance the alignment between sales and marketing processes (Wiersema, 2013). To make use of marketing automation features, potential customers' contact information must first be gathered and recorded into the automation system through website contact forms (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016). Different convertible digital content can be used to entice customers to leave their contact information in exchange for customer guides, brochures, whitepapers, and more (Murphy, 2018). However, Järvinen and Taiminen (2016) highlight that the provided content should not be promotional but instead fulfil a customer's specific need or solve an issue they face to generate the desired results.

Marketing automation also benefits sales and marketing collaboration. It is believed to improve team integration and bring new opportunities to the mix (Mero et al., 2020; Wiersema, 2013). In addition, Järvinen and Taiminen (2016) found that integrating marketing automation and CRM systems into marketing and sales processes improves departmental efficiency and accelerates tasks for both teams by automating processes that previously required manual labour, such as lead transfers. The optimisation of the overall marketing and sales process has also reportedly led to a better connection between marketing and sales teams and increased transparency. Mero et al. (2022) additionally emphasise that while these processes can enhance collaboration, effective lead management requires initial collaboration between marketing and sales so that new processes can be seamlessly introduced and adopted.

Customer relationship management (CRM) technology, on the other hand, emerged in 1999, and it was initially created to improve performance and to allow sales, marketing, product and other professionals to accomplish tasks more efficiently and in coordination with each other (Rodriguez & Honeycutt, 2011). CRM software brings benefits and new features within marketing and sales reach, such as the ability to simplify repetitive processes and increase process transparency (Singh et al., 2019). Moreover, CRM software has changed how both

teams coordinate and utilise real-time customer data, as the collection and illustration of customer insights have become simpler.

According to Chang et al. (2010), CRM software has also integrated reporting and analytics dashboards between marketing and sales, improving coherency and process evaluation. The authors believe shared dashboards provide both teams with an up-to-date view of the status of activities while promoting data-driven decision-making. However, the authors simultaneously argue that how effectively marketing and sales employees adopt the system directly impacts the relationship between improved performance and CRM use. In recent research, Malshe and Krush (2020) found supporting evidence for this view as they discovered that both marketing and sales teams perceive the implementation and adoption of CRM software and its diverse features as challenging, affecting the usage of the software. The authors pointed out that introducing CRM software could cause resistance. This, in turn, could indicate that the benefits of CRM system integration generate organisational outcomes with a delay. Table 2 highlights the main findings about how technology influences customer acquisition and relationship management, as well as its effects on the collaboration between marketing and sales.

Table 2 Technology in customer acquisition and relationship management

Key Insights	Study
Marketing automation software helps automate marketing processes and enables lead nurturing through behavioural targeting and personalised content.	Salesforce, n.d.
Marketing automation can improve sales and marketing alignment and team integration and provide new opportunities.	Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016; Wiersema, 2013
CRM technology has enhanced performance and coordination among sales, marketing, and other professionals, simplifying repetitive processes and increasing transparency.	Rodriguez & Honeycutt, 2011; Singh et al., 2019
CRM software has changed how teams coordinate and utilize real-time customer data, integrating reporting and analytics dashboards for improved coherency and decision-making.	Chang et al., 2010
The integration of marketing automation and CRM systems into sales-marketing processes improves departmental efficiency and accelerates tasks.	Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016
Initial collaboration between marketing and sales is required to set up effective lead management.	Mero et al. 2022

2.3.2 Technology in sales process optimisation and enablement

Over the past two decades, sales processes have become more sophisticated, and many sales functions are utilising more technology to enable enhanced sales routines (Badrinarayanan et al., 2022). Technology that supports sales operations has also introduced new types of projects and areas of responsibility between sales and marketing. These types of technology initially aim to streamline sales

processes, offer a centralised space for sales materials, and allow customer data storage and handling (Lauzi et al., 2023). Sales enablement software is the most typical software that represents this technology category.

Peterson and Dover (2021, p.46) define sales enablement as a "cross-functional assimilation of content, processes, and technology that readies a firm to more productively assist the customer's journey". In simpler terms, sales enablement software is essentially a resource for sales employees, encompassing supportive information and assets from across the organisation (Lauzi et al., 2023). The increasing demand for sales support has led to the development of sales enablement software, which aims to assist and support sales procedures while ultimately enhancing efficiency and productivity (Peterson & Dover, 2021). Sales enablement software can be utilised for various processes, including training, onboarding and offboarding, reporting and analysis, content optimisation, and facilitating seamless sales encounters (Lauzi et al., 2023).

A study that explored sales enablement software used in a pharmaceutical setting found that when sales employees relied on software for data and information collection instead of traditional notes, the margin of error in the correctness of information decreased (Biemans, 2023). The study also found that sales employees perceived sharing digital information between different organisation units easier, which in turn improved the flow of information between sales and other units.

Sales enablement software is designed for interdepartmental collaboration, and the best results are obtained from close cooperation between multiple functions (Rapp & Beeler, 2021). Currently, the most significant pitfalls related to sales enablement implementation arise from poor training, a lack of a shared vision and strategy, and a lack of cross-functional coordination (Lauzi et al., 2023). The authors go on to argue that cross-functional coordination is especially crucial as, without it, sales cannot obtain knowledge and resource transfer from other functions, which is at the core of the software and its purpose. Especially marketing plays a critical role in supporting sales by supplying assets that can be integrated into sales enablement software. According to Didner (2018), the role of marketing in sales enablement involves fulfilling content needs, driving demand generation, working closely with sales to nurture prospects, and crafting convincing value propositions. However, the author argues that to align marketing and sales initiatives better, the marketing team support should instead focus on recognising marketing aspects that can be incorporated into sales conversations, assist sales in understanding the role and potential of technology in sales and marketing activities, and encourage the integration of sales and marketing tools. This demonstrates that even though introducing sales enablement software has made sales processes more efficient, marketing is still looking for its place (Didner, 2018). Additionally, there is still a long way to go before marketing and sales can take full advantage of this technology. Table 3 highlights the main findings about how technology influences sales process optimisation and enablement, as well as its effects on the collaboration between marketing and sales.

Table 3 Technology in sales process optimisation and enablement

Key Insights	Study
Digital tools decrease the margin of error in information correctness.	Biemans (2023)
Digital tools allow for easier sharing of digital information between different units, improving overall information flow.	Biemans (2023)
Results show enhanced efficiency and productivity in sales processes.	Peterson & Dover (2021)
Collaboration between multiple functions produces the best results for sales enablement software use.	Rapp & Beeler (2021)
Poor training, lack of a shared vision and strategy, and lack of cross-functional coordination are among current pitfalls.	Lauzi et al. (2023)
Cross-functional coordination is crucial for knowledge and resource transfer from other functions.	Lauzi et al. (2023)
Marketing's role includes fulfilling content needs, driving demand generation, nurturing prospects, and crafting value propositions.	Didner (2018)
Better alignment requires recognising marketing aspects in sales conversations, assisting sales in understanding technology's role and integrating sales and marketing tools.	Didner (2018)

2.3.3   Technology in data-driven decision making

Agag et al. (2024) argue that modern organisations must adopt data-driven processes and rely on data in decision-making to succeed in today's rapidly changing business environment. As a result, the number and use of digital platforms designed for data-driven decision-making, such as data analytics software, have steadily increased over the past decade. These tools supply insights through reports and predictions on customer behaviour, business trends and future business performance. (Cadden et al., 2023).

Business analytics software gathers essential business data on one platform, allowing for efficient data structuring, storage, and analysis (Huang et al., 2022). According to Agag et al. (2024), business analytics software has surfaced as a response to increased demands in the business landscape. The authors state that organisations need to deepen their understanding of customers to gain a competitive advantage as the number of competitors increases. Further, Hauer et al. (2021) argue that data and customer insights can help organisations distinguish themselves from the competition and improve customer targeting. In addition, Cadden et al. (2023) state that the effective use of data can allow organisations to present themselves more efficiently externally while providing metrics and tools to measure performance more accurately internally.

Data analytics software is currently being used for performance optimisation and decision-making in marketing and sales functions (Agag et al., 2024). The authors stress that the degree to which data is being used in organisations may differ substantially. Especially in marketing, the goal of data analytics processes is to convert vast amounts of unstructured data into valuable business and marketing insights that can help guide action and strategy (Cadden

et al., 2023). Table 4 highlights the main findings about how technology influences data-driven decision-making, as well as its effects on the collaboration between marketing and sales.

Table 4 Technology in data-driven decision making

Key Insights	Study
The use of digital platforms for data-driven decision-making has increased over the past decade, providing insights into customer behaviour and business performance.	Cadden et al., 2023
Business analytics software centralizes essential business data for efficient data structuring, storage, and analysis.	Huang et al., 2022
Data and customer insights from analytics software can help organizations distinguish themselves from competitors and improve customer targeting.	Hauer et al., 2021
Effective data use enables organizations to present themselves efficiently externally and measure performance accurately internally.	Cadden et al., 2023
Data analytics software optimizes performance and makes decisions in marketing and sales, converting unstructured data into actionable business insights.	Agag et al., 2024; Cadden et al., 2023

2.3.4 Technology in collaboration and communication

As mentioned earlier, with the COVID-19 pandemic, organisations had to adopt new technology and processes to support collaboration and communication digitally due to remote work restrictions and recommendations. The purpose of these different technologies was to transfer interaction and information sharing from the immediate environment into a digital environment. Organisations adopted or increased the usage of tools such as online workspaces and instant messaging platforms to assist team communication, project management, and document sharing (Biemans, 2023). This change aroused the interest of several researchers, and at this time, several studies were carried out investigating the impact of digital platforms on collaboration and cross-functional communication (Lal et al., 2023; Maurer et al., 2022; Morrison-Smith & Ruiz, 2020; Waizenegger et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2021). These studies produced somewhat divergent results regarding the effect of remote working via digital tools and platforms on cooperation and communication. We will begin by examining research that explores the impact of digital tools and platforms more broadly on cross-functional collaboration and communication. Then, we will compare these perspectives with research focusing solely on the effects of digital tools on collaboration and communication within the sales-marketing interface.

According to Waizenegger et al. (2020), the transition of collaboration and communication to digital platforms has significantly affected low-barrier ideation and conversation around ad-hoc tasks and division of responsibility. The individuals who participated in this study initially reported that this change

was negative as it required more preparation and planning to host and schedule conversations online versus on the corridor. However, after a short period of adaptation, the interviewees stated that conducting ad-hoc conversations digitally has, in fact, shaped these conversations to be more focused and purpose-driven, which has increased efficiency and collaboration. Similarly, Morrison-Smith and Ruiz (2020) found that working virtually increased employee autonomy and productivity while reducing time and space barriers, which led to enhanced cross-functional interaction. Finally, Maurer et al. (2022) found that digital platforms can increase network density and bring more people into an employee's communication network.

At the same time, several studies found adverse effects related to collaboration and communication resulting from remote work and the quick adoption of new technology. In a study focusing on information workers, Yang et al. (2021) found that the transition to remote work strongly impacted employees' collaboration networks, making them more static and siloed. The authors highlight that the shift to remote work, despite the vast adoption of technology, also reduced the number of communication bridges between different functions. As a result, these changes impacted employees' ability to obtain and share relevant insights across the whole network. A study by Lal et al. (2023) found that individual factors influence whether communication and cooperation increase, decrease, or remain the same due to the transition to technology and digital platforms. This could explain why several studies with similar bases have produced substantially different results. Research by Maurer et al. (2022) also highlights the influence of individual factors, such as virtual competence, on collaboration and communication fluency. Essentially, virtual competence can be described as one's ability to adapt one's activities and communication to the virtual environment. However, both studies conclude that these individual factors can be managed at the organisational level if the organisation remains aware of diverging needs (Lal et al., 2023; Maurer et al., 2022).

Studies that focused solely on the impact of technology in sales-marketing collaboration reported fewer drawbacks than ones focusing on general cross-functional cooperation. For example, Hauer et al. (2021) found that digital tools positively impacted sales-marketing cooperation and communication by softening the boundaries between departments. Additionally, a study by Biemans (2023) found that instant messaging platforms and especially chat features have improved timely information sharing between sales and marketing which in turn has enhanced sales-marketing alignment. Further, with the ability to receive quick insights and feedback from the counterpart team, decision-making has also become more efficient. Lastly, Arnett et al. (2021) found that communication via digital platforms has improved communication transparency as digital messages leave a trace of conversations and agreements as opposed to hallway conversations. This communication transparency has translated into more accurate knowledge exchange and improved conversation quality. Table 5 highlights the main findings about how technology influences collaboration and

communication, as well as its effects on the collaboration between marketing and sales.

Table 5 Technology in collaboration and communication

Key Insights	Study
Ad-hoc conversations have become more focused and purpose-driven, increasing efficiency and collaboration.	Waizenegger et al. (2020)
Digital platforms have increased network density and broadened communication networks.	Maurer et al. (2022)
Planning digital conversations requires more preparation and planning.	Waizenegger et al. (2020)
Negative findings show that collaboration networks became static and siloed, reducing communication bridges between functions ultimately impacting employees ability to share relevant insights.	Yang et al. (2021)
Individual factors influence the effectiveness of communication and cooperation, explaining varying results across studies.	Lal et al. (2023), Maurer et al. (2022)
Individual factors, such as virtual competence and fluency can be managed at the organizational level.	Lal et al. (2023), Maurer et al. (2022)
Digital tools softened boundaries between sales and marketing departments, improving cooperation and communication.	Hauer et al. (2021)
Instant messaging platforms improved timely information sharing between sales and marketing, enhancing alignment and decision-making.	Biemans (2023)
Digital platforms improved communication transparency, leading to more accurate knowledge exchange and improved conversation quality.	Arnett et al. (2021)

2.3.5 Technology in conferences and meetings

For many organisations, various platforms that enable virtual meetings between company employees, customers and partners play a key role in facilitating the smooth flow of information (Lojeski & Reilly, 2020). Different video calling and virtual meeting platforms allow hosting webinars and training sessions alongside video calls and virtual meetings (Biemans, 2023). For many international organisations, these platforms have enabled cross-border participation in shared meetings and events, bringing employees from different parts of the world closer together (Hacker et al., 2020).

Research focusing on the effects of videoconferencing platforms on sales-marketing collaboration has also found wide-ranging benefits of these tools. For example, Biemans (2023) reports that videoconferencing platforms enrich traditional meetings by allowing participants to share documents, hyperlinks, images, messages, and real-time project overviews with meeting participants to support ongoing discussion. Research by Hacker et al. (2020) also highlight that the ability to diverse functions in video conferencing platforms is extended to all participants instead of only participants being able to share at a physical meeting

room's common screen. According to the research, these features have had a positive impact on participants' overall engagement and information digestion.

One study found that when the world moved to remote conditions due to COVID-19, marketing employees felt they had a better understanding of the sales interface than ever before (Maurer et al., 2022). According to the research, since the sales meetings were moved to online video conferencing platforms, marketing could, therefore, participate in sales meetings with a lower threshold. Participation in joint meetings reportedly improved marketing employees' understanding of customers' needs while broadening the understanding of sales needs. Table 6 highlights the main findings about how technology influences conferences and meetings, as well as its effects on the collaboration between marketing and sales.

Table 6 Technology in conferences and meetings

Key Insights	Study
Various virtual meeting platforms facilitate the smooth flow of information.	Lojeski & Reilly, 2020
Videoconferencing platforms enrich traditional meetings by allowing participants to share documents, hyperlinks, images, messages, and real-time project overviews.	Biemans, 2023
Advanced meeting features have had a positive impact on participant engagement and information digestion.	Hacker et al. 2020
Virtual meeting increased marketing employees' understanding of sales interface due to lower threshold to participate in sales meetings.	Maurer et al., 2022
Participation in sales meetings improved marketing employees' understanding of customers' needs and sales needs.	Maurer et al., 2022

The mentioned digital platforms and tools mark the initial steps toward enhancing the collaboration between marketing and sales. However, as Malshe and Krush (2020) mention, digital platforms also cause resistance in users, which strongly impacts the results of technology implementation. Hauer et al. (2021) point out that the success of different platforms depends on users, emphasising again the critical role of organisational actions and strategies in supporting teams and individuals. The overarching challenges and opportunities brought by technology to sales and marketing processes are still under debate, and specifically, the impact of digital tools on sales-marketing coordination remains ambiguous.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

The research's theoretical framework built upon Chernetsky et al. (2022) categorisation of integrating mechanisms for the sales-marketing interface while

drawing from an extensive body of sales-marketing interface literature (Beverland et al., 2006; Dawes & Massey, 2006; Dewsnap & Jobber, 2000; Kotler et al., 2006; Malshe & Krush, 2020; Rouziès et al., 2005). The theoretical framework illustrates integrating mechanisms that affect the sales-marketing interface. Additionally, the framework illustrates moderator variables that influence or strengthen the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The moderator variables allow research to explore the role of technology as an integrating mechanism for the sales-marketing interface. The theoretical framework will guide the formulation of interview questions, data analysis, and organisation of the research findings. Figure 1 presents the theoretical framework.
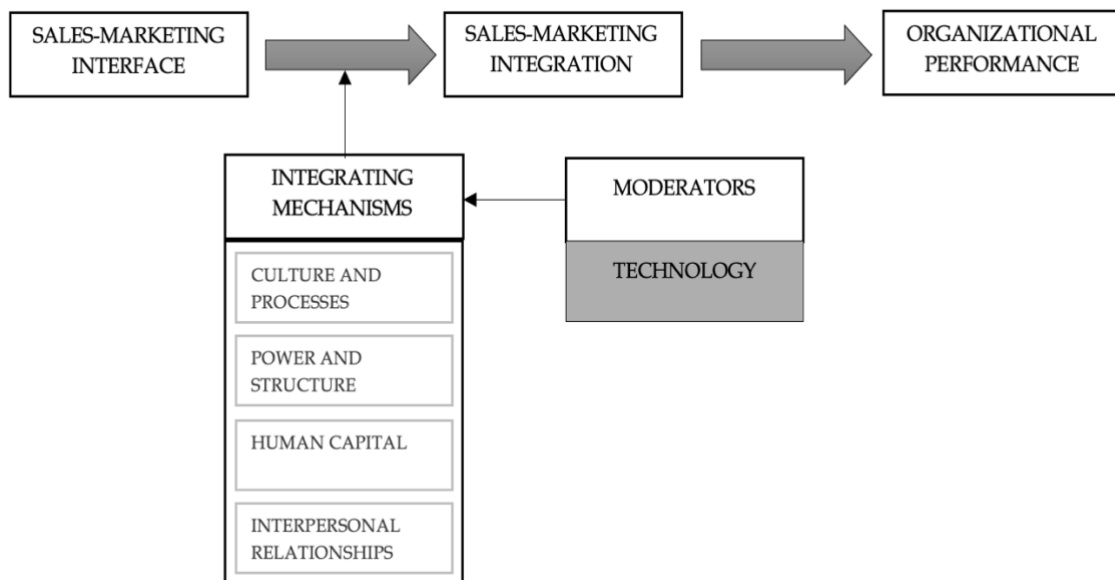

Figure 1 Theoretical framework

3 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The methodology chapter introduces the empirical studies' research design, data collection, and analysis method. According to Brinkmann (2013), the chapter on research methodology should aim to provide a detailed analysis of what the researcher has done and the justification for each decision. The rationale for each decision brings transparency to the empirical study, which helps uphold the integrity of the research (Kothari, 2004).

The literature review of the research domain acted as groundwork for the empirical study, providing background on the sales-marketing interface and its intricacies. The empirical study is conducted to find answers to the main research question: *How do diverse digital technologies impact the sales-marketing interface?* The research will simultaneously seek answers to the sub-question: *How do digital technologies change marketing and sales employees' collective roles and shared responsibilities?* The objective remains to identify any emerging opportunities technology brings to the sales-marketing interface to map the current situation and explore the prospects for the future.

3.1 Research approach

When conducting scientific research, the researcher typically begins by defining the research question and objectives for the empirical study, after which the most suitable design, method and data collection process can be determined (Creswell, 2014). An appropriate method helps the researcher obtain the correct data and insights from their study, whereas an unfit method can leave the study and its results vague or scarce (Kothari, 2004). Quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods approaches are designed to provide diverging results, each suitable for a specific purpose (Hirsjärvi et al., 2007). According to Creswell (2014), the mixed method includes quantitative and qualitative elements, and it is especially

beneficial in situations where neither approach alone can answer the research problem.

Following the procedures recommended by Biemans et al. (2022), this research will adopt a qualitative method as the current research domain remains narrow and lacks a solid foundation. This research aims to expand the foundations of existing research and explore the research phenomena more deeply. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research methods are well-suited for exploring depth, whereas quantitative methods are more effective when searching for breadth. As a result, the desired depth for this empirical study could be challenging to achieve through quantitative means. In addition, Creswell (2014) states that as the quantitative methods aim to generalise certain phenomena and test theories, a significant theory base and explanatory studies need to exist on which to build quantitative research. However, when such a theoretical base is deficient, research on the subject or phenomena should begin with qualitative methods (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018). From the three available research methods, we can conclude that the quantitative method is unsuitable for this empirical study, and therefore, the mixed method can also be excluded from the options.

3.2   Data collection

Interviews were chosen as the data collection method for this empirical study. Interviews can be conducted following either a structured, unstructured, semi-structured or thematic interview method (Saldana, 2011). The unstructured interview design lacks predetermined interview questions, and it is often characterised to have a conversation-like flow. On the contrary, the structured interview design consists of set questions and formulated answer options, which are presented to the interviewees. (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). The structured interview method resembles a questionnaire, as participants must select from the provided alternatives and have little ability to lift their personal perspectives or opinions (Creswell, 2014). The semi-structured interview design has some ready-made questions; however, these questions can be adapted or skipped based on the interviewees' answers. Lastly, the thematic interview design consists of topics and themes that guide the interview but does not consist of predetermined interview questions (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998).

According to Saldana (2011), the interviewees' expertise and understanding of the researched topic can also influence the choice of interview method. The researcher argues that a structured interview is especially suitable for instances when the interviewees are not experts or thoroughly acquainted with the subject beforehand, while a semi-structured and thematic interview design requires the interviewees to have some knowledge of the research topic so that sufficient insights can be extracted. This research will adopt the semi-structured interview design because it provides flexibility to the interviewees

and the opportunity to bring new perspectives to the discussion. Moreover, the semi-structured interview design is well-suited, considering the target interviewees are experts in the studied phenomena. Discretionary sampling was used to select the interviewees, and according to Eskola and Suoranta (1998), in this method, the researcher relies on their own capabilities to select suitable candidates for the empirical research. Both marketing and sales directors and managers were selected as interviewees for the research to gain thorough insights and perspectives on both sides of the situation.

The interview questions of the empirical study were extracted from the theoretical framework introduced in section 2.4. Essentially, the theoretical framework guided the process of formulating the interview questions and ensured that the connection to theory was maintained and no subject was sidestepped. As a result, 11 interview questions were created consisting of both closed and open-ended questions. Additionally, table 7 was prepared to visually depict various technologies to demonstrate to the interviewees before the interview. The table was constructed to ensure that the interviewees understood the scope of the technology in question and how it is defined in the study.

Table 7 Technology classification and examples

Types of technology	Provided examples
Marketing Automation Software	e.g. HubSpot, Marketo, Drip, Marketing Cloud
CRM Software	e.g. Salesforce, Pipedrive, Monday.com, Agile CRM
Sales Enablement Software	e.g. Showpad, Showell
Data Analytics Software	e.g. Google Analytics, Tableau
Online Workspaces	e.g. Google Workspace, SharePoint, Trello, Miro, Mural, Workplace
Video Calling Platforms	e.g. Teams, Zoom, Webex, FaceTime, Skype
Instant Messaging Platforms	e.g. WhatsApp, iMessage, Slack, Jabber, Viber
Social Media Platforms	e.g. LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram

3.3 Implementation of the research

The research interviews were conducted in March 2024. They were conducted remotely using Microsoft Teams, and all participants were asked permission to record the session for transcribing purposes. The Microsoft Teams text recording software was used to transcribe the interviews; however, some adjustments were

made manually to correct mistakes and ensure that the interview and the text transcript matched each other. The duration of the interviews ranged between 30 and 51 minutes, with an average interview length of 40 minutes. To preserve the anonymity of the interviewees and the organisations they represent, interviews will be referred to as interviewee 1, interviewee 2, interviewee 3, and so on. The table below summarises the interview details. Additionally, table 8 presents the interviewees' job titles, functions, industry background, and firm size.

Table 8 Summary of interviewees

Interviewee Identification	Function	Job Title	Industry	Firm size (Large or SME)	Duration of Interview
I1	Marketing	Marketing Manager	Consumer Goods	Large	40min
I2	Marketing	Director of Marketing Operations	Global Logistics	Large	38min
I3	Sales	Sales Director	Manufacturing	SME	44min
I4	Marketing	Marketing Director	Manufacturing	SME	51min
I5	Sales	Sales Manager	Process Technology	Large	30min
I6	Sales	Sales Manager	Consulting	SME	42min

The interview was piloted with the first interviewee to ensure that all the questions were understandable and to test the interview duration. According to Eskola and Suoranta (1998), the pilot interview method is an effective way to identify any weaknesses or gaps in the interview so that they can be adjusted before the next interviews. From the pilot interview, it became evident that one interview question needed to be clarified as it was unclear and misleading. After the necessary adjustments were made, the rest of the interviews used this revised interview frame.

3.3.1 Ethical considerations

In qualitative research, different ethical questions must be considered. Several challenges to data privacy and confidentiality are, for example, posed by the collection and handling of sensitive information (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018). To avoid such challenges, participants were informed in advance about the processing of their personal data, provided with a data privacy form, and asked several times for permission to record and utilise interview data. In addition, participants were informed in advance that all interview recordings would be

deleted immediately after transcriptions were complete. Lastly, by request of the interviewees, each interviewed individual and corresponding organisation appear anonymous in the study to ensure the protection of privacy.

3.4   Data analysis

According to Bryman and Burgess (1994), at the beginning of qualitative data analysis, the data needs to be transcribed, compartmentalised, and classified, which are essentially the processes of organising and summarising data one by one. The authors state that by organising the data, similarities, variations, relationships, and interdependencies can be recognised. Different data analysis methods can also help the researcher navigate the data and find relevant insights (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018). This study adopts a theory-driven data analysis method, in which an underlying theory guides the data analysis (Bryman & Burgess, 1994). The study's theoretical framework serves as the theoretical basis and provides a structure for coding and labelling the data. As a result, the coding follows the four-part model of the theoretical framework. It divides and categorises the data into sections, such as culture and processes, power and structure, human capital, and interpersonal relationships. Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2018) also point out that data coding serves as a tool that helps better describe the content of data in the findings section.

4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings chapter presents the results of the empirical study and illustrates the findings with examples from the data. The interviewees introduced numerous topics and presented mutually supportive and opposing ideas regarding technology's role in the sales-marketing interface. The research results are categorised according to the classification of the theoretical framework, and they are presented one after another under the following categories: culture and processes, power and structure, human capital, and interpersonal relationships. At the end of each category, a table of the key findings of each section is presented. Finally, a summary table of all research results is also offered at the end of the findings chapter.

4.1 Culture and processes

According to the interviewees, digital systems and tools have affected the work culture and processes between marketing and sales. Digital platforms have, for example, shaped collective operations and introduced new working methods. For instance, different digital platforms and tools have brought sales and marketing onto the same platforms, where both functions carry out their tasks and responsibilities. The interviewees reported that using common platforms has created a shared space for sales and marketing, which has helped the formation of a common consensus of what is being done together and separately. Some interviewees mentioned examples of specific platforms, such as sales enablement software and online workspaces, while others talked about digital platforms in general.

> I1: "We have now implemented sales enablement software, which is a tool for salespeople in customer meetings that helps display material and various presentations and videos. It has shaped the joint work in the way that our salesperson uses this and communicates with customers and marketing, and marketing, of course, makes materials for this and monitors analytics and statistics."

I5: "There is perhaps a better consensus on what we do, and it probably comes from the fact that, in a way, those digital tools are used."

I6: "Well, it has already made it possible to know or be up-to-date, in a way, in real-time, about what others are doing and what responsibilities others have. We use online workspaces where we can also see colleagues tasks and projects."

Interviewees also emphasised that technology has enabled both functions to access the same customer data, which has further improved both functions' overall understanding of the operational environment. Moreover, interviewees reported that shared data has been used in planning and decision-making procedures, which has increased the number of joint synergies. Different platforms have also impacted the coordination of joint projects. Interviewees mentioned that several platforms have facilitated the coordination and visualisation of projects, and, in particular, the holding and organisation of workshops have become more manageable. Interviewees also emphasised that different digital tools make the administration of instructions fast and efficient.

I2: "Maybe compared to the previous way of working, these tools have definitely improved this cooperation. We have a wide range of different tools in use. These different visual workspaces, such as Miro and Mural, help especially with workshops."

I3: "It is easier to coordinate people and different activities. We receive notifications from platforms and so it is easy to follow the joint activities of the team and colleagues."

One interviewee also pointed out that these platforms have increased efficiency, as technology can help structure shared project work as well as personal work. In this case, technology has impacted task prioritisation and time management.

I1: "Through digital tools, you stay informed about what is happening and what should be done next. And then maybe it's easier to come back from what was done in a way. It also helps to prioritise what needs to be done, which makes it easier to use time and contributes to efficiency."

However, the use of different digital platforms and tools in project coordination has also raised resistance. The interviewees reported that keeping up with the number of digital platforms and their unique features has been demanding. The interviewees had experienced the demands of technology, but they also mentioned that their colleagues shared the same feelings. One interviewee stressed that in their organisation, each project manager gets to freely decide which digital platform is used per project, and the organisation does not limit or regulate the use or number of tools.

I2: "Different development projects, such as programming and development projects, require different project management tools, which we use versatilely. Project

managers choose the tools according to the nature of the project and management style, and this is always discussed at the beginning of the project and on a team-by-team basis."

This arrangement has also had minor challenges, as employees reportedly must continuously learn new systems on a tight schedule. However, this issue has been addressed, and according to the interviewee, at the beginning of each project, there is an orientation session on the technology to ensure that all team members are proficient in utilising the selected platform.

> I2: "In the beginning, an orientation is usually organised if you are not familiar with any tool, platform or the project's operating methods in general. It is also important to constantly ensure that everyone stays involved and knows how to use the chosen technology in the best possible way."

The interviews also revealed that digital systems and tools have affected the feedback culture between marketing and sales. Interviewees reported that different systems and tools have, for example, lowered the feedback threshold by providing access to multiple ways of giving feedback.

> I4: "I have noticed that digital tools and systems have really affected the feedback culture, especially in the communication between marketing and sales. In marketing, we strive to make giving feedback as easy as possible and to lower the threshold. Different technologies have made this process really smooth."

Several interviewees pointed out that feedback between marketing and sales is essential on many levels, and it is one of the only ways to improve processes, emphasising that all facilitating forces to support feedback culture are welcome. A couple of interviewees reported that different shared online workspaces, for example, give sales and marketing employees a good overall picture of what is being done, which in turn enables easy commenting and sharing of internal feedback. These online workspaces also keep a record of all activity, comments, feedback, and interactions between teams so that feedback can also be monitored and incentivised.

> I2: "These tools allow us to comment and mark things easily. All this information makes processes and cooperation much smoother. In addition, it is easy to share information and give internal feedback within these platforms and project perspectives. When different ways of giving feedback are available, everyone can find the most suitable way to maintain communication."

> I6: "We use online workspaces like Trello and others, where we can see colleagues' boards, comment on, and react to what others are doing."

However, one of the participants stated that digital systems and tools have contrastingly had little effect on the feedback culture between sales and marketing. The interviewee stated that the organisational culture defines how and what issues can be discussed freely without consequences, guiding

employees' behaviour and processes. The interviewee emphasised that the organisation's role is important in developing a functional two-way feedback culture. In this situation, technology has had a small or non-existent impact on the feedback culture between marketing and sales.

> I1: "The digital tools themselves have not affected the feedback culture. For us, it is more related to the organisational culture. The mentality and style of being able to talk about things directly come more from the side of the organisation and organisational culture. I think that they affect whether you can talk directly about even difficult things without fear of being punished. So, it has more to do with the culture than with digital tools. Organisational culture rather defines the operating methods."

Table 9 summarizes the key findings on the effects of digital systems and tools on culture and processes within the sales-marketing interface.

Table 9 Effects of digital systems and tools on culture and processes

Positive Impacts	Negative Impact	Emerging Demands
- Unified space for collaboration - Streamlined operations - Enhanced consensus of operations - Unified customer data access - Utilisation of shared data in decision-making - Increased joint synergies - Improved project coordination and visualisation - Enhanced workshop organisation - Improved operational understanding - Expedited administration of instructions - Increased efficiency and time management - Reduced feedback threshold - Facilitated communication through digital platforms	- Demanding management of multiple digital platforms - Contrasting views on feedback culture impact	- Training and support - Leadership role of project coordinators

4.2 Power and structure

According to the interviewees, digital platforms and tools have influenced the emergence and mitigation of conflicts between marketing and sales. Technology has, therefore, had a positive and negative impact on conflicts. Since the topic deals with conflicts between marketing and sales, the perspectives of both sides on the situation are presented. Marketing interviewees began by describing individual challenges they experienced in relation to sales-marketing conflict and the role of technology. On the marketing side, one of the interviewees stated that significant challenges arise from the fact that marketing is not always sufficiently informed about what is happening at the grassroots level, which affects marketing's ability to conduct their job analytically. Another challenge pointed out by the marketing interviewees was that sales sometimes keep customer data out of marketing's reach. Marketing employees characterised the situation as follows:

> I2: "Especially in marketing, I feel that we are still quite outside of what is really happening in the customer interface. We strongly rely on our own processes, such as lead nurturing, which we have focused on."

> I4: "Some may sales members have their own offline folders, Excel tables, and processes, but the problem is that others do not have access to these files."

According to the interviewees, both sales and marketing perceive that various digital solutions could assist in addressing these challenges, but their views regarding the practical implementation of these solutions differ. According to the interviews, marketing perceives sales as less open to adopting new technology and innovative ways of working.

> I4: "Sales is always not so open towards new technology. Sales may feel that the use of digital tools increases their workload, and the benefit of the technology remains unclear. The reform of working processes can cause frustration when trying to introduce new digital tools."

Based on the interviews, sales demonstrated a greater readiness and willingness to adopt the technology compared to what marketing anticipated.

> I3: "In a way, this causes more work for our team, but then that information would come out more easily through the CRM, which would facilitate the work and, of course, also this information flow."'

Some of the interviewees also felt that the challenges stem primarily from general attitudes and not so much from the technology itself or its adoption.

> I1: "There will always be resistance to change, and not everyone likes it as much as switching to digital systems and starting to use new tools. There are challenges, but

they are not so much related to the tool itself but more related to the state of mind. In general, many new things can be scary."

I6: "Many systems are simple to use and if they are used correctly, I can see that they have a really big potential. At the moment, the problem is that some people still think that using different systems and even updating the progress of projects on a common board takes a lot of time. But if everyone would really commit to using different platforms smartly, I see a really big potential."

However, the majority of the interviewees noted that both marketing and sales teams exhibit some level of resistance towards adopting new technology. Interviewees emphasised that it is especially challenging to encourage everyone to use new technology if its benefits and intended use are unclear. As a result, interviewees highlighted that following the organisation's lead could alleviate the situation, thus easing the adoption of new technology. Interviewees stated that the organisation needs to prioritise transparency and clear communication to encourage employees to adopt new technology and reshape their attitudes towards it. Interviewees pointed out that it is crucial for the organisation to communicate clearly why new technology is being implemented and how it supports the organisation's goals. Additionally, senior and middle management play a vital role in this, as they need to lead by example and support the change, avoiding ambiguities.

I5: "In the process of change, there will always be resistance and questioning. Therefore, leadership through example and ongoing communication are extremely important. Inter-team communication, especially between sales and marketing, is crucial so that everyone has the same expectations and understanding of the change objectives."

Additionally, interviewees reported that internal communication focusing on how technology makes work more efficient and easier helps overcome the initial major resistance, which often resides solely in people's minds. After that, providing necessary training and support in implementation is important, as the change process can involve various challenges.

I1: "I think that it is important to communicate to team members the benefits of the new technology and its significance in their daily work. Maybe when employees understand how technology makes their lives easier and solves operational challenges, they are more likely to embrace the change."

I3: "What is important in such digital platforms is that how you can notice the tangible benefits of using such systems and tools, e.g., how it saves time. Through those benefits, a culture and way of operating is formed."

One of the interviewees described their organisation's journey from facing challenges to achieving success. The organisation made efforts to underscore the concrete benefits to employees, such as the time-saving capabilities of digital tools. This helped employees understand the value of digital tools and what they

can achieve, simultaneously reducing conflicts and increasing productivity, cooperation, and fluency.

> I1: "We have had conflicts since we implemented the lead management system. This had not been done before. It caused conflicts because we got an awful lot of leads, and then sales did nothing about it and didn't contact or handle their role. Since then, we have started nurturing or enriching leads, where the goal is that the quantity drops, the quality improves, and sales like this. Now, we have already reached the point where sellers are asking, hey, where can I get some leads? The beginning brought a lot of challenges and conflict, but the situation is now levelling off and going in a better direction, and I strongly believe that in the end, there will be thanks."

One participant highlighted the importance of organisational alignment in adopting new methods and tools. They stated that if certain employees resist this change despite the support of company leadership, the organisation should evaluate the employee's prospects within the company. Nevertheless, the interviewee noted that such extreme instances are rare.

> I1: "Sometimes, in the process of change, the organisation may have to address its "rotten apples" or individuals who strongly oppose the change. These individuals must either adapt to the change or leave the organisation for the change to progress smoothly."

In the earlier examples, the organization's role as an advocate of new technology was highlighted. However, one interviewee stated that marketing and sales employees should also share responsibility for advocating new technology. The interviewee emphasized that each team bears the responsibility of making their work visible. The significance of open communication regarding ongoing tasks, accomplishments, and the impact and benefits of new technology on everyone, is reportedly crucial for shifting attitudes towards technology. The interviewee additionally highlighted that continuous development provides rich narratives and opportunities for teams, and that these narratives could be utilized in inspiring and demonstrate how new technologies enhance the value of everyone's contributions.

> I2: "Regarding digital tools, we should bring out more signs that we are involved in these activities and keep different teams more aware of how our activities affect the organisation. This helps to maintain a positive working mood also between marketing and sales. I think all continuous development offers great stories and potential for teams and the goal is to inspire and show how new technologies bring value to everyone's work."

Lastly, several interviewees also stated that it has been significant to notice that organisations are starting to understand that many processes are slowly becoming digitised and that they must react to this change. According to the interviewees, successful technology integrations have produced positive results, and the interviewees characterised the current situation as functional and transparent. As an additional benefit, technology has brought transparency to

processes, which, according to one of the interviewees, helps the onboarding and offboarding processes of employees considerably.

> I2: "Now that we have gotten over this stage, the processes have been renewed, and everyone is pulling the same rope, and our work has become more transparent. I believe that in addition to this, there are other benefits, such as a faster introduction of a new employee to the organisation and an improvement in the flow of information, which prevents information leaks when leaving the organisation. All these things affect the community and the atmosphere significantly."

Table 10 summarizes the key findings on the effects of digital systems and tools on power and structure within the sales-marketing interface.

Table 10 Effects of digital systems and tools on power and structure

Positive Impacts	Negative Impact	Emerging Demands
• Enhanced functionality and transparency • Improved onboarding and offboarding processes	• Perception disparities hindering adoption • Resistance to change • Unclear intended use leading to resistance	• Leadership role of senior and middle management • Training and support • Clear communication and transparency from the organisation • The clear communication of the purpose and benefits of new technology • Emphasising concrete benefits • Role of employees as technology advocates

4.3 Human capital

According to the interviewees, digital systems and tools have, to some extent, affected sales and marketing's understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities. Digital systems have reportedly brought more concreteness to each other's work and areas of responsibility. Marketing, in particular, reports that previously, it seemed as though sales did not understand 99% of their tasks because they were not visible to sales, while now, technology and shared platforms have made marketing processes visible. In the past, ad hoc tasks have specially created challenges. When sales bring tasks for marketing to undertake,

and marketing declines due to their existing workload, this creates a division between the teams. Marketing interviewees characterised their previous situation as follows:

> I1: "In sales, there are often such ad hoc things. Maybe they need something to be done right now, but when you don't understand what else is on the marketing table and the amount of work and different processes that go on, and so on, it can often just cause delusions in a way, that they don't do anything there other than play around a misconception that sales take care of everything."

> I4: "We also had that basic cliché, that sales don't understand the 99 other things that marketing does, and then a lot of our work is often dismissed."

One interviewee reported that they have dealt with this problem by bringing sales and marketing teams to the same table when planning for the coming year. Different technologies have been used to plan the year and illustrate sales goals. Partly, the goal here has been to show sales employees that marketing participates in several projects and supports each salesperson in turn.

> I1: "I have tried that when making the annual marketing plan, together with sales, we plan the big frames and projects in which marketing supports and make it clear that marketing participates in many projects. I think this helps sales to understand that when ad hoc tasks come up, you can't stretch to all of them because we follow this big strategic plan and the tasks and projects that belong to it."

The interviewee stated that, in addition, increasing the open discussion regarding ad hoc tasks has made it easier to contain situations. When discussing ad hoc tasks openly, both marketing and sales can collectively determine how urgent and necessary they are and this way, disappointments can be avoided.

In addition to different types of preventive crisis management, technology has also had an impact by bringing the already previously mentioned clarity to processes. An interviewee emphasised that different platforms have made marketing tasks increasingly visible, aiding sales in managing expectations regarding achievable outcomes. Reportedly, digital platforms have also increased communication, which has brought clarity to roles.

> I4: "With the help of these platforms and channels, sales also know what marketing is doing and vice versa."

> I5: "I think managing of the expectations is the most important thing, of course I want marketing to finish this whitepaper for me today but now we now know better what marketing has time for and what they do."

> I2: "Communication and clear process has helped avoid conflict and bring clarity to areas of responsibility."

Contrastingly, one interviewee stated that digital tools and platforms have not brought added value regarding job clarity; however, they have reportedly affected the overall picture and understanding of the business environment.

> I3: "Of course, there have been new systems, and as a result, perhaps an overall picture of this operating environment has been better understood, but it has not, in itself, brought added value to each other's work or work image in concrete terms."

As mentioned by several interviewees, marketing processes have become visible to sales and vice versa, and they have also become increasingly measurable. As a result, interviewees from sales functions reported that they find this measurability easy to internalise and that it helps build trust between sales and marketing. Sales and marketing view this positively and described the situation as follows:

> I5: "What has been very beneficial for marketing is that they can now show some numbers, and they can now say that look at what we did and how it impacted sales, so this has helped understand marketing and I think bring trust to what they do and show us that we need each other."

> I2: "Now the contribution of marketing can be measured and illustrated better than ever before, and I hope it will bring clarity to the challenges between marketing and sales."

According to interviewees, technology has also influenced the creation of common goals between marketing and sales. Common goals have arisen from two sources. Firstly, platforms have brought common methods of operation closer together and affected shared culture, which in turn has given birth to common goals.

> I1: "And I would also say yes, they have affected culture so that we now do things in the same way and everyone has the same goals."

Secondly, the increased amount and access to data have been significant factors in generating common goals. Various platforms have made collecting data more feasible, allowing the breakdown of overarching goals into weekly or monthly targets. For instance, CRM systems have provided enhanced insights into marketing and sales procedures, enabling close monitoring of two key features: Marketing Qualified Leads (MQL) and Sales Qualified Leads (SQL). Additionally, marketing and sales teams can jointly monitor the progress towards achieving their goals.

> I1: "We have such different dashboards where we track where we are going. We have certain common goals on a monthly and then daily level. With the help of these dashboards, a common vision of where we are is developed. And then if it seems that for some reason it's not, or we're behind, or it's not going well, we start thinking that."

I2: "We practice very targeted marketing, and it is always fully aligned with our sales goals. We regularly stop to review the results of marketing measures and their impact on sales. We closely monitor how many leads we generate and how many of them turn into potential sales leads, setting goals for the future. At the same time, we monitor how many of these leads convert into customers."

I6: "Yes, it has created common goals and strengthened earlier goals. What makes this easier is that we can get numbers and data from many sources and track different numbers through many technologies and systems. Numbers are presented from the sales side and marketing side, and marketing can look at a month's sales, and after that, we set goals for both."

Technology has fully enabled the creation of such goals, and both sales and marketing report that they have had a strong impact on joint efforts. Data and processes have also impacted employee development by enabling the comparison of current results with those from a year ago, facilitating assessments of improvement. One interviewee highlighted that, particularly in marketing, data provided by technology serves as the only source of certainty regarding performance strengths and weaknesses.

I2: "We do goal-oriented marketing, and we want to do things better. We always want to do something meaningful, so data is the only one that basically tells us how we are doing. And then maybe add to that the fact that you also have to learn from it, and in a way, you can do that when you look at the situation at the moment, but also see what the situation was, for example, a year ago."

The development of one's own skills and the role of technology are related to the same requirements as in the previous sections. One interviewee emphasised the importance of necessary training and stated that technology has and will continue to demand a lot from employees.

I4: "Well, at least I need to get training related to that CRM system, and I need to learn how we can utilise this technology in our daily operations. Has already demanded and will certainly demand in the future also the development of own competence."

Table 11 summarizes the key findings on the effects of digital systems and tools on human capital within the sales-marketing interface.

Table 11 Effects of digital systems and tools on human capital

Positive Impacts	Negative Impact	Emerging Demands
- Enhanced role clarity - Enhanced visibility of marketing processes - Increased trust	- Debate over added job value regarding clarity - Increased demands on employees	- Training and support - Managing expectations

• Improved planning and illustration of goals • Facilitated the development of competence • Strengthened collaboration and goal-setting • Improved data collection • Enhanced joint monitoring of progress • Improved collaboration through common goals • Facilitated employee development and performance assessments	43	

4.4 Interpersonal relationships

According to the interviewees, digital systems and tools have affected the amount and frequency of information sharing between sales and marketing. Interviewees reported that different systems and tools have become a good addition to meetings and conferences from a communication perspective. According to interviewees, the use of different platforms has promoted, for example, the daily information flow. In addition, the use of instant messaging services has increased the sharing of informal information and brought up new ways to communicate.

> I4: "I would say that there are more unofficial channels, and their use has increased. For example, we share a lot of work stuff on WhatsApp because it is so fast and easy and as a result, the flow of information has definitely improved."

> I5: "Technology has made communication quite pragmatic and faster and in that sense we can also work faster together."

Several interviewees stated that the use of informal channels has been useful and supportive in addition to traditional communication channels. However, the use of unofficial platforms also attracted opposition and criticism. One of the participants emphasised that informal channels have their pros and cons, and while the increase of channels offers versatile options for interaction, it simultaneously confuses users and makes it hard to distinguish which information belongs to which channel.

> I2: "Nowadays, it seems that the number of different communication channels is only increasing. There are many options to choose from, what you want to use, and how

officially you want to communicate, depending of course on how official information is shared. I notice that, for example, more informal platforms can collect a lot of official and even important information, which should then be included more in official documents."

The interviewee pointed out that because of the increased number of channels, and especially with the evolution of unofficial channels, the need to define which information belongs to which channel has become essential. One interviewee stated that the also organization could define internal guidelines regarding which platform to use for communication within the company.

On the other hand, the increased number of communication platforms and methods has also increased the efficiency of communication. Specifically, one interviewee reported that the decreased number of email conversations has allowed for more time to focus on other tasks. According to the interviewee, communication has not decreased, but instead, these e-mail discussions have moved to project platforms, chat or in some situations, the number of emails has simply decreased because both teams have access to the same platforms and data. When comments can be left on project platforms, and necessary data can be obtained through shared platforms, everyone's time is saved, and processes become more efficient.

> I1: "Technology has helped in such a way that the number of e-mails has decreased dramatically and somehow it is easier to understand the overall picture. Maybe through the technology and the work tool, there is a very concrete example that it has made our processes more efficient."

Table 12 summarizes the key findings on the effects of digital systems and tools on interpersonal relationships within the sales-marketing interface. Thereafter table 13 summarises all key findings.

Table 12 Effects of digital systems and tools on interpersonal relationships

Positive Impacts	Negative Impact	Emerging Demands
• Enhanced daily information flow • Increased frequency of information sharing • Introduction of new communication methods • Improved communication efficiency	• User confusion and information overlap • Difficulty in ensuring correct information distribution	• Establishment of common communication rules • Organisational responsibility for clear communication guidelines

Table 13 Summary of findings

		Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Emerging Demands
Effects of digital systems and tools on culture and processes, power and structure, human capital, and interpersonal relationships within the sales-marketing interface.				
Culture and processes		• Unified space for collaboration • Streamlined operations • Enhanced consensus of operations • Unified customer data access • Utilisation of shared data in decision-making • Increased joint synergies • Improved project coordination and visualisation • Enhanced workshop organisation • Improved operational understanding • Expedited administration of instructions • Increased efficiency and time management • Reduced feedback threshold • Facilitated communication through digital platforms	• Demanding management of multiple digital platforms • Contrasting views on feedback culture impact	• Training and support • Leadership role of project coordinators
Power and structure		• Enhanced functionality and transparency • Improved onboarding and offboarding processes	• Perception disparities hindering adoption • Resistance to change • Unclear intended use leading to resistance	• Leadership role of senior and middle management • Training and support • Clear communication and transparency from the organisation • The clear communication of the purpose and benefits of new technology • Emphasising concrete benefits • Role of employees as technology advocates

		46	
Human capital	- Enhanced role clarity - Enhanced visibility of marketing processes - Increased trust - Improved planning and illustration of goals - Facilitated the development of competence - Strengthened collaboration and goal-setting - Improved data collection - Enhanced joint monitoring of progress - Improved collaboration through common goals - Facilitated employee development and performance assessments	- Debate over added job value regarding clarity - Increased demands on employees	- Training and support - Managing expectations
Interpersonal relationships	- Enhanced daily information flow - Increased frequency of information sharing - Introduction of new communication methods - Improved communication efficiency	- User confusion and information overlap - Difficulty in ensuring correct information distribution	- Establishment of common communication rules - Organisational responsibility for clear communication guidelines

5   CONCLUSIONS

The research aimed to identify how diverse digital technologies impact the sales-marketing interface and whether technology impacts marketing and sales employees' collective roles and shared responsibilities. Based on a qualitative analysis of interview data from both marketing and sales managers, it can be concluded that digital technologies have significantly enhanced the integration and collaboration between marketing and sales teams. The results indicate that diverse digital tools and systems have facilitated several key improvements which will be discussed in detail this chapter. The conclusions of the research are divided under four sections: theoretical contributions, managerial implications, evaluation of the study, and suggestions for future research.

5.1   Theoretical contributions

As indicated earlier, the sales-marketing interface literature to date heavily focuses on the wide-ranging challenges and the current perceptions of the relationship between marketing and sales (Biemans et al., 2022; Cespedes, 1993; Chernetsky et al., 2022; Dewsnap & Jobber, 2000; Hauer et al., 2021; Kotler et al., 2006). However, only a few studies have explored the effects of facilitating forces, such as digital technologies, on the relationship. Although the subject has not yet been sufficiently researched to draw proper conclusions, sales-marketing interface literature supports the conception that technology could improve sales and marketing cooperation (Banerjee & Bhardwaj, 2019; Biemans et al., 2022; Dawes & Massey, 2006; Hauer et al., 2021; Huang & Rust, 2021). This research followed Biemans et al. (2022) recommendations by examining the impact of technology on the sales-marketing interface and sales-marketing integration. Due to the current research domain's limited scope and insufficient foundation, theoretical frameworks that support research by considering the diversity of

technology and its impact on various components of the sales-marketing interface have yet to be established.

This research contributes to theory by providing a theoretical framework that considers these factors. The theoretical framework is built upon Chernetsky et al. (2022) categorisation of integrating mechanisms for the sales-marketing interface while drawing from an extensive body of sales-marketing interface literature (Beverland et al., 2006; Dawes & Massey, 2006; Dewsnap & Jobber, 2000; Kotler et al., 2006; Malshe & Krush, 2020; Rouziès et al., 2005). The theoretical framework illustrates integrating mechanisms that affect the sales-marketing interface. Additionally, the framework illustrates moderator variables that influence or strengthen the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The moderator variables allow research to explore the role of technology as an integrating mechanism for the sales-marketing interface. In this research, the theoretical framework guided the formulation of interview questions, data analysis, and organisation of the research findings. The theoretical framework can also serve as a foundation for future research on the subject.

In addition to the theoretical framework, this research produced numerous theoretical contributions by adding new perspectives to existing knowledge on the effects of digital technologies on the sales-marketing interface by confirming, broadening, and challenging prior research. The research, for example, confirms earlier findings by Huang and Rust (2021) state that digital platforms indeed catalyse new working methods, fostering new collaborative processes between sales and marketing. The research also found that digital platforms have created a shared space for sales and marketing, facilitating cooperation. These findings also support Hauer et al.'s (2021) view, suggesting that technological solutions simplify and enhance collaboration by creating a centralised space for both teams. This research also expands existing knowledge with findings that suggest that digital platforms have made tasks more visible and clarified processes, improving the consensus on what is being done together and separately. This has positively impacted the understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities.

Banerjee and Bhardwaj (2019) suggest that a centralised space improves data sharing and constructs shared and aligned strategies around common goals. The research results support this by demonstrating that access to shared customer data and insights enhanced the overall understanding of the operational environment and improved planning and decision-making while increasing the number of joint synergies. Additionally, this research found that the measurability of processes helps build trust between sales and marketing. This unique contribution brings depth to understanding how digital platforms improve operational efficiency and enhance team dynamics. What is also essential to note with these findings is that increased trust has a broader impact on the sales-marketing interface, as Le Meunier-FitzHugh and Piercy (2007) demonstrate that increased trust between marketing and sales reduces the occurrence of conflicts.

The research results show that digital technologies, including instant messaging platforms, have promoted daily information flow and communication transparency. The results also support the conception that digital communication tools improve knowledge exchange, facilitating better sales-marketing alignment. These results align with Bieman's (2023) and Arnett et al. (2021) research, which states that instant messaging platforms can improve timely information sharing and that communication via digital platforms improves communication transparency. Both authors conclude that increased knowledge exchange translates to enhanced knowledge exchange and better alignment between marketing and sales teams. This research also builds on the findings of Arnett et al. (2021) by providing new insights into how digital channels have impacted the feedback culture and transparency between marketing and sales. The findings of this research suggest that feedback has become more diversified, as it can now be given on different communication-supporting platforms, project platforms, and online workspaces. These platforms record all activity, comments, feedback, and team interactions, enabling improved transparency through several organisational processes.

This research also provided results that contradict previous research. For example, Aguenza (2012) and Malshe and Krush (2020) raised concerns regarding digital technologies' capability to disrupt and decrease employee performance. However, this research uncovered that technology could improve efficiency and task prioritisation when integrated effectively into existing processes. The possibility of digital platforms improving overall work efficiency has received limited attention in existing literature, making it a novel finding in this research. While the findings simultaneously acknowledge that the use of technology has also increased the demands placed on employees and confirmed that both marketing and sales teams exhibit some level of resistance towards adopting new technology, these effects were mitigated by organisational efforts to underscore the concrete benefits to employees. This resulted in employees understanding the value of digital tools and what they can achieve while simultaneously reducing conflicts and increasing productivity, cooperation, and fluency. These results suggest that the right approach can overcome resistance identified in earlier research.

Finally, the research provided new insight into how technology has influenced the creation of shared goals between marketing and sales. The results highlight that various digital platforms have made data collection more feasible, allowing the breakdown of overarching sales-marketing goals into weekly or monthly targets. Digital technologies also enabled marketing and sales teams to collectively monitor progress towards achieving shared goals. According to the data, both marketing and sales verified that shared goals have strongly impacted joint efforts, improving overall sales-marketing collaboration.

In summary, this research confirms several existing findings regarding technology's role as an integrating mechanism in sales-marketing collaboration while offering new insights into trust building and common goal formation through data and measurability. In addition, the research introduced new

perspectives and expanded the current understanding of the impact of technology on employee performance, task visibility and role clarity, and feedback diversity and transparency. Moreover, the research challenged previous studies by demonstrating that technology can improve efficiency and task prioritisation when integrated effectively into existing processes.

5.2   Managerial implications

This research also produced various managerial implications that can be implemented to help alleviate challenges related to technology use and integration within marketing and sales teams. The first managerial implication is related to the amount of organisational support and the organisation's lead when introducing and adopting new technology. The research results suggest that organisations are encouraged to prioritise transparency and clear communication to support employees in adopting new technology and to cultivate a positive attitude towards technology adoption. Additionally, the organisation should outline why new technology is being implemented and how it supports individual, team, and organisational goals. The research results confirm that senior and middle management play a vital role in this process, as they must lead by example and support the change, avoiding ambiguities. In addition, the importance of providing necessary training and support was emphasised, as change and adopting new processes often involve various challenges.

The second managerial implication of the research relates to the organisation's responsibility over policies and established guidelines for technology use. As the number of digital platforms and systems continues to grow, it is increasingly critical for the organisation to develop overarching guidelines to ensure that different functions use technology consistently and uniformly. The research revealed that it is essential to determine, for example, what kind of information belongs in which channel, which documents and data should be stored for the benefit of others, and how to use informal communication platforms in a professional sense, as otherwise, these factors could lead to conflict and misuse.

In summary, the research underscores two main managerial implications for alleviating technology integration and use challenges. Firstly, organisations are advised to prioritise clear communication, transparency, and senior and middle management support to advance technology adoption and positive attitudes toward new technology. Secondly, organisations are encouraged to constitute comprehensive guidelines for technology use to minimise conflict and misuse.

5.3   Evaluation of the study

This section reviews the research's reliability and validity. According to Bryman and Burgess (1994), assessing these research features helps determine whether the research results are plausible and whether they bring value to other researchers and the research community. In qualitative studies, evaluating research reliability and validity may be more complicated than in quantitative research, as these concepts emerged initially from quantitative research. However, they are also applied to qualitative studies as they help the researcher consider and discuss the accuracy of their research process and findings. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018).

When assessing the reliability of research, it is crucial to consider whether the researcher has conducted the research orthodoxly and whether the study is replicable (Hirsjärvi et al., 2007; Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018). Additionally, Hirsjärvi et al. (2007) emphasise that the reliability of research can be enhanced by clearly justifying the choice of various procedures, including research approaches, methods, data collection, and data analysis. Each chosen research approach has been justified in this study with references to applicable literature. Additionally, detailed descriptions of each research process step have been provided to increase research transparency and reproducibility. Some factors also affect the reliability of research results. Eskola and Suoranta (1998) state that the reliability of results can be influenced by the accuracy of the obtained data and the exactness of the data interpretation process. Attempts have been made to maintain the correctness of the research results by cross-checking the data and verifying that the data is processed in its complete form so that no incorrect conclusions are made from partial testimonies.

On the other hand, research validity evaluates the accuracy of scientific findings and determines whether the research effectively addresses its intended objectives (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018). Research validity is sometimes also divided into two perspectives: internal validity, which considers the researcher's objectivity and external validity, which considers the degree to which the results can be applied to other contexts. This research prioritised maintaining internal validity and objectivity by conducting an extensive literature review on the research topic and returning to these studies throughout the research process. Additionally, the empirical phase of the research, including the selection of method and approach, data gathering and analysis, was guided by a theoretical framework grounded in previous research. Unfortunately, regarding external validity, the research results cannot be used to generalise entire populations, functions, or industries; instead, they produce results that could be applied on a case-by-case basis. Considering the minimal research conducted on the topic, qualitative research methods were preferable to quantitative methods, as they enabled the analysis of subjective experiences to broaden our understanding of the effects of technology on the sales-marketing interface. This study aimed to map the current situation and broaden the limited research foundation, thereby

enabling the possibility of conducting quantitative research on the subject somewhere in the future, which could yield generalisable research results.

5.4   Suggestions for future research

Literature on the role of technology in the sales-marketing interface remains limited, so it is recommended that the subject be studied further. This research set out to map the current situation and explore the topic deeper. Although this research brought multiple theoretical and managerial contributions, the results of this study are far from generalisable. Future research could explore the role of technology in sales-marketing integration through qualitative methods. Additionally, there is potential for quantitative studies to investigate this subject further when a sufficient research foundation exists.

The empirical investigation of this research focused on marketing and sales managers and their professional perspectives on technology integration and sales-marketing collaboration. To get a more comprehensive and well-rounded understanding, it is also essential to study the professional views of the marketing and sales team members on the role of technology integration and sales-marketing collaboration. Moreover, a longitudinal study tracking the entire process from the planning and introduction of new technology to its implementation and completion stages could offer diverse perspectives and insights into the subject. Additionally, longitudinal research could provide detailed analysis regarding the challenges faced throughout each phase, potential points of conflict that may arise, and the facilitating and supporting factors contributing to the successful implementation and utilisation of the technology. Finally, the last recommendation for future research is to narrow the scope of the investigation to a single industry, employing the case study method, which could offer insights into industry-specific differences in technology integration and sales-marketing collaboration.

In summary, further research is recommended to deepen the understanding of technology's role in sales-marketing integration. This research should employ qualitative and quantitative methods, explore the perspectives of marketing and sales team members, conduct longitudinal studies to record technology implementation processes and narrow the focus to specific industries to clarify industry-specific differences. In addition, it is essential to consider that the technology landscape is developing rapidly, highlighting the need to constantly reassess the evolving role of technology in marketing and sales processes and collaboration.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Research questions

1. How do you perceive the influence of digital platforms and tools on the amount and frequency of information sharing between marketing and sales?
2. In what ways have digital platforms and tools impacted the feedback culture between marketing and sales?
3. How have digital platforms and tools influenced the general culture and atmosphere between marketing and sales?
4. How have digital platforms and tools altered the management approach toward marketing and sales teams?
5. How have digital platforms and tools influenced emerging and mitigating conflicts between marketing and sales?
6. Have digital platforms and tools promoted transparency in collaborative processes and increased team trust?
7. How have digital platforms and tools influenced the understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities within marketing and sales teams?
8. How do you perceive the impact of digital platforms and tools on establishing or aligning common goals between marketing and sales?
9. In what ways have digital platforms and tools affected the collaboration of shared projects or the coordination of projects between marketing and sales teams?
10. Have digital platforms and tools impacted the level of information transparency?
11. How has the use of digital platforms and tools impacted the volume of data, and do both teams have access to the same data?