FACILITATORS AND IMPEDIMENTS OF AGILE MARKETING SOFTWARE IMPLEMENTATION - CASE DIGITAL KANBAN BOARD

University of Jyväskylä
School of Business and Economics

Master's Thesis

2021

Author: Iiro Turkki
Subject: Digital Marketing and Corporate Communication
Supervisor: Heikki Karjaluoto

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

ABSTRACT

Author	
Iiro Turkki	
Title	
Facilitators and impediments of agile marketing software implementation – case digital Kanban board	
Subject	Type of work
Digital Marketing and Corporate Communication	Master's Thesis
Date	Number of pages
June 2021	53

Abstract

During the last years, agile marketing methods have gained much attention among marketing agencies operating in digital performance marketing. Agile organizations and concepts used to be the luxury of software development, but now agile methods have been adopted by marketers. Digital marketing industry is fast-changing and constantly more competitive, so agile marketing is seen as a possibility to create extra value to customers and increase firm's competitiveness. As part of organizational agility, a digital Kanban board is a project management tool that is used to run dynamic projects. Together with agile marketing methods, Kanban board can help marketing companies to improve project management processes and serve their clients better. The goal of this research is to increase the understanding of information and communication technology (ICT) implementation and provide valuable information on facilitators and impediment of implementing and adopting digital Kanban board in digital marketing agency. The theoretical background contains the concepts of agile marketing and Kanban, and ICT implementation. The framework used in this study is adopted from Honeycutt et al. (2005) sales force automation implementation framework. The case study provides findings on the facilitators and impediments of digital Kanban board implementation, giving valuable information to managers who are looking to adopt agile marketing technology in a company. The findings identify several factors from planning, communication, and evaluation phases that can affect ICT implementation process either positively or negatively.

Keywords
Agile marketing, digital marketing, ICT implementation, ICT adoption, Kanban
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Jyväskylä University Library

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tekijä Iiro Turkki	
Työn nimi Facilitators and impediments of agile marketing software implementation – case: digital Kanban board	
Oppiaine Digital Marketing and Corporate Communi-cation	Työn laji Pro gradu -tutkielma
Päivämäärä Kesäkuu 2021	Sivumäärä 53
Tiivistelmä Viime vuosina ketterä markkinointi on kasvattanut suosiotaan digitaalisen markkinoinnin toimistoissa. Aikaisemmin ketteristä menetelmistä pystyivät nauttimaan vain ohjelmistoalan yritykset, mutta nykyään menetelmät on otettu käyttöön myös markkinoinnin alalla. Digitaalinen markkinointi on nopeasti kehittyvä ja jatkuvasti kilpaillumpi ala, minkä takia ketterät menetelmät nähdään mahdollisuutena luoda lisäarvoa asiakkaille ja täten kasvattaa yrityksen kilpailuetua. Osana yrityksen ketteryyttä digitaalinen Kanban-työkalu mahdollistaa sujuvamman projektinhallinnan. Ketterät menetelmät ja Kanban auttavat projektien ja prosessien tehostamisessa ja luovat lisäarvoa asiakkaille. Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena on parantaa ymmärrystä siitä miten digitaalisen markkinoinnin yritys voi ottaa käyttöön tieto- ja viestintätekniikan (ICT) työkalun, ja mitkä ovat uuden teknologian käyttöönoton mahdollistajat ja esteet. Teoriaosuudessa käsitellään ketterän markkinoinnin, Kanbanin sekä tieto- ja viestintätekniikan käyttöönoton taustoja. Tässä tutkimuksessa on käytetty Honeycutt ym. (2005) viitekehystä myynnin automatisoinnin käyttöönotosta. Tutkimuksen tulokset selvittävät mitkä tekijät mahdollistavat tai estävät digitaalisen Kanban -työkalun käyttöönoton. Tulokset tuovat yrityksen johdolle arvokasta lisätietoa ketterien menetelmien ja Kanbanin käyttöönoton eri vaiheista. Eri vaiheita ovat suunnittelu, viestintä sekä arviointi, joista jokainen vaihe voi vaikuttaa uuden teknologian käyttöönottoon joko positiivisesti tai negatiivisesti.	
Asiasanat Ketterä markkinointi, digitaalinen markkinointi, tieto- ja viestintätekniikan käyttöönotto, Kanban	
Säilytyspaikka Jyväskylän yliopiston kirjasto	

4

CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

TABLES

FIGURES

1 INTRODUCTION

Marketing has increasingly become a digital profession over the past decade. Brands and companies must utilize digital channels if they are willing to stay competitive and grow. As consumers turn to digital devices, platforms and services, the saying "If a company cannot be found in Google, it does not exist" is more accurate than ever. Websites, e-mail, search engines, social media and online advertising are elements of why modern-day marketing is often labelled as digital marketing. The dynamics between traditional marketing and digital marketing are quite different, as digital requires more speed, adaptability, connectivity, scale, and precision. Organizations across different industries need to consider digital dimensions to manage digital complexity and create value for customers; customers who are only few clicks away from choosing another one of hundreds of offerings that can be found online. (Taiminen & Karjaluoto, 2015.)

Jesse (2018) argues that classical organizational patterns are built on hierarchy, structure, and bureaucracy where control, rules and processes lead management and day-to-day operations. The larger the company, the more complex and inflexible they are. Lou Gerstner, CEO of IBM has described how difficult it is to "get an elephant to dance", which highlights the cumbersomeness of many organizations. These types of organizational models are not able to adapt the fast-changing environment of digitalization that requires speed, adaptability, connectivity, scale and precision. (Jesse, 2018.)

Modern-day marketing agencies, of course, cannot be directly compared to multinational corporations that employ tens of thousands of people. Majority of marketing agencies are SMEs, who deal with different organizational challenges. According to Taiminen and Karjaluoto (2015) techniques used in SMEs are typically more informal, reactive, and spontaneous. As organizations grow the more structured they become, and the more they invest in process implementation to guide employees (Taiminen & Karjaluoto, 2015).

Understanding organizational agility and agile ways of working has gained interest among businesses around the world. Although modern organizations have implemented creative ways to run organizations and projects, unfortunately the failure rate of projects has remained high and relatively stable over the past decade. (Serrador & Pinto, 2015.) Researchers and practitioners have been investing time in finding alternative methods for project implementation, as many popular and widely used organization and project management models have been found to be too inflexible to run modern-day businesses. Organizational agility and agile marketing methods have been trending over the past few years, however, research on the topic remains scarce. Examples of successful and unsuccessful cases of businesses implementing agile marketing methods requires more attention among researchers. (Zhang, 2011.)

As the competition in different industries has become fiercer upon introduction of wide range of online-based tools and globalization, businesses are looking for best practices and techniques to augment their competitive advantage.

The question of surviving in today's competitive market is not only a concern for large global organizations, but similarly for national small and medium-sized companies. (Zhang, 2011.)

At the same time when competition is intensifying, new opportunities are available for businesses. The use of digital tools in organizations has increased dramatically over the past two decades, as new information and communication technology solutions are continuously developed and published. Digitalization holds its position as one of the most talked about issues among businesses and consumers. New ICT technologies continue to offer new ways to connect, collaborate and innovate for both businesses and individuals. Thus, companies can conduct business and interact with stakeholders more efficiently than ever. Failure to take advantage of the available technology can, with high probability, lead organizations into concern. Notwithstanding the industry, modern day companies can all be regarded as "tech companies", as technology has reached into every industry sector imaginable. (Zhang, 2011.)

The importance of digital tools can also be easily seen from the number of new ICT products and services entering the market. The Internet is full of advertisements, user reviews and tutorials about the variety of online-based business solutions. As the number of suppliers contributing towards the availability of information and communication technology increases, organizations can use new tools with affordable costs. Besides affordability, one of the main reasons for the popularity of online-based platforms is the convenience of using cloud platforms (software, hardware) compared to having in-house IT systems. Especially small and medium sized businesses can benefit from services that are available online, since there is no need for complex and expensive in-house IT installation and maintenance. (Martins, Oliveira, Thomas, & Tomás, 2018.)

The computing platforms available for businesses include Software-as-a-Service (SaaS), Platform-as-a-Service (PaaS) and Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS) (Safari, Safari, & Hasanzadeh, 2015). SaaS is being adopted widely across industries, as it is relatively simple to set up and use. SaaS platforms operate with a method of payment called "pay-as-you-use", so each business can easily choose a subscription based on how complete service is needed. Often the light memberships prices are very modest, and even the premium packages cost a fraction of a in-house IT installation. (Safari et al., 2015.)

While digitalization has been an emerging area in business, organizations seek new ways to utilize the online services to create better and deeper relationships with their customers and stakeholders. In no way it is an easy task, since there are often several parties included in business operations – both internally and externally. This has forced companies to concentrate in improving communication and bringing the stakeholders closer, to maintain relationships and avoid losing customers to competitors. (Safari et al., 2015.)

The aim of this thesis is to provide insight of agile marketing methods and how new ICT solution implementation can help achieving it. The focus will be in project management between service provider and client, and how to implement

a digital Kanban board that will enhance the cooperation between stakeholders and thus create extra value. If agile marketing and Kanban improve the cooperation between the service provider and their clients, it can also provide a major lift in the company's competitiveness.

1.1   Key concepts

The key concepts in this study include agile marketing, ICT implementation and improved project management – in a digital environment. Marketers and other business practitioners can benefit by adopting new digital innovations to help improving business processes and maintaining strong stakeholder relationships. For over a decade, software start-ups have been exploiting new ways of organizing work, and thus, making business processes more efficient. In recent years, many companies from different industries have realized that similar tools and methods could improve their businesses as well. Especially marketing agencies are becoming more familiar with new technologies and therefore keen to try new ideas to stay competitive. (Norbert, 2018.)

As today's marketing relies on a tremendous amount of digital infrastructure to manage its operations, implementing new digital tools has become a must. It could be argued that all modern marketing specialists are tied to use different software applications in their everyday work. Therefore, the digital environment they face can offer potential to give marketing agencies digital leverage, such as speed, adaptability, and precision. Speed dominates companies around the world, as communication happens faster now than ever. At the same time, adaptability and modifiability has never been faster and easier, than it is in digital era. Websites can be altered quickly and effortlessly, information can be created and distributed in an instant, and software applications can be easily personalized to each of their own liking. And all this can be made in a precision, that could not be done manually 20 years ago, with data backing up decisions and KPI's to track performance. (Bharadwaj, El Sawy, Pavlou, & Venkatraman, 2013.)

Because of digital being the new norm, it is natural for companies to take advantage of implementing and adapting new technologies to keep up with the unpredictable markets. Thus, in this study, the concepts of adapting ideas from agile and lean software development methodologies will be studied in a way, that creative digital marketing agency could have the potential to implement them, as it seeks to create extra value for its customers and increase competitiveness in fast changing industry.

1.2   Justification of the topic

There are several reasons of why modern companies including marketing agencies will benefit from agile marketing now and in the future. Marketing as a

business field has constantly changed and become more complex, thus making it difficult to plan and manage projects with old project management methods. Digitalization has shaped the expectations of organizations that look for creative services, such as hiring an outside digital marketing agency. They now seek flexible and customized services and expect quick results, whether it is re-branding company's image, marketing new business offerings or getting maximum returns on their advertising spending. Project deadlines are short and many specialists from different business areas work simultaneously on multiple projects, both from the supplier's side and from the client's side. There is urgency for agile concepts that allow complicated projects to be managed as effortlessly as possible. (Brinker, 2016.)

Another challenge that has risen during the rapid digitalization of businesses is that co-workers, clients, and other stakeholders have less face-to-face time, as digital tools and channels offer the possibility to work remotely without predetermined times and locations. When people have less face-to-face interaction and more individual work opportunities, project management gets more complicated. Teams collaborating in joint projects locate in various cities, countries and even continents, not to mention different time zones and working hours. Work becomes more scattered and the possibility of information breakdowns, misunderstandings and making duplicate work increases. Agile marketing methods and Kanban allow stakeholders to self-organize their work and project schedules, as well as decrease time wasting. (Moi & Cabiddu, 2020.) A correct use of Kanban helps companies, teams and individual employees to schedule their work and improve the efficiency of managing projects and tasks (Corona & Pani, 2012).

Third reason for adopting agile marketing methods and Kanban is to support constant self-development for employees, create testing culture and empower an environment of open discussion. Projects are divided into multiple short sprints instead of bundling everything into one big unit. Shorter sprints allow stakeholders to plan little stock of work items to work for, so that there is a constant understanding who is working on what. (Brinker, 2016.)

There have been several studies about organizational agility in the past 10 or 15 years, but much of the research has focused on software development where agile methods have been in use since late 1990's or early 2000's. However agile methods are still very new in other areas of business, especially in marketing. There is a clear shortage of real-life examples of marketing companies that use agile methods in their business services. Therefore, research around the topic is also very scarce. (Serrador & Pinto, 2015.)

1.3   Study background

Online-based platforms and the importance of digitalization has been discussed and studied a lot in the recent years. Similarly, value creation process has been

trending subject among researchers. However, the concepts have been mostly studied individually, and the research on digital solutions and its value outcomes remain scarce (Jaakkola & Hakanen, 2013). Although some discussion can be found around the value of developing and providing solutions, much of the research has been done at a rather general level (Jaakkola & Hakanen, 2013). Additionally, much of the present research around agile and lean methods concentrates on software start-ups, instead of considering other industries (Serrador & Pinto, 2015). To address this gap, the author wanted to seek more understanding related to agile marketing, ICT implementation, and value outcomes of implementing Kanban in digital marketing agency.

While value creation in business-to-consumer context has been studied quite extensively during the past decade, research in collaborative business-to-business setting is still very limited. Researchers should pay attention to the practice perspective of value creation in B2B systems in future studies and described the current research situation as following (Kohtamäki & Rajala, 2016, 11).:

> Understanding the creation and capture of value as systems or networked phenomena – rather than simply considering the value created within the boundaries of a single firm – is an emerging theme in the marketing literature and beyond, in both theory and practice.

In this study, the aim is to connect ICT implementation and how agile marketing methods, more specifically digital Kanban board, can create additional value in business-to-business context. Many companies implement digital tools that are integrated with customers. How should these tools be implemented and adopted to add extra value to customers? What are the facilitators and impediments of adopting new technology? How can companies ensure that the implementation of new ICT solution would be successful and beneficial for the company?

1.4   Study objective and research questions

The main objective of this study is to increase the understanding of implementing new information and communications technology solution. The reason for adopting a new ICT system in the case company is that it will facilitate agile marketing implementation in the organization. Therefore, the literature review will focus on two main areas. First it will focus on providing a theoretical framework on implementing ICT system in B2B service business. Second part discusses on agile marketing methods by looking into the benefits and challenges of agile marketing, and specifically Kanban. This thesis aims to contribute to presenting practical findings that can help the case company to succeed in the implementation process of agile marketing ICT system. Therefore, the empirical part of the paper is conducted as a case study, and employees of the case company will be interviewed.

The primary research question is:
How can a modern marketing agency implement agile marketing ICT solution successfully?

The primary research problem is supported by three additional research questions:

1. What are the perceived benefits and risks of implementing agile marketing software?
2. What are the facilitators of ICT implementation?
3. What are the impediments of ICT implementation?

1.5   Introduction of data and research method

In this case study the empirical data was collected during a two-month period between August 2019 and September 2019. The aim of this research is to provide empirical understanding of what are the impediments and facilitators in the adoption and implementation of an agile marketing ICT solution. The data was collected by in-depth semi-structured interviews where full-time employees from different organizational levels were selected to participate. Roles included top management, team leaders and specialists who all were employed throughout the whole agile marketing implementation process. Each of the nine employees were interviewed once.

1.6   Structure of the study

This study consists of five chapters including introduction, literature review, methodology, study findings and discussion. In addition, references and appendixes are presented in the end.

The first chapter in this study concentrates on the process of adoption and implementation of an agile marketing. As there is limited number of studies on agile marketing software implementation, the Sales Force automation (SFA) adoption and implementation framework has been chosen to reflect the process. The second part of the literature review covers the concept of agile marketing and organizational agility, and what are the benefits as well as the challenges of implementing agile marketing methods in business-to-business setting. The aim is to review existing literature and gather information of how organizations utilize agile marketing methods, and if they can be seen as beneficial.

Next, the case company is introduced together with the plans of implementing new ICT solution to help the firm to move towards agile practices. Name of

the solution is a digital Kanban board, which has many features associated with organizational agility.

2   AGILE MARKETING

Organizational agility and agile marketing has been the subject of research in-creasingly over the past decade, as companies operating in variety of industries have been trying to find new flexible ways to carry out business operations (Worley & Lawler, 2010). Now more than ever, businesses of different sizes are concentrating on adopting agile methods, as consultants, executives and man-agement theorists are trying to understand and capitalize on agile strategies. The main question that is being tackled by agility is change. Cambridge Dictionary defines agility, in the context of planning and doing work as:

> "[Agility is] ways of planning and doing work in which it is understood that making changes as they are needed is an important part of the job. Business agility means a company is always in a position to take account of market changes. Constant change is the new dynamic of the global economy and makes agility even more necessary than ever."

First chapter will discuss about the emergence of agile marketing and explain why many companies believe that agility is more important than ever. This will be followed by a closer look into different elements of agile marketing: the driv-ers, capabilities, and providers. Next part will focus on Kanban board, which is a tool used in agile work and project management.

Next, the three stages of organizational agility adoption and implementation are explained. The adoption and implementation process include three phases that are planning, communication and evaluation.

2.1   The emergence of agile marketing

Many studies on organizational theory across disciplines explain that organiza-tions are facing a dynamic environment (Nijssen & Paauwe, 2012). Organizations are struggling with the complexity, unpredictability and instability of environ-mental change and the pressure from modern business environment result com-panies with the need of align the organization with the ever-changing context. In many situations, the focus is no longer on exceeding expectations, but on survival. (Nijssen & Paauwe, 2012.) If a firm can survive, the next question that many ex-ecutives are struggling with is to design organizations that can drive satisfactory performance in the short term but are agile and dynamic enough to yield profits over the long run (Worley & Lawler, 2010.) In the field of digital marketing, Finn-ish marketing agencies are feeling the pressure, because new competitors emerge in constant manner, companies searching for digital marketing services are con-stantly demanding higher return rates for their investments and the price

competition is booming. Worley & Lawler (2010, 3) argue that "organization design is the cornerstone of a firm's competitive advantage and performance, as research shows that the cleverest strategy will not reach its potential if an organization's structures, processes, and systems do not support it."

Digitality potentially enables speed, that organizations can utilize to act and react more quickly to new opportunities and threats. Thus, agility combined with digital utilities allow organizations to listen market feedback and react to them accordingly. Service offerings and content can be altered for shifting circumstances with scale and precision relatively easily, compared to the mechanics of traditional economics and marketing. (Brinker, 2016.) The latest and most innovative technology is not enough to make an organization agile, because all digital software are simply tools. So, a company that uses market leading software cannot be considered agile if the organizational structures do not allow using the technology in flexible way. Many existing processes, structures and management practices still create bottlenecks that limit the speed and adaptability offered by technology. Bottani (2010, 251) suggests that "agility can be achieved through the integration of organization, highly skilled and knowledgeable people and advanced technologies".

2.2 The concept and origins of agile marketing

Because of digitalization and constantly changing business environment has forced marketers to apply agile methods and practices to offer more flexibility, transformation ability and increase competitiveness (Moi & Cabiddu, 2020). Agile marketing is a dynamic way of designing an organization that can recognize the need for change from both internal and external sources, meet those demands of change and sustain effective performance over time (Worley & Lawler, 2010). The key is long-term performance, since many companies can meet short term goals, but the real issue is to find ways to create structures, processes and systems that are systematically successful. By instituting agile marketing methods the aim of a company is to enrich and satisfy customers and employees. (Tseng & Lin, 2011.) Tseng & Lin (2011) argue that agility could be defined as "the ability of an enterprise to respond rapidly to changes in the market and customer demands." The foundation of true agile marketing is to create a strategically competitive structure with the integration of information technologies, personnel, business processes, innovation, and facilities that marketing firms can quickly adjust strategies in response to changing and evolving customer needs. Each element or feature must be constructed with flexibility in mind, so that they support the dynamic design that is key in organizational agility. (Bottani, 2010.)

The origins of agile marketing are usually set toward the end of the twentieth century. At that time software development started to emerge and grow with high speed, with more professionals encountering the challenges of digital dynamics. They started to understand what it was like to continuously change plans and work on new projects, as at that time, computers doubled in processing

power every two years. New requirements were introduced at a rate that no other industry had faced before. (Brinker, 2016.) In 2001, some of the leading members of the agile software development community got together and produced the "Manifesto for Agile Software Development". Their guidelines resonated with a large group of software professionals, and so the industry began to move towards agile methods. Marketers then adapted agile methods from the software development arena, and so agile marketing emerged. Agile marketing is the extension of agile practices, e.g. faster production cycles, more transparent project management, stakeholder coordination and engagement, and continuous improvement of processes. (Moi & Cabiddu, 2020.)

Vassileva (2017) argues that modern dynamic organizations differ from traditional organizations in many ways. Traditional organizations have linear vertical processes, task-based assignments, old-fashioned management, and hierarchy-based organizational structure. The level of digital maturity is often emerging, and marketing evolution is in early stages. Dynamic organization, however, are service-based, collaborative, customer-oriented, and have real-time on demand management and production. These dynamic features are distinctive to modern organizations following agile marketing methods. (Vassileva, 2017.)

2.3   Benefits of agile marketing

2.3.1   Clarity of roles and tasks

One of the first steps to reach well-organized agile marketing process is to have a mutual understanding of roles and tasks between the stakeholders participating in collective business operations. Each task within a shared project should have dedicated person, so that all participants know who the driving team members are and who are the non-responsible stakeholders. it is the customer's task to prepare apprehensible list of wants and needs to be able to articulate them efficiently during future interaction encounters. In addition to pre-interaction activities and actual interaction, it is advisable to create a process around post-interaction actions, so that the risk of any pitfalls during business collaboration decreases. (Järvi, Kähkönen, & Torvinen, 2018.)

2.3.2   Joint development of processes and resources

The basic concept behind agile marketing is the co-design philosophy, in which processes are collaboratively specified, synthesised, and implemented (Durugbo, 2014). The reason behind co-design philosophy is the need to eliminate non-value adding activities, such as minimizing rework and reducing the amount of duplicate work being done. The origins of co-design and joint working come from industrial product development, where production steps have shifted from linear

design to co-design. This approach has then been adopted by marketers, where close collaboration and value co-creation are valued. Figure 2 illustrates the difference of the "old" linear thinking and "new" concurrent thinking. (Durugbo, 2014.)
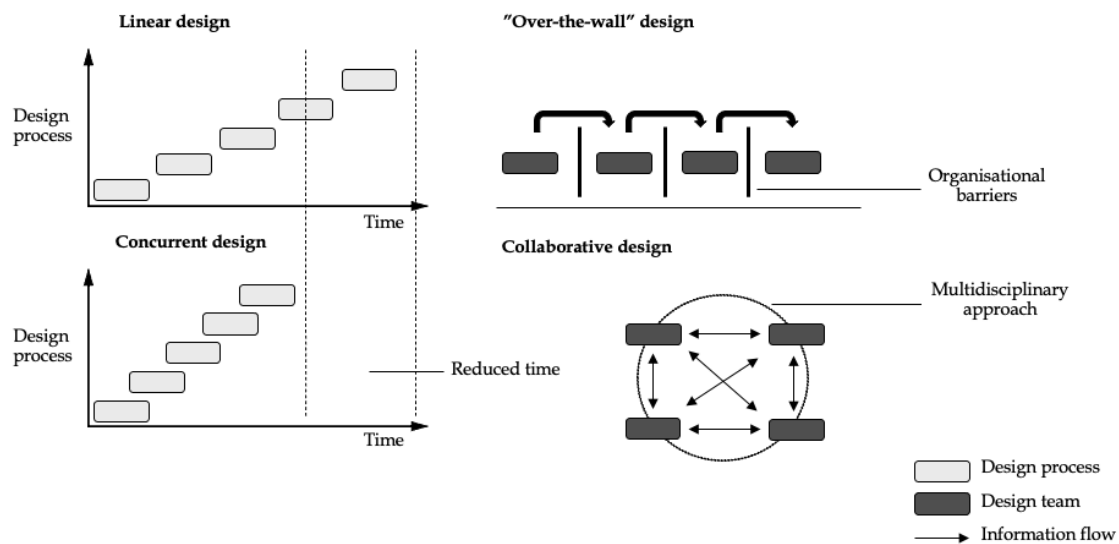

FIGURE 1 Co-design in comparison to linear design (Durugbo, 2014).

The above figure shows, how linear production leaves gaps of information between the steps taking part in the process. There are organizational barriers between individuals or teams that are working towards the same goal, making it difficult to the participants to know what is being done during other production steps. Silos between the organization predispose the production line to errors, that are caused by information flow being disturbed. Like products, the production of services can also be affected negatively, if collaboration is missing. Improved collaboration affects positively to the flow of information, which again increases the efficiency of the whole production line. (Durugbo, 2014.)

In academic literature, researchers have focused on how to overcome the problematic "over-the-wall" approach, meaning that the organizational barriers could be solved across business functions, as marketing, production, and customer service. Especially in networked environments, where several stakeholders have access to same software and tools, and who are responsible for working with tasks simultaneously, can benefit greatly from the absence of barriers. (Parraguez & Maier, 2012.) Gasson (2008) argues that organizations can improve communication and work practices, as well as streamline data processing if business processes and information systems are mutually constituted between stakeholders. Joint development of processes and resources enable companies to collaborate and achieve common goals more efficiently by bringing together teams and specialists. By blending different skillsets and capabilities from multiple disciplines, companies can add extra value in managing and organizing multi-team tasks. Based on the research conducted by Durugbo (2014), stages of work

processes and projects can be overlapped to improve end-products and cut production times.

2.3.3   Knowledge sharing and integration

Collaborative knowledge sharing is especially important in knowledge-intensive business services (KIBS). Practices such as sharing information and coproducing services between the supplier and other stakeholders should not be overlooked when business partners look forward to effective process integration (source). Knowledge is often one of the key competences in services sector. Much of organizations knowledge originates from internal sources, such as from personnel experience, expertise and processes, and is used to serve customers. Leveraging knowledge effectively among organization, employees and stakeholders is an important factor in achieving company's objectives. (Cegarra-Navarro, Soto-Acosta, & Wensley, 2016.)

The study of Cegarra-Navarro et al. (2016) points out that applying knowledge between business partners provides the potential for effective action, underlining the importance of knowledge sharing. As businesses are becoming more technologically complex, specialized and knowledge-intensive, suppliers and customers are becoming more dependent on sharing their knowledge and resources (Aarikka-Stenroos & Jaakkola, 2012).

2.3.4   Cross-functional involvement

Firms are constantly looking for improving business processes to maintain competitive advantage and increase profits. Hence, every opportunity to create value in collaboration with customers and suppliers should be used. In B2B setting, when stakeholders combine their knowledge and skills to achieve improved performances, the results are usually much better compared to working independently with company's own resources. (Enz & Lambert, 2012.) Cross-functionality should not be a privilege for only the top management or salespeople maintaining the business relationships with stakeholders and customers, but it should be applied to other functions as well, such as marketing, operations, R&D and IT (Lambert, 2010). Based on the study conducted by Enz & Lambert (2012), more value was created in those B2B relationships where cross-functional, cross-firm teams were involved, compared to the relationships where businesses and teams worked independently, and collaboration was not involved.

2.4   Kanban

In Japanese, the word "Kan" means visual and "Ban" means board, thus "Kanban" meaning a visual board or visual display. The highly influential agile management method was developed by Taiichi Ohno at Toyota in the 1980's where

the focus was to decrease wasting resources and improve efficiency and performance in Toyota factory. (Krishnaiyer, Chen, & Bouzary, 2018.) In addition, it addressed empowering workers to reach their full potential by allowing them to continuously manage and improve their work. Later, David Anderson expanded the method and developed a version of Kanban for software development. The emphasis was in visualizing workflow, limiting work in progress, pulling work along a process and continuous improvement. (Brinker, 2016.) The difference between conventional push architectures of work, Kanban uses a pull method. Instead of someone pushing new projects and tasks to employees, each individual can limit their work-in-progress tasks and pull more work whenever the limit allows to do that. (Hofmann, Lauber, Haefner, & Lanza, 2018.)

2.4.1   Kanban board

The most well-known connect of Kanban is the Kanban board, which in essence is a whiteboard divided into columns. There are various styles of Kanban boards, but the simplest version would have three columns named "to do", "doing" and "done" (figure 1.). Tasks are written on cards and are placed in "to do" column. As the tasks are taken on, they would be moved along the board first in "work in progress" column and finally in "done" column, as the task is completed. Different variations of the Kanban board can include additional columns such as "backlog", "review" and "Q&A". The benefit of Kanban board is that anyone can see the workflow at glance and understand the progress of tasks and projects, as illustrated in below figure. (Hammarberg & Sundén, 2014.)
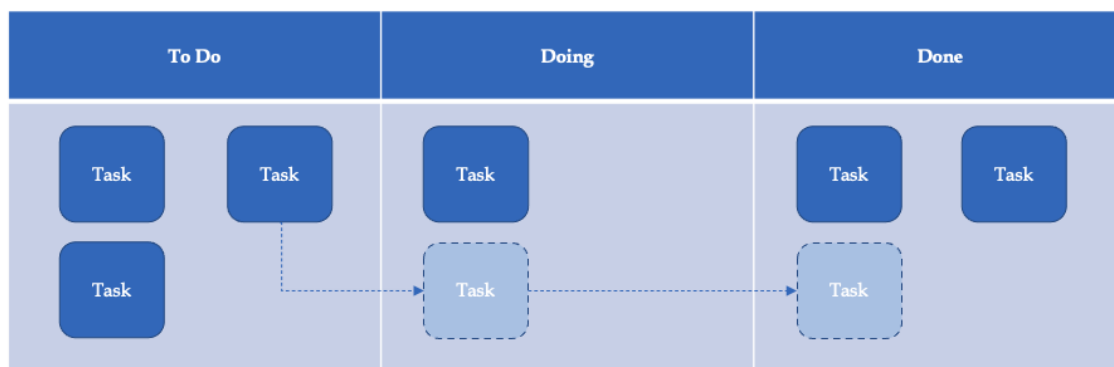
FIGURE 2 Simplified Kanban board showing tasks and workflow.

Aside from helping project teams to have common understanding of the status of the project and visualize the workflow, Kanban board is effective in limiting and prioritizing work. Each column in the board has a work in progress (WIP) limit, meaning that a specific column cannot contain more than agreed number of tasks. Tasks need to proceed from left to right before new tasks can be pulled. This helps in avoiding bottlenecks where projects stand by because of too many simultaneous tasks in progress. The WIP limit makes sure that people working

in projects do not have inhumane workload and forces stakeholders to prioritize most important tasks over other work. (Hammarberg & Sundén, 2014.)

3   ICT SOLUTION IMPLEMENTATION

As the world is rapidly coming digitally intensive, firms must maintain competitive advantage with digital solutions that allow them to operate in multiform ecosystem (Krishnaiyer, Chenk, & Bouzary, 2018). This requires organizations to rethink how to standardize digital platforms and business processes around them. Especially the agility of operations has been an emergent factor for many B2B businesses, as the fast-changing environment demands rapid responses. Organizational agility refers to the capability of a company to quickly adapt in to changes and decrease process response times. (Cegarra-Navarro et al., 2016.) Implementing new innovative digital solutions to enhance process agility could seem like an overwhelming but necessary task in B2B settings (Bharadwaj et al., 2013).

Value creation in traditional business models is relatively well understood, as there are several strategic management theories and practices focused on physical, tangible resources. Digitalization, however, provides additional dimensions that alter the nature of value creation in intangible context. (Bharadwaj et al., 2013.) Suppliers are encouraged to develop integrated solutions that meet customer demands. Flexible service "bundles" are created in order to provide the best possible value experiences for customers, without them having to buy individual components from number of suppliers. (Jaakkola & Hakanen, 2013.) More research should be done on capitalizing new digital solutions in unlocking new business opportunities across B2B markets (Liu, Foscht, Eisingerich, & Tsai, 2018).

Nowadays, many firms are beginning to understand the importance of digital resources, realizing that products and services can be offered efficiently through web-based platforms. As organizations and industries have become familiar with the easiness of digital information, communication, and connectivity, the separation between business strategy and digital business strategy has diminished. Soon digital business strategy will be the business strategy. (Bharadwaj et al., 2013.)

Bharadwaj et al. (2013) argue that digital business strategy can be seen as an umbrella to many of the processes within a company; digital platforms support various business operations such as marketing, operations, customer service, communication, and others. With the help of IT capabilities, digital business strategy takes advantage of internal and external digital platforms allowing processes to be tightly connected and well organized (Bharadwaj et al., 2013).

3.1   Digitalization of service providers

Digital channels have made it possible for service organizations to democratize content, as well as share, distribute and co-create it in more useful forms.

Dynamic coordination in digital settings between stakeholders have led to more efficient workflows and business processes. (Bharadwaj et al., 2013.)

The speed of providing services and building networks concerns every firm, industry sector and industry. While working is no longer tied to time and place, speed can be reached through effective stakeholder collaboration. One of the key elements for today's organizations is the capability to digitally design, structure and manage external networks providing complementary services as efficiently as internal operations. The possibility to orchestrate processes that are visible end-to-end between the supplier and the customer has allowed partnerships to be more efficient than ever before. In global basis, speed has a big role in driving competitive advantage, and for that reason, should receive much attention from organizations. (Bharadwaj et al., 2013.)

3.2   ICT solution implementation

Digital solutions, or better known as information and communication technology (ICT) systems are widely used in organizations of different sizes. Many aspects advocate the use of ICT systems, as they provide favourable elements in conducting business. For example, they improve group interaction and collaboration, sharing of workplace know-how and enhance the performance of teams. There are several existing studies looking into ICT system implementation, and many of them show that ICT investments are valuable for business performance and productivity. However, ICT system implementation affect both the organization and individuals working in the organization, thus making it challenging to adopt and establish the use of ICT systems successfully. (Andriessen, 2003.)

According to Korpelainen (2011), the articles published on ICT system implementation and adoption are growing on annual basis. Digitalization has had and continues to have an impact on wide range of industries. Resulting in studies being published regularly in leading journals, including Information & Management, MIS Quarterly, the Journal of Information Technology and the Journal of Management Information Systems. (Korpelainen, 2011.)

Researchers discussing about ICT implementation and adoption often speak about a term "open-to-new ideas corporate culture", meaning that organizations should support a working environment where employees can keep up with changing technologies. It is a strategic intent that provides direction toward an organization-wide commitment that encourages individuals to adapt and use new ICT technologies in their daily work. Lack of strategic direction commonly result in failure in clarity of thought and purpose, which leads to individuals having their own, sometimes disparate goals. (Barba-Sánchez et al., 2007.)

3.3   Facilitators and impediments of ICT implementation

Overall, digital solutions can provide number of benefits across a wide range of internal and external business operations. One of the major assets of ICT systems is that they can contribute to improvement of information and knowledge management inside the organization. Additionally, they increase the speed and reliability of business processes. (Barba-Sánchez et al., 2007.) Korpelainen (2011) suggests that several studies have shown that ICT investments are not only beneficial for performance and productivity, but also indicate many other favourable consequences, such as improvement in interaction and collaboration as well as supporting workplace learning.

One important factor that drives ICT adoption is company's technological competency, that has a direct effect on how firms succeed in implementing new ICT solutions. The technological competency of an organization can be divided into four categories, from which three are internal and one external factor. The internal ICT adoption competencies are firm's technological competencies, human capital and internal organization structure. (Giotopoulos, Kontolaimou, Korra, & Tsakanikas, 2017.) The external competency consists of environmental and firm characteristics, as pictured below.
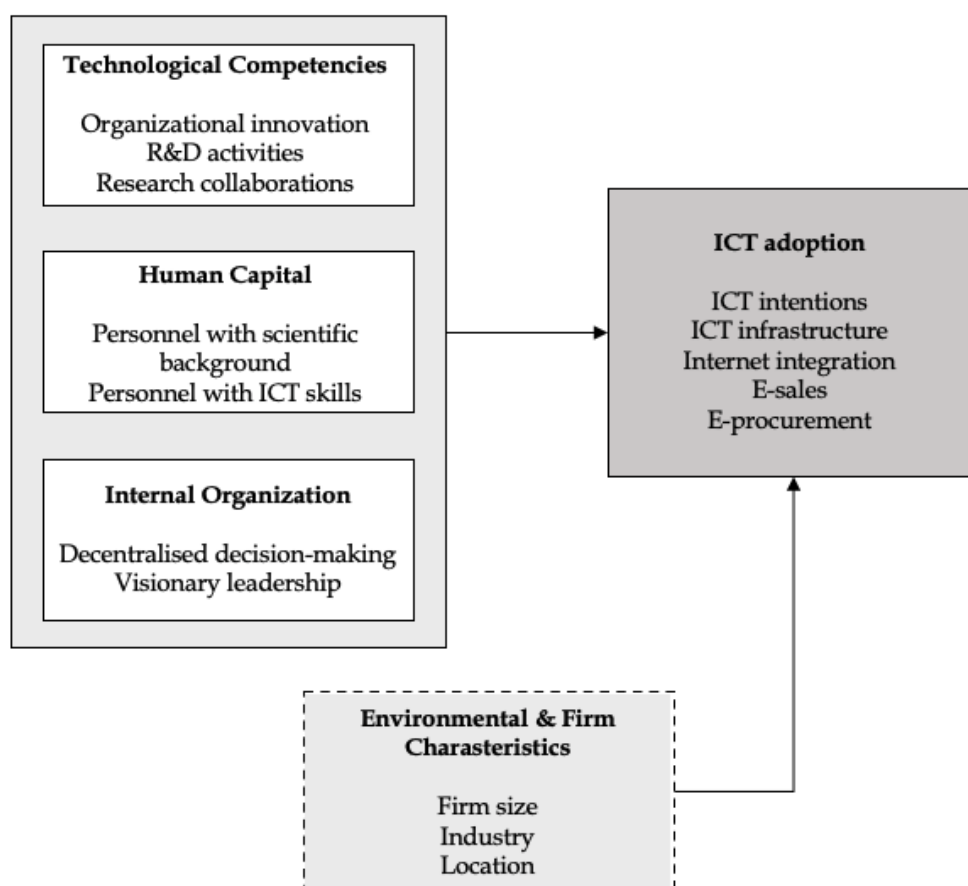

FIGURE 3 Conceptual framework of ICT adoption (Giotopoulos et al., 2017).

Giotopoulos et al. (2017) found out that all four aspects affected ICT adoption positively. A company that is innovative, has history to run research and development activities, and has prior technological experience is more likely to succeed in adopting ICT solutions. Further, Barba-Sánchez et al. (2007) explain that open-to-new ideas corporate culture drives ICT adoption. In addition, high human capital is also positively associated with ICT adoption, meaning that employees' education, training, and experience are crucial in ICT adoption, because they have higher probability to possess required knowledge and skills that are beneficial in ICT implementation. Thirdly, decentralized organizational structure and decision-making are specifically important for ICT adoption. Centralized organizations are less likely to adopt new ICT solutions. Additionally, companies with visionary leadership that are committed to reach goals have higher likelihood to have success in ICT adoption. (Giotopoulos et al., 2017.)

In business setting, successful ICT implementation and adoption is not guaranteed, but it challenges companies regardless the size and age of an organization. The implementation of an ICT system always causes both organizational and individual changes, thus requiring careful planning, ownership, and commitment across the whole organization. The challenges and problems faced in introducing ICT systems in organizations have led both scholars and practitioners to study and seek understanding of the process. (Korpelainen, 2011.)

The next three sections concentrate on identifying and explaining the problem areas regarding ICT adoption and implementation. After the impediments are clear, the paper continues to suggest solutions on how to overcome potential stumbling blocks. According to Honeycutt et al. (2005), the reasons behind organizational failures in ICT projects are often similar despite the industry in question. The failures in ICT projects regularly spring from same sources; insufficient measures taken in planning, communication, and evaluation phases of the project. Additionally, fourth pitfall is that organizations fail to convince, or "sell" the idea of using a new digital system to its employees and customers. When an organization overlooks one or more of the four mentioned phases, the risk of failure in ICT implementation and/or adoption increases. (Honeycutt et al., 2005.) The three steps of planning, communication and evaluation will be covered in the next sections to present necessary information and tools for the case company to succeed in their upcoming digital solution implementation. Next, the first three phases are discussed in detail, starting with planning, and continued by communicating and evaluating phases.

Honeycutt et al. (2005) have identified steps during ICT implementation and adoption process. The original framework was created for sales force automation (SFA) implementation process, but it has been applied to other implementation purposes too. The below figure shows that the implementation process framework is divided into three phases. First is the planning phase, followed by communication and finished by the evaluation stage (Honeycutt et al., 2005).
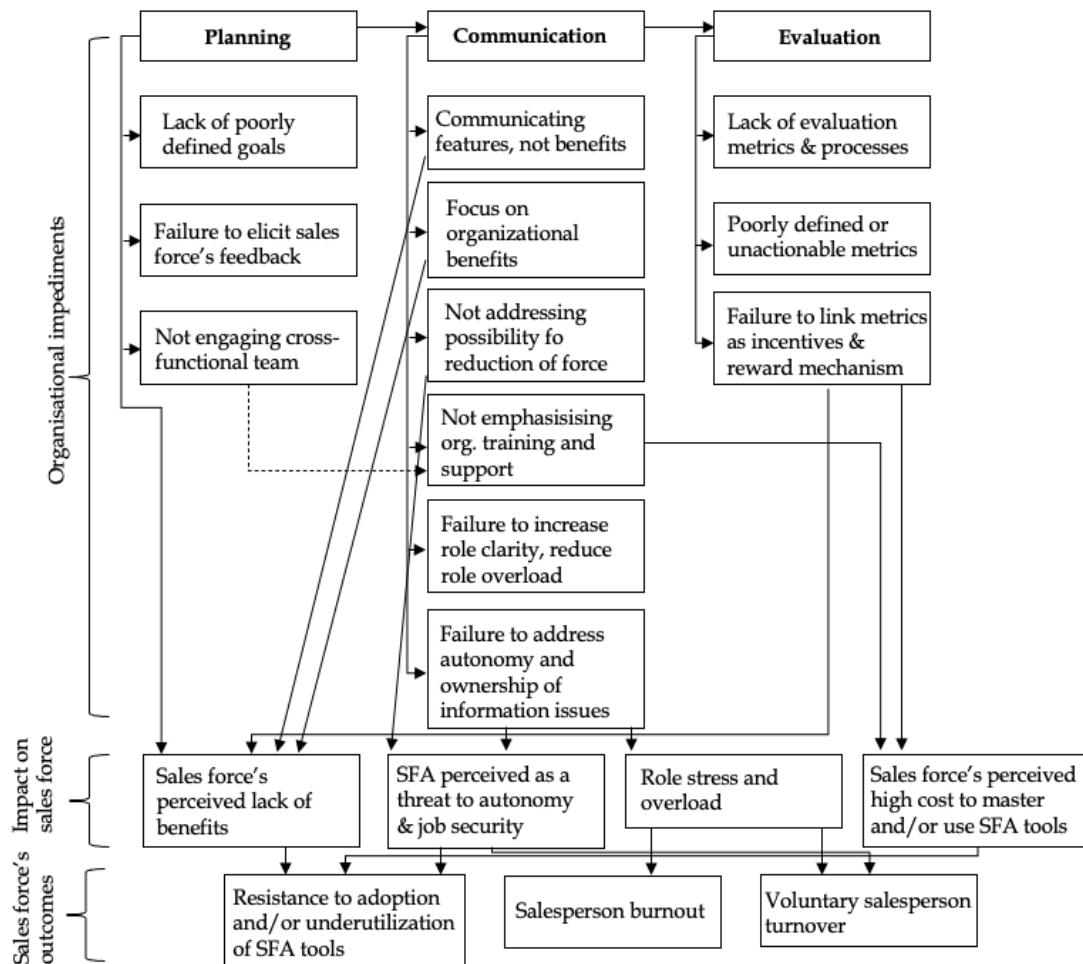
FIGURE 4 Impediments to the implementation of SFA system (Honeycutt et al., 2005, 315).

3.3.1 Planning

Most importantly in planning phase for ICT implementation is to recognize the business problem that the organization wishes to resolve. Although companies have hugely different approaches to planning phase of ICT implementation, there are some key guidelines of what aspects should be considered. The early involvement of variety of stakeholders positively impacts the implementation process and decreases the chance of failure. After all, adopting new ICT solution is likely to have significant affect to wide range of teams and employees. (Honeycutt et al., 2005.)

First, to be able to succeed in implementation process, one or more goals needs to be set to be able to measure success, and if the implemented solution provides benefits. The lack of setting specific goals is often one of the major

pitfalls if an ICT implementation process fails. The goals should be detailed and clear to everyone, because too broad objectives leave open questions that make careful evaluation impossible. Secondly, in addition to defining clear goals and objectives, the whole process from planning to evaluation should involve cross-functional teams to have as much necessary details as possible to make informed decisions. When there are a group of people involved in the planning phase, there is a chance to receive comprehensive feedback. Any ICT implementation process should include close cooperation between teams to gather as much information and data to have effective planning and overall implementation process. (Honeycutt et al., 2005.)

By overlooking setting specific goals and failing to involve and inspire cross-functional teams, there is a growing risk that the company unsuccessfully implements new technology. Lacking clear planning, there is increased possibility that employees don't embody the perceived benefits, thus causing resistance to adoption of new ICT tool, or underutilization of ICT tool. (Honeycutt et al., 2005.)

3.3.2   Communicating

The second phase of ICT solution implementation should take care of communicating the expectations and benefits of the new ICT solution across personnel. The most important task for the top management is to make sure that the purpose of acquiring new technology and the process of implementing it is common knowledge to all who are affected by the ICT implementation. It is not unusual that the key benefits differ a lot depending on the role of an employee. For that reason, a common mistake is that the people who are going to be using a new ICT solution get irrelevant benefits communicated to them. For example, top management might see that an ICT solution key benefits are easier reporting or better online security, but these are not necessary the benefits that will drive enthusiasm among the end users, e.g., the specialists working with the new technology every day. Specialists may respond to very different key benefits, such as easier client management, or less scattered tools that need to be used. (Honeycutt et al., 2005.)

If a company fails to communicate real benefits or focuses too much on technical features or organization benefits instead of underlining employees' benefits, it could potentially damage existing employees' mindset. Failing in communication could at worst create additional stress to personnel, increase the resistance to implementation, and even affect the well-being of the employee, if the adoption of new ICT system threats their job autonomy and ownership. (Honeycutt et al., 2005.)

3.3.3   Evaluating

Good evaluation is possible only if the objectives and goals of an ICT implementation process have been set during planning phase. Many companies lose the

opportunity to perform careful evaluation, because the implementation process is lacking structure and performance indicators that can be measured. Even if the overall thought of an implementation process is positive, it is impossible to analyse results and evaluate success thoroughly. (Honeycutt et al., 2005.) Around 50% of companies fall short in evaluating phase, because they have not set up metrics in advance to measure the outcome of ICT implementation (Erffmeyer & Johnson, 2001). Common reason for not setting measurable objectives is because it is difficult to define and decide metrics for soft goals, such as improving client management or saving time. If possible, there should be hard metrics that measure specific areas of the implemented ICT solution. For example, a company could measure if tasks are completed quicker after implementation compared to before. Or if deadlines are missed less than before. These kinds of performance indicators give hard data on how the adopted ICT solution is bringing benefits or not. (Honeycutt et al., 2005.)

Metrics do not only help evaluating the success of ICT implementation, but they also provide credibility for the new technology. By being able to showcase clear results to employees, there is less likely to be resistance towards adoption and future use of the ICT solution. In addition to give credibility, monetary goals should be set to calculate the investment that has been used to new technology adoption. The investment calculations and targets should of course include the cost of acquired ICT solution, but also intangible costs. The intangible costs include time used for employee training or technical support, that are essential in almost any ICT implementation process. The better the organization can estimate the costs and set measurable objectives, the more likely it can prove the successfulness of an implementation process. (Honeycutt et al., 2005.)

4   METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the research strategy and explain why qualitative methods were used for collecting the research data. Since the previous research on agile methods in B2B setting is scarce, the main objective of this study is to offer empirical understanding about implementing agile methods in a modern B2B setting, and what should be considered in the implementation process. The research follows a typical structure of a qualitative research. First, an extensive literature review was done on previous research and theories. Secondly, the study is carried out by semi-structured interviews that were conducted by employees of the case company. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the interviewer. The results are presented with respondents' comments and the findings are discussed in detail.

4.1   Introduction of the case company

The case company is a Finnish digital marketing agency, established in 2012. The company portfolio consists of over 130 customers including both Finnish and international companies that operate in various business-to-business and business-to-customer sectors. The case company offers its clients several different services within the field of digital marketing, helping clients and/or advertisers to improve their marketing. Some of the bestseller services include Google Ads advertising, social media marketing, search engine optimization, and copywriting. The company currently employs around 30-35 digital marketing professionals and is headquartered in Jyväskylä.

Having operated for less than 10 years, the case company is still positioned as a start-up company. As the company is growing relatively fast with over 20 new employees hired in the past two years, as well as many new clients acquired during the same time, the company is willing to develop strong and sustainable organizational structure that thrives on continuous testing, experimentation, team agility, self-governance and scalability. Based on the discussions with company's upper management, the aim is not only to find a fitting organizational structure that works well, but to make it a competitive advantage. Thus, one of the key responsibilities of the board is to fine-tune the organizational model and make it as functioning and competitive as possible.

As a reaction to the dynamics of the industry, agile organization was seen as one of the key development areas. Agile marketing methods would not only affect the company at the organizational level, but it would also have a positive impact at individual level as well as team or department level. Additionally, other case studies have shown that agile methods also improve customer satisfaction through regular, dependable, high-quality operations (Anderson, 2010,

15). Because of these opportunities, the case company wanted to find out ways how agile marketing methods and an agile project management tool could be implemented in a modern digital marketing agency. The main objective was to acquire and adopt a digital Kanban board that would help the company to pursue increased competitiveness and organizational agility.

4.2   Kanban board implementation

The growing number of clients and large customer portfolios has emerged a need to better organize the daily workflow of digital projects. Simultaneously, one of the core values of the case company states that the company has a desire to genuinely help its customers. Therefore, an active flow of communication, transparency and feedback are continuously monitored and improved. As the company grows and the number of clients increase, agile processes are essential to ensure efficient cooperation between stakeholders. To develop agility, the company has decided to implement a digital Kanban board.

Kanban is used to aid in project management by visualizing the workflow both internally and externally, meaning that both the supplier and customer can interact with the Kanban board online. Its main task is to enhance collaboration between parties that participate in joint projects. By looking at the digital board, all members engaged in each project can see which tasks are waiting to get started, which are in-progress and which have been completed. The goal of Kanban is to streamline project passages and increase communication between the supplier and customer, thus improving customer engagement and provide additional value to customers. Ultimately, Kanban leads to higher quality and better performance. (Anderson, 2010.) By establishing regular workflow rhythm and delivering against it consistently, Kanban helps to build trust with customers and other stakeholders partaking in projects (Brinker, 2016).

4.3   Research strategy

For this thesis, the case study approach was selected as research strategy. When studying contemporary and real-life phenomena that has not been studied in-depth, case study approaches are favoured. Single case can serve as a fitting starting point for more in-depth studies. Additionally, case study research focuses on answering questions of how or why in real life context and is especially fruitful when exploring new phenomena under rare circumstances, or when an opportunity for unusual research access becomes available. In this case agile marketing methods and ICT solution implementation have not been researched extensively. Although organizational agility has been a topic of interest in many technology companies and ICT solution implementation has been studied more and more

over the past decade, there are very limited research on the topics together, especially in marketing context. (Yin, 2014.)

In this study, the case refers to agile marketing solution implementation in digital marketing agency. The case under study is contemporary and rare, as agile marketing and ICT implementation combined have not yet been studied. Furthermore, the research concentrated on a real-life event, as the case company aimed to revise organizational structure, processes and implement new ICT system successfully. Case study approach allowed the researcher to form a comprehensive picture of the project. Another of the main reasons for this research was that there were no previous knowledge or case material available for the case company to use when new SaaS platform and organizational agility when the project was decided to be launched. Literature and past research displayed several cases, but none of them fitting to this specific setting.

4.4 Data collection and analysis

In this case study nine employees of the case company were interviewed, of which all had some past knowledge of agile marketing. All interviewees also had previous experience in using different project management tools, both for internal purposes and with clients. Therefore, all participants were able to critically evaluate how the ICT implementation process was managed. According to Dubois & Gibbert (2010) in qualitative research data triangulation is important to have transparency and reliability. Therefore, data was obtained from multiple sources. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews where employees from different positions were interviewed. The participants included employees from search engine marketing, social media marketing, content marketing and search engine optimization teams, as well as from sales and upper management (Table 1). Both team leaders and client managers were interviewed, and each team was represented. Choosing participants across teams was crucial for non-biased research, as different teams use project management tools and other ICT solutions variably and in very different ways.

TABLE 1 Case company interview respondents in 2019.

Title	Role & Responsibility	Length of interview
CEO	• Managing director of the company • Responsible for HR and organizational level development	23 minutes
Team leader 1	• Team lead and client manager • Responsible for social media marketing	31 minutes
Team leader 2	• Team lead and client manager • Repsonsible for content & copywriting	25 minutes
Team leader 3	• Team lead and client manager • Responsible for search engine marketing	31 minutes
Specialist 1	• Client manager • Responsible for search engine marketing	30 minutes
Specialist 2	• Client manager • Responsible for search engine optimization	32 minutes
Specialist 3	• Client manager • Responsible for social media marketing	41 minutes
Specialist 4	• Client manager • Responsible for website development and search engine optimization	21 minutes
Specialist 5	• B2B sales and client manager • Responsible for client acquisition and client nurturing	35 minutes

All interviews were conducted face-to-face in August and September 2019. Participants were selected randomly, although the participation of team leaders and the CEO were predetermined to obtain answers throughout the organizational structure. During interviews, the participants answered a set of open-ended question to ensure in-depth views on the topic. The interviews varied between 21 to 41 minutes, average being around 30 minutes. All interviews were conducted in Finnish and the responses were recorded both in audio and in writing. The data was transcribed and analysed after all interview data was collected. In addition to interviews, the author participated in workshops and meetings related to agile marketing implementation and got acquainted with all available material related to the implementation process.

4.5   The role of the researcher

The researcher was employed at the case company during the research and ICT implementation process. It was easy to take the role of a researcher, as the author knew the company and the culture well in advance. Prior to agile marketing and Kanban implementation project, he had been involved with other internal projects where the objective is usually to improve one specific area of business whether it is internal processes, culture, client satisfaction or testing new utility software. When it was decided that the ICT implementation process wanted to be recorded, it was easier to choose someone inside the company to study the process, instead of hiring an external consultant. The advantage that the researcher had compared to external hire was that he was part of case company's everyday life whether it was participating in meetings, handling clients as a

digital marketing specialist or having informal conversations with other company employees.

The interview questions and the research overall were intended to be as objective as possible to ensure that the results give a broad view that represents the company's conception. During interviews, workshops and other discussions around the research topic, the author always recorded comments and answers as they were given, immediately writing them down or through audio recorder. This way the author would have as unbiased data as possible. As the researcher did not have responsibility over the implementation process, there was no need to drive the research in a particular direction or gather data that would highlight the success of the implementation process. The author was merely conducting a case study of the project.

5 STUDY RESULTS

5.1 Planning

5.1.1 The reasons behind implementing agile marketing software

Prior to the decision of implementing digital Kanban software, the case company had used project management tools. Project management was mainly done internally, and only some aspects of cooperation and project information were shared with each client. These aspects included monthly reporting, meeting notes and variety of daily or weekly communication. Only a small percentage of clients had access to holistic project overview where the progress of tasks could be coordinated. In addition, each employee was allowed to use optional task management tools and to-do-lists. There were no clear guidelines on how to use each software, but some rules of thumb were communicated. Therefore, the way of using different project management tools varied notably between the teams and individual users.

As the company grew in size with more employees and clients onboarding, the need of being more agile emerged. This, however, was not the driving factor for the management to find new ways to improve business processes. The increasingly competitive landscape in the industry required the case company to find new ways to position and differentiate itself from the competing digital marketing agencies. Agile marketing methods and digital Kanban solution were seen key measures in creating extra value to clients.

> "Agile marketing methods are the only sensible way to organize the company and the work of employees, so that we can keep pace with the changing digital environment. We need to find a model to respond to the change without people breaking under the workload." **CEO**

In addition to creating extra value to clients, the CEO of the company believed that in creative and intellectual line of work individual contributions and small team collaborations will provide the best results for both the clients and the organization. In agile and dynamic organization, the main drivers are low organizational structures, self-learning and self-organizing. The idea of these key pillars coming true is that teams and individuals can take more responsibility for what they produce and how they produce, giving employees more ownership.

> "I wanted to find out how to ensure low organizational structures and enforce culture of self-learning and self-organizing. This way we can give the specialist more decision-making power and free them from unnecessary constraints. I felt that there is no other alternative but implementing agile marketing methods. Agility is our lifeline." **CEO**

Because of the nature of digital marketing business, vast majority of the employees were above the average with their digital savviness meaning that many had had first-hand experience of using digital tools either during their previous work and studies, or while working at the case company. This was seen as an advantage for the company to try and find yet another ICT solution.

> "Many of the employees have already used different digital platforms on daily basis to manage their projects and tasks – myself included." **Team leader 1**

> "We have already used digital Kanban board with one of our big clients and the feedback from our specialists has been very good. It has helped to manage task deadlines, as specialists don't have to remember them by themselves, but Kanban board displays them." **CEO**

> "The organization and the employees are already "agile" and much more adaptative to change compared to many other organizations, even though agile marketing methods are not familiar." **Specialist 1**

The first-hand experience from *Kanbanlike* agile project management tools as well as the CEO's dedication towards agile marketing methods and flat organizational structure were acting as main drivers as the planning continued to proceed. However, there were no ready-made models for marketing agencies to use Kanban boards. Majority of the real-world examples were from software companies whose ways of work are in many ways different than in marketing agencies. Therefore, the CEO of the company attended to "agile workshops" where he could learn more about different agile marketing and Kanban board approaches. In 2017-2018 there were not many organizations besides software companies that had successfully completed and documented agile marketing and Kanban implementation.

> "There are some companies outside of the software industry that have been able to implement Kanban board and agile marketing methods. We need to find our own model to implement and use these, if we want to succeed." **CEO**

The conclusion from planning phase was that the CEO of the case company was determined to implement agile marketing methods and digital Kanban board, because company cannot survive if it is not agile. He believed that the company could resolve the implementation process itself. All the employees agreed that the decision to implement the agile methods was solely done by the CEO.

> "The final decision of implementing agile marketing methods and digital Kanban software was done by our CEO." **Specialist 3**

> "If not the decision, then at least strong push towards decision was done by the CEO" **Team leader 2**

Although all interviewees agreed that the decision was ultimately done by the CEO, many also highlighted that the decision-making process was not truly clear and some questioned if a final decision was even done.

> "It feels like the decision of pursuing the implementation of agile marketing methods and digital Kanban board was done because it was trendy topic. I can't recall that there would have been reasons behind the decisions that would actually benefit our company." **Team leader 2**

> "If the reasoning behind the implementation decision was better, maybe the implementation process itself could have gone smoother. Now it was unclear what were the steps during the implementation process" **Specialist 4**

5.2 Communication

5.2.1 Responsibilities in communication

The first step after the decision to acquire digital Kanban board was that each member of the strategic team was tasked to read a book called "Hacking Marketing" by Scott Brinker that covered agile marketing methods, models, and approaches. The strategic team consisted of six team leaders and the top management. This way the team was able to familiarize themselves with agile marketing methods and Kanban. The strategic team gathered on weekly basis to discuss the ideas of how the company could use digital Kanban board and how agile marketing methods could be adopted. The reason to involve members of the strategic team to take the project forward was to share responsibilities and bring perspective to the implementation process. This was the group that formed the core team for the project.

> "It was a natural choice to select the strategic team to support the implementation process, as that core team was used to develop and run joint projects. The forum was small enough that feedback and ideas were heard. If all 30+ employees would have worked on the implementation process from day one, it would have been too chaotic." **Team leader 4**

> "We were encouraged to share our thoughts on how the implementation process should go forward. The top management trusts our opinions." **Team leader 1**

Another dimension to strategic team meetings were workshops or info sessions that were intended for all employees of the company. These sessions were held to keep the information flowing to whole organization. Agenda of the workshops changed time to time, but usually they consisted of the CEO's presentation and Q&A session. Most of the interviewees agreed that the company-wide workshops were important.

"Whenever we met together with all employees, I think the conversation and feedback gave a lot for the implementation process. Several employees were able to share past experiences and ideas to help with the project." **Specialist 3**

Two of the interviewees however pointed out that there was a silo between the top management and employees. As there were no ready-made agile marketing models that could be adopted as such, there were many aspects that had to be considered – what were the main benefits that the company wants to pursue?

"Top management and especially the CEO is taking the project forward, but they don't necessarily know the challenges that teams, and specialists encounter on daily basis, and what are the real benefits of agile marketing methods and Kanban to company's employees." **Specialist 2**

5.2.2 Key benefits of digital Kanban implementation

The more the employees begun to understand about agile marketing and Kanban, the more concurrent benefits emerged. There were six main benefits of digital Kanban board that were mentioned by three or more interviewees. The six key benefits were:

- Improving efficiency in project management
- Helping to manage time better
- Improvement in reactivity
- Reinforcing testing culture
- Developing transparency
- Enhancing communication

Visualizing work and workflow were seen as the main benefits in streamlining project management. The framework of visualizing workflow establishes a controlled project environment where project teams can see the entirety of each project but resolve tasks incrementally.

"We can avoid bottlenecks that slow down client projects and make the workflow smoother" **Specialist 2**

"The larger the client is the more Kanban board helps. Visualizing the work in Kanban makes it easier to split the whole into smaller parts that are more manageable. It also makes it easier to see what other project members have on their to-do list to understand the bigger picture." **Team leader 3**

"Going through the digital Kanban board every week or every two weeks with the whole project team ensures that everybody knows the status of the project and what parts of it should be prioritized." **Specialist 5**

Second benefit of digital Kanban board is that it helps to manage specialists' time more efficiently. Many specialists thought that switching between client tasks is inefficient and takes a lot of time in each workday. When project management is well-structured, it gives specialists a sense of security that all projects and tasks are in order and scheduled evenly.

> "I don't always have to worry that what was I supposed to do now, as I know that my tasks are written in my Kanban board." **Team leader 2**

> "Kanban board helps us specialists to reduce jumping between tasks and thus decreases time wasting." **Specialist 2**

> "When I know that my task list or to-do list is in order, it relieves my stress. It's a good feeling when we have shared Kanban boards with project teams, and I know that someone else is also making sure that team and individual deadlines are met." **Specialist 4**

Improvement in reaction time were also seen as one of the key benefits of using digital Kanban board. Digital marketing is fast changing environment, where plans and projects are always under scrutiny. The employees felt that digital project management tool that visualizes the work, and that is easy to use makes it much more efficient to manage projects and keep up with prioritization of tasks.

> "Our work and clients have changed from what they were 3-4 years ago. Agile project management makes us much more reactive and adaptive to different situations." **CEO**

> "We have had problems to keep large project teams up to date with all the changes and new tasks, so Kanban board can make that much easier. With digital Kanban board we can react to changes sensibly and quickly." **Team leader 4**

Improving continuous testing and experimentation were some of the aspects that were especially highlighted by both the top management and employees. One of the main engines behind agile marketing and organizational agility are sprints. Large projects are split to stages, and each stage, or sprint, provides an opportunity to give feedback and correct course. Small scale sprints offer much better base to experiment and make many small bets instead of choosing one direction where to steer the project. Digital Kanban board gives an opportunity to split big projects into small tasks, and review and comment them upon completion.

> "Quick sprints over long and slow projects is the way to go." **Specialist 1**

> "It's better not to plan all things in advance, but in shorter cycles. It's a lot easier to change direction, if we see that the project needs to be nudged to different way." **Team leader 4**

> "Kanban board in all its simplicity is mirroring plan, do, study, act cycle. We can leverage all the information that we get during short sprints and learn from them." **CEO**

Transparency, meaning that there is full visibility across team and stakeholders, was another area that digital Kanban would improve, according to specialists, team leaders and top management. Each member of a given project team has the same access to view a Kanban board. As anyone from the team can access the Kanban board easily from a laptop or phone, the project management becomes highly transparent.

> "All stakeholders, including the client, can go and view the digital Kanban board anywhere and anytime, so that there is a full transparency of how the project and tasks are being taken care of." **Team leader 1**

> "The whole project team that consists of our in-house specialist team and contact persons from client's side can access the Kanban board. All project information is saved at the same place and is available at all times to anyone in the project." **Specialist 2**

Similarly to enhanced transparency, also improved communication across internal and external teams was seen as key benefit of digital Kanban board. When everything related to a specific project is kept in the same place, no one works in isolation, and the flow of communication remains. Whenever the Kanban board is updated or new tasks are created, all parties involved will receive a notification. In addition to real time notifications collaboration is easy as project members can communicate through messages or creating tasks within the board. Digital Kanban board really accelerates agile teamwork.

> "Communication improves both internally and externally when all stakeholders use the same Kanban board." **Specialist 1**

> "Digital Kanban board provides an excellent way to exercise agile teamwork, as the communication can be done quickly and efficiently across the project team." **Team leader 4**

Vast majority of the interviewees agreed with key benefits that digital Kanban board would provide. However, there was one aspect that brought out dissenting opinions. Especially the CEO pointed out a benefit that other employees – specialists and team leaders – thought not to bring extra value. This aspect was that Kanban board would make extra work visible, and thus the company could charge extra from clients whenever the workload exceeded the agreed amount.

> "One of my biggest fears is that the underlying reason for implementing agile marketing methods and digital Kanban board is corporate greed. I hope that the software will be implemented to help project management instead of just a way to earn more money." **Team leader 3**

5.2.3 Risks of implementing digital Kanban board

Digital Kanban board implementation also involves risks, as ICT implementation projects often do. The company has acquired and tested many SaaS platforms for different purposes, such as project management, file storage, instant messaging, financial management and client communication. In addition to companywide software acquisition, also employees have had experience with numerous platforms. Not all risks are recognized during the planning phase, but only after a new ICT problem has been acquired and the implementation process has begun. Organizations might rely on new software and platforms to solve existing problems, although it's rarely true. To complete new ICT system implementation successfully it requires variety of aspects to work well together.

> "Employees have an important role in adopting the digital Kanban board. It's not only the ICT system that needs to be implemented, but also the idea of agile marketing has to be merged into the organization's culture" **Specialist 2**

> "I'm worried that our existing culture, structure and ways of working will dissolve when we adopt agile marketing methods and new project management philosophy in our company." **Specialist 4**

Resources should always be available when a new project is initiated. Not reserving enough time to take the project forward can easily result in unsuccessful implementation and even harm the current state of the company. One of the most highlighted risk of implementing digital Kanban board was time resources and the lack of them.

> "The new Kanban project management tool and related meetings consume lots of time from employees." **Specialist 5**

> "Already during the planning phase extra meetings regarding Kanban board implementation take up much time every week" **Team leader 2**

> "If the new project management solution is difficult and time consuming, then employees will not get excited about it. There is a risk that unmotivated personnel will slow down the implementation process." **Specialist 4**

Although majority of the respondents thought that the Kanban board implementation process is time consuming, two employees argued that the extra effort doesn't really use much time, and the end result will justify the extra time spent on implementing the ICT solution.

> "Meetings regarding Kanban and agile marketing take up few hours every month, so it's not a huge investment." **Specialist 3**

In addition to time and resources, possible limitations of the acquired digital Kanban board could make it difficult to adopt the ICT system companywide. There were doubts whether the same agile project management tool is suitable

throughout the company, where different teams have very distinct projects and daily routines.

> "Is it even possible to have the same digital Kanban board and project management framework for the whole company, as there are so unique projects and teams that behave so differently." **Team leader 2**

> "If it is anyway necessary to customize the Kanban board to fit into each teams' needs, why should we even implement it? If each team uses the board differently, then is there a point to implement it?" **Specialist 1**

There were also many concerns that the Kanban board will be just another SaaS platform that will be used for a short period of time and then forgotten. Especially when extra value to customers is not guaranteed, is the company and its employees using unnecessary resources to the implementation process?

> "We are not sure if agile marketing methods and digital Kanban board will provide extra value to our customers, so there is a chance that all the time used in the implementation process is pointless." **Specialist 1**

Some respondents even argued that the ultimate risk of implementing Kanban board could compromise the present customer experience and increase churn rate.

> "Totally transparent project management with digital Kanban board could turn against the company, as clients could see that the projects and tasks are not moving forward as quickly as they should be." **Team leader 4**

5.3   Evaluation

For the past 9-12 months the company has adopted and implemented agile marketing methods and trained using digital Kanban board. So far, the company and its employees have seen both benefits and disadvantages in using the new ICT system. Several respondents explained that the expected benefits from Kanban are yet to be seen.

> "Only when we have introduced Kanban board to several of our clients, can we expect to create extra value in project management." **Team leader 1**

> "Currently our Kanban is just another to-do list." **Specialist 2**

> "The real value will be seen in the future, but we are moving to a right direction. We still lack concrete examples of Kanban board best practices, but the direction is right." **CEO**

Everybody at the company knew that the agile marketing and Kanban board implementation process would require time, so majority of the employees were prepared to wait until the benefits exceed the sacrifices. However, there was consensus among interviewees that there was lack of communication and instructions regarding Kanban board implementation. All teams and individuals used the software differently, and some employees were not using or testing the board actively at all.

> "The implementation of digital Kanban board should have had shared processes so that all employees would have had a clear framework for testing." **Team leader 4**

> "All teams have very different ways they use Kanban. It's quite confusing." **Specialist 4**

The lack of clear guidelines and instructions was however apprehensible, as there is no ready-made models or frameworks how agile marketing, and Kanban should be implemented in marketing agency.

> "There is no ready-made model that we could adopt in our marketing agency, but we need to benchmark software companies and find our own model." **CEO**

Even more than lack of communication and instructions, all the respondents felt that there were not enough resources allocated to promote the project. Same group of employees were responsible to work with Kanban board implementation who worked on day-to-day basis with clients and other initiatives.

> "Urgent client work goes ahead of internal projects. Nobody has really had time to think about Kanban implementation, because everybody has been busy with normal daily work." **Team leader 1**

> "Much of it is my fault that the implementation of agile marketing and Kanban board hasn't been completed yet. Me or nobody else have had the time to concentrate on the project." **CEO**

Although time and resources, as well as instructions could have been planned and executed better, many respondents felt that the implementation process of agile marketing and digital Kanban board has further improved the organization's culture and brought the personnel together.

> "We have had many exciting workshops and sessions where the atmosphere has been creative and warm. The CEO really wanted that each of company's employees understand what agile marketing and Kanban is all about." **Specialist 4**

5.3.1 Facilitators of digital Kanban board implementation

There are several elements that have increased the probability to successfully implement agile marketing methods and digital Kanban board in the case company.

By far the most important facilitator is the company's culture where openness and learning are valued. Top management, team leaders and specialists all agreed that the culture enables different kinds of projects to succeed, including ICT implementation project.

> "We have had the freedom to practice trial and error method with Kanban board. The organization has encouraged us to test different software and ways to use Kanban board, and nobody has restricted us." **Team leader 1**

Also, the CEO of the company identified the culture as the most important facilitator during the implementation process.

> "Our company's culture is willing to change and there is very little resistance. We are used to constant change, as the tools and best practices in our industry continually change." **CEO**

One of the respondents also pointed out that there is a clear explanation for why there is minimal resistance to change.

> "We are relatively young company and none of us employees have been here for more than few years. It's easy to adopt new things when you haven't been at the same workplace for long." **Team leader 2**

In addition to prospering culture, the top management has a high trust towards company's employees. This was seen as one of the key factors that makes it possible to successfully complete the implementation process. Like learning, the company encourages its employees to test new ideas.

> "We are allowed to test the Kanban board individually and find different ways to use it." **Specialist 3**

> "Individual employees have had the chance to test different software and modes of using Kanban. Thanks to free testing, we have received lots of useful information on best user cases." **CEO**

Although all employees were given the chance to test different software for digital Kanban board and the company gained knowledge from individual tests, majority of the respondents agreed that the company's strategic team was the most important facilitator of the implementation process. The core strategic team has a lot of experience on project development, so they were likely to possess the necessary skillset to complete the adoption of agile marketing and Kanban.

> "The strategic team knows how to divide large projects into smaller pieces, and how the information about the project should be communicated to all personnel." **Specialist 1**

> "The core strategy team has worked well in exchanging ideas and presenting feedback that has been collected from specialists. This has definitely helped the implementation process." **Team leader 3**

Based on the interviews, another aspect that improved the implementation process was that several employees already knew about agile marketing and how Kanban boards are used.

> "Many of us have already had experience with Kanban from previous work or studies. These experiences provide insights to our agile marketing adoption process." **Team leader 2**

While there was first-hand experience from agile marketing in-house, the company and its employees also have extensive networks across marketing and software industries. These networks proved to be very useful, as the company got visiting consultants to run agile marketing workshops for free.

> "Our company has received help from our external networks that includes agile marketing consultants and industry specialists. It has helped a lot to hear concrete examples of how Kanban boards are used at other companies." **Specialist 4**

5.3.2 Impediments of digital Kanban board implementation

Like facilitators, the implementation process also had several impediments that complicated the adoption of agile marketing and digital Kanban board. Some of the difficulties were yet to be solved when the interviews were held. The biggest challenge during the digital Kanban board implementation process was the lack of time, which was brought up by all respondents. Busy daily schedules and the amount of routine client work took focus away from the adoption of agile marketing methods and Kanban.

> "There is simply too much work to be done simultaneously with the Kanban project, so it's impossible to focus on developing the project." **Team leader 2**

> "We have not prioritized the implementation of agile marketing and Kanban high enough, so we are still paying the price for that not being ready with the implementation process." **Specialist 1**

Majority of the specialist and team leaders also agreed that the benefits in successfully implementing and using digital Kanban board are not clear enough. Many argued that the top management is focusing too much on the profitability side of Kanban and overlooking the benefits that would help specialists in their work.

> "I feel like the CEO is paying too much attention on how Kanban board will create extra value in reporting and increasing the profitability of the company." **Specialist 5**

> "I think the real benefits have not been communicated well enough. People would like to hear more about how their work will become more manageable and simpler, because that's what agility is all about." **Team leader 2**

Further, the fact that agile marketing methods and Kanban are mostly used in software companies raised doubts whether the case company could ever benefit from them.

> "The whole concept of today's agile marketing has been developed in software companies, so can it ever suit for the purposes of a digital marketing agency?" **Team leader 2**

Another impediment was seen to be the ICT solution that had been acquired. The implemented digital Kanban board was a SaaS platform that required minimal installation work or customization. The board was accessed through browser and could be used with variety of devices, including computer, phone and tablet.

> "The Kanban solution that we are using seems to make our work more complicated, even though the objective is to make it simpler." **Team leader 1**

> "Our Kanban board is a SaaS platform that isn't very good. It's not customizable enough so that we could integrate it easily with our existing, necessary tools." **Team leader 4**

> "We have encountered such problems with acquired software that were impossible to anticipate. This has been one of the biggest reasons why our Kanban implementation process, as well as agile marketing adoption process has delayed." **CEO**

One of the main issues with the acquired software was that although it worked seemingly well in company's internal use, it wasn't easy for the clients to start using it. The clients would need to use similar stack of online tools for the integrations to work as intended. If a client was to use other project management or messaging tools at their own end, then the acquired Kanban board would not work seamlessly between client and the case company.

> "There are some serious issues to integrate the Kanban board with our clients, which is absolutely necessary." **Team leader 3**

The planning phase and the implementation process itself were also seen as an impediment. More than half of the respondents said that excessive planning has slowed down the implementation process.

> "We have internally planned the different stages of adopting Kanban too long, whereas we should have included our clients in the adoption process much earlier." **Specialist 4**

"Have we read too many books and held too many workshops instead of really using the Kanban board in real life with our clients? We haven't been agile in implementing Kanban and agile marketing, which sounds ironic." **Team leader 1**

"The workshops and presentations have been too theoretical, and we have lacked concreteness and hands on testing." **Team leader 4**

Lack of leadership was also regarded as one impediment in the Kanban board implementation process. While majority of the respondents thought that it was a good idea to involve several people in the implementation process, they also argued that projects should always have a clear leader. Especially when a project is as big as the one in question. A project manager would have the time and resources to focus on implementing agile marketing methods and the digital Kanban board.

"We have failed to appoint a person in charge to take the project from the beginning to the end." **CEO**

5.4   Summary of research findings

The implementation process from the beginning was lacking clear structure, which made the whole process more complicated. The case company had experience from project management and different project management and task management tools. Common routine work, such as reporting, direct messaging and project planning was done using these tools. Projects and client work were managed in very traditional way, which served its purpose, but did not create much extra value to stakeholders – especially to clients. The CEO of the company was convinced that agile marketing methods and digital Kanban board were the future of the company, and without adopting these tools and processes the company would not survive in the competition. The scenario of digital marketing industry assured the top management to explore organizational agility. The implementation and adoption process of digital Kanban board was studied using a framework for common pitfalls in sales force automation implementation created by Honeycutt et al. (2005). The framework was chosen to this research, as it contains different stages that are common in ICT implementation: planning, communication, and evaluation. (Honeycutt et al., 2005.)
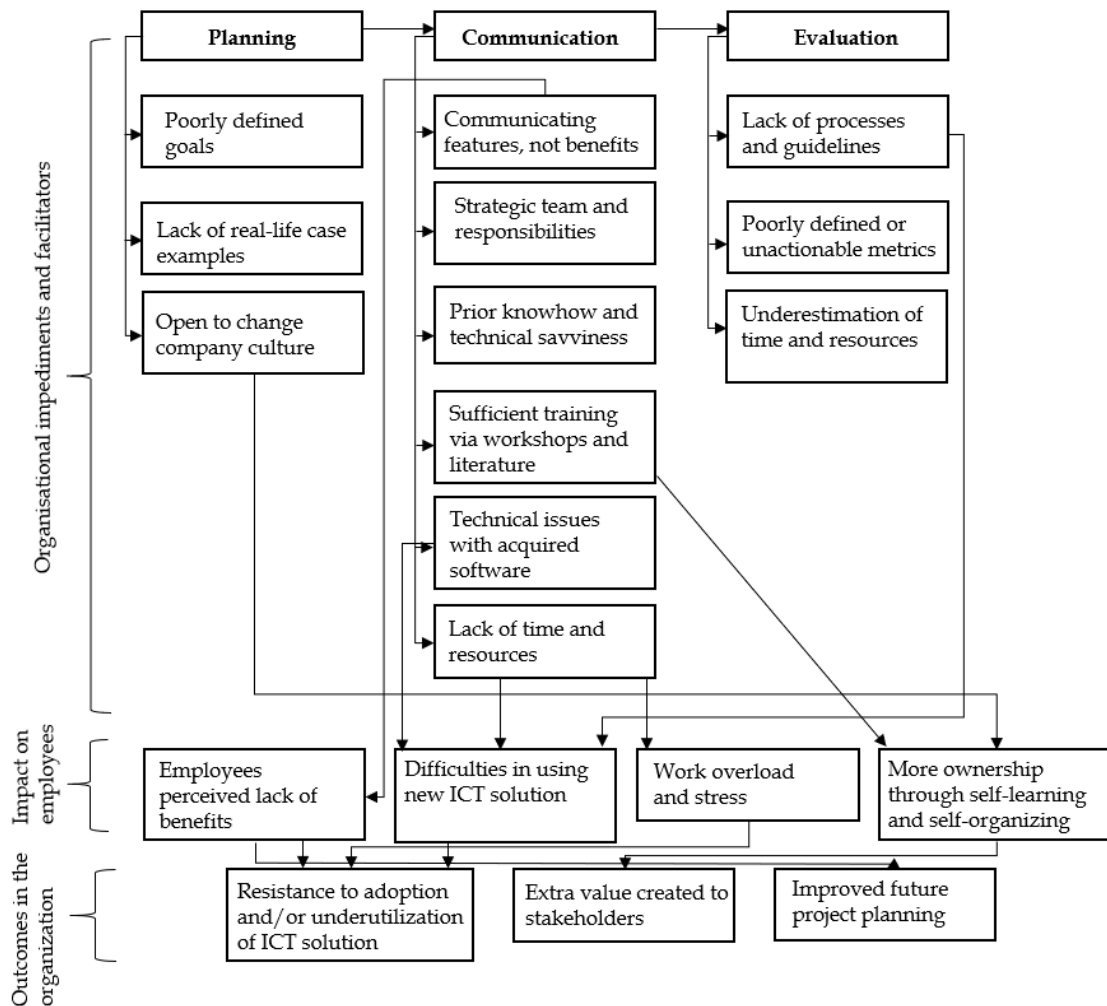
46

FIGURE 5 Impediments and facilitators in the implementation of digital Kanban board.

The planning phase was described as confusing because there were no ready-made models of how Kanban could be used in marketing agency. Additionally, employees had doubts about the reasoning of adopting Kanban – whether it

would have any real benefits for the company or if implementation decision was made only because of agile marketing was a trendy topic. There were only frameworks from different industries, mainly from software industry, of how Kanban board should be used and what are the benefits. The case company's strategic team were responsible of find ways how agile marketing and Kanban could be exploited. First the strategic team that included team leaders and C-level employees familiarized themselves with agile marketing methods by studying it, but quite soon the whole personnel were encouraged to start thinking about agile marketing and how digital Kanban could be used in their everyday work, and especially in project management. Although the company had to come up with model of their own, the personnel's digital savviness and prior knowhow of project management tools helped the company to have feedback and ideas from cross-functional team. Also, the culture and organizational structure of the case company was already "agile" and adaptative to change to many other organizations.

The strategic team acted as the core team during the early stages of digital Kanban board implementation. They were tasked to learn about agile marketing models and approaches and give feedback on weekly basis. It was an obvious choice to involve the strategic team in the implementation process, as the same group of people had experience developing projects together. Although the project setup was well organized, the strategic team and especially top management were unable to communicate key benefits of agile marketing and Kanban implementation clearly to the rest of the personnel. The benefits that specialists were expecting from using Kanban related to improving project, time and client management. By making the work more manageable and fluent, majority of specialists were excited about the possibilities Kanban had to offer. Naturally, clients would also benefit from Kanban, as the projects would be more transparent and easier to manage. Thus, extra value would be created to all stakeholders by exploiting the key benefits of digital Kanban board. However, the communication from top management was focussing too much on harnessing Kanban to find ways to increase profitability of the company instead of providing specialist with a useful tool to help with their workload. This mistake in communication resulted in specialists' perceived lack of incentives to learn using the new ICT tool. Also, the concern about replacing existing ways of working and processes was brought up during the interviews. Many respondents expressed their worry that a lot of time would be used to implement new project management tool, and it would not bring any benefits, and could potentially even harm existing structure and processes.

The evaluation phase revealed several facilitators and impediments in the digital Kanban board implementation process. Majority of the respondents argued that the key benefits were still to be discovered, as the implementation project had taken more time and resources than what it had given back. Especially lack of time was seen as the main impediment, as all employees had to get their daily work done and very few employees had extra time to invest in adoption of agile marketing and Kanban. Also, the unclear objectives and lack of pre-defined

goals made it hard to evaluate whether the implementation process was successful or even moving to a right direction. However, despite of many challenges the consensus was that the project was necessary and that it had brought the whole company together even more, while trying to solve the challenges in implementation. All interviewees agreed that the Kanban implementation had not moved forward as expected, but there were many facilitators that were giving hope for a better future. The organizational culture and trust between top management and specialists form a solid base where internal projects can flourish. The company employs tech savvy individuals who are experienced in ICT related projects, thus providing many useful insights and skills to ICT implementation processes. As a young company there is little or none resistance to change, and the case company's extensive network includes several ICT and project management experts that can provide additional resources.

5.4.1 Outcomes of implementation process

Although the implementation and adoption of agile marketing methods and digital Kanban board is not completed, the message from the company's personnel is united – more time and resources should be used to complete the implementation of digital Kanban board. During the past 12-18 months all employees have had the change to familiarize themselves with agile marketing and explore the dynamics of digital Kanban board. Majority of internal communication and project management is already done via Kanban, but there are still structural challenges on how it can be introduced to clients. The proposed solution based on the interviews was to appoint project leader who could focus on completing the implementation process. Many of the remaining challenges are technical or tactical, that need enough resources to investigate and resolve. The idea of agile marketing and Kanban is already planted in the company and all specialists are familiar with the idea.

Still, more time is needed to start seeing the benefits, and the adoption will require time from each employee. Projects are already more transparent, and in many ways easier to manage, as all members of project teams can follow the same task lists and project outlines. The communication is more effective between teams and specialists, and deadlines are met more systematically. The company board has given its full support to complete the implementation process and the next step is to invite test clients to trial the existing setup. Until the first test results are collected, it remains unclear whether the acquired ICT solution is continued to be used, or if an alternative should be considered. However, the initial results from implementing the digital Kanban board have proven that the case company and its stakeholders will gain extra value when the project is finished in the future.

6   DISCUSSION

6.1   Theoretical contributions

This study provides a number of theoretical contributions. Firstly, the sources of sales force automation impediments are very similar to different ICT implementation processes, digital Kanban board included. The three stages of SFA implementation: planning, communication and evaluation, all can be applied to digital Kanban board adoption. As suggested by Honeycutt et al. (2005), several areas in the implementation process if ICT can negatively affect the successfulness of new technology adoption. Poorly executed planning, communication or evaluation phase can decrease the perceived benefits and incentives in the eyes of personnel. The more impediments there are in each phase, the more probable it is that company will see resistance to adoption or underutilization of adopted ICT tools. The research findings support the idea that any failures in the three implementation phases will decrease the chance to have successful ICT implementation. Lack of clearly defined objectives in planning, the gap between organizational and employee perceptions of ICT benefits during communication phase, and difficulties in measuring success in evaluation stage all jeopardise the implementation and adoption of ICT solution. (Honeycutt et al., 2005.) The fail rate is especially high in the evaluation phase, because up to 50% of companies do not set up metrics in advance and thus are not able to evaluate the success clearly (Erffmeyer & Johnson, 2001). By successfully implementing new digital solutions, companies can operate more efficiently in highly competitive multiform ecosystems (Krishnaiyer et al., 2018).

Secondly, the conceptual framework of ICT adoption by Giotopoulos et al. (2017) highlights the important facilitators of ICT adoption that have positive effects on new technology implementation. Technological competencies, such as previous research and development activities, as well as innovative atmosphere are likely to yield better results in ICT implementation. This was further affirmed by the study results, where the case company's strategic team and skillful specialists were seen as one of the biggest success factors during the digital Kanban implementation process. Also, the second competency of human capital was highlighted as an important facilitator in the theoretical part of the study, as well as in the empirical part of the study. Personnel with study and work background, and ICT skills are a big driver for successful ICT implementation. Especially experience from similar technology that is being implemented can generate much needed insights and feedback. Additionally, specific internal organization attributes effect positively to ICT implementation. Cross-functional teams, decentralized decision-making and visionary leadership are all facilitators based on the ICT adoption framework. Although cross-functional teams and decentralized decision-making were seen as positive attributes in digital Kanban implementation, some arguments against were also brought up by the respondents. Some

interviewees thought that there can be too much decentralization in decision-making, which leads to lack of leadership. If the responsibility of successful implementation is spread to several employees, then there is increased chance that the process will not move forward as schedule when no-one takes ownership. Overall, "open-to-new ideas corporate culture" affects positively on adopting new ICT solutions and companies should invest in creating working environment that support employees' technical skills (Barba-Sánchez et al., 2007).

Lastly, agile marketing methods provide modern organizations the chance to increase competitiveness and provide extra value to all stakeholders, by streamlining cooperation between project teams (Brinker, 2016). By adopting agile marketing methods and Kanban, marketing agencies and other companies can improve different areas of business, whether they are internal or external. The research findings support the idea that more time and resources should be put into implementation and adoption of agile marketing and digital Kanban board. When the main objective is to provide benefits for employees to do a good job, also the organization will be beneficial. Digital solutions overall provide number of benefits to companies by contributing to improvement of information and knowledge management, streamlining collaboration and supporting workplace learning within organizations (Barba-Sánchez et al., 2007; Korpelainen, 2011).

6.2 Managerial implications

This research offers three managerial implications for different stages of implementing ICT. First, when planning to adopt new ICT solution, it is not enough to consider the big picture of what the implemented solution will offer. Firms often think that starting to use a new software or tool will automatically bring new benefits or fix existing problems. Although ICT implementation would be beneficial in the end, it's very difficult to measure the impact of new technology on company's business. Setting up performance indicators and clearly stating the desired benefits will make the evaluation of implementation process much easier. Marketing managers are very likely to stumble upon new software and online tools regularly, so instead of wilfully adopting new technology, it should be decided that what are the concrete benefits that the implementation of this technology will bring and how the successfulness will be measured.

Secondly, when communicating the benefits of a new ICT solution to company's employees, managers should concentrate on highlighting the benefits that will positively affect employees' daily work instead of communicating technical specs or organizational benefits. Even though the ultimate goal would be to improve company's structure or profitability, these should not be the key benefits communicated during the implementation process. A gap between employees' goals and company's objectives is likely to exist and if managers concentrate too much on the organizational benefits, it can cause resistance in adoption among employees or negatively affect how much the implemented technology will be

used after initial adoption. If employees are on board with the benefits, then it is more likely to yield wanted organizational results too.

Thirdly, project managers should expect that there are both facilitators and impediments in any ICT implementation process. When evaluating the success factors of an implementation process, both the facilitators and impediments should be recorded for future insights. If involving cross-functional teams and asking for consultancy from company's external networks have considered to affect ICT implementation positively, then those things should be continued to do in next ICT implementation projects. Similarly, collecting feedback will reveal impediments that are likely to occur in future research and development projects. The challenges should not discourage future project developments and instead regarded as opportunities to improve. Also, even the evaluation phase would point out that the current ICT implementation process has failed, it does not mean that the project should be ended – there is every possibility to continue the implementation process.

6.3   Evaluation of the study and ideas for further research

The objective of this research was to study the facilitators and impediments of implementing digital Kanban board that is an ICT solution for enforcing agile marketing methods. Agile concepts and methods are widely adopted in software companies, but there is very limited research or industry benchmarks on how agile marketing methods could be adopted in a marketing agency. In addition, the sales force automation implementation framework was used in this research, because SFA implementation is in many ways very similar to other ICT solution implementation. This study offers companies valuable information on possible pitfalls that could affect ICT implementation project negatively. At the same time, the study identifies factors that act as facilitators in new technology adoption. The study also reveals that what are the benefits and risks if companies pursue the adoption of agile marketing methods, and more precisely, digital Kanban board implementation. As agile marketing is a trending topic among companies, the results of this study can help organizations to avoid making similar mistakes during the implementation process.

While the study provides useful insights on facilitators and impediments of ICT implementation, the limitation of this research is that data sample is very small, and the findings are heavily generalized. By choosing different interviewees the results could have been different, or at least the opinions could have been weighted to another direction. However, the study findings were largely consistent with previous results reported in the ICT implementation literature. Future research should consider collecting a larger set of sample data to have more generalizable results. Given the qualitative nature of the study, the objective of this research was, however, to gain deeper understanding of the facilitators and impediments of agile marketing technology.

To add more, this study was only conducted within the case company and the results reflect the opinion of highly skilled, tech savvy digital marketing professionals, who have extensive experience from using new technology and working in companies that are more agile than average. Therefore, studying the perceptions of clients and other stakeholders would provide more understanding how beneficial agile marketing methods and digital Kanban board are seen. Afterall, marketing agencies work in cooperation with clients, where both sides are represented in shared projects. Depending on the industry that clients operate, or the technical skills that the client's employees possess, the research findings could be very different compared to research on the agency side only.

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APPENDIX 1 – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Questions related to agile marketing:

1. What is your experience about the agile marketing implementation so far?
2. Why agile marketing methods were acquired and for what purposes?
3. Who made the decision and was your opinion heard?
4. What has facilitated the implementation of agile marketing methods?
5. What has prevented the implementation process of agile marketing methods of being more successful?
6. What do you see as the benefits of implementing agile marketing methods?
7. What do you see as risks of implementing agile marketing methods?
8. What goals do you have for the implementation of agile marketing methods?
9. What could have been done better during the implementation process of agile marketing methods?
10. Should more resources be invested for the implementation of agile marketing methods?

Questions related to digital Kanban board:

1. The case company has had the digital Kanban board in internal use for about six months now. Are you there where you taught you would be at this point? If not, why? Can you already name something that could have been done better?
2. What has been accomplished with digital Kanban board so far?
3. How successful the implementation of digital Kanban board has been so far?
4. Which parts have been especially successful and which not?
5. What are the difficulties that the case company has faced in the implementation of the digital Kanban board?
6. What are the difficulties that the case company may face in the implementation of the digital Kanban board?
7. Who do you think will be mainly responsible for the implementation and usage of the digital Kanban board?
8. How much / how often do you think you will use the digital Kanban board next year?
9. What is your role in the implementation of the digital Kanban board?
10. What should be done to improve the implementation and usage of the digital Kanban board?