

Business Mobility for SMEs in the Netherlands

Exploring needs, challenges, and
opportunities for a scalable proposition

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Master Thesis

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Preface

This thesis marks the completion of my master's degree in Strategic Product Design at Delft University of Technology. It concludes a seven-month graduation project carried out in collaboration with The Client (anonymised), part of The Holding (anonymised). The project explored how business mobility providers can better serve small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Netherlands — a topic that combines my interests in design, mobility, and strategy.

Working on this project taught me more than any before. I experienced the balance between analytical research and creative design, between academic depth and real-world feasibility. The collaboration with The Client gave me the opportunity to apply design methods in a corporate environment, to work with many stakeholders, and to see first-hand how strategy and design intersect in practice.

Acknowledgements

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who supported me throughout this project. This has by far been the most challenging project I've ever done—both because of the endless complexity of the B2B mobility field and because of the responsibility that came with working on a real project with tangible impact.

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And finally, my parents, for their emotional support and unconditional trust.

Thank you all for the support that carried me through this final stretch!

Enjoy reading my work!

Thomas

Delft, November 2025



Definitions

The following terms are used throughout this report for consistency:

BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal) = long-term strategic goal of The Holding: reaching one million paying users by 2029.

Business mobility = all forms of work-related travel and the associated systems, policies, and facilities that enable it.

Cash Flow Model = financial projection estimating revenues, costs, and time to break-even.

Corporate Client = large enterprise customer (>250 employees).

Customer / Employer = an organisation that purchases services from The Client.

Decision Making Unit (DMU) = the group of individuals within a company involved in purchasing decisions (e.g. director, HR, or finance).

DVF Framework (Desirability, Viability, Feasibility) = evaluation model developed by IDEO to assess the potential of a concept.

Epic Statement = project summary formulated within the Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe).

Free market = the open commercial market in which organisations voluntarily choose suppliers, as opposed to tender-based acquisition.

Gain = a benefit, improvement, or positive outcome that a customer values or expects from a product or service.

Jobs-to-be-Done (JTBD) = framework used to identify the tasks customers aim to accomplish through a product or service.

Pain = a customer problem, frustration, or obstacle that hinders them in achieving their desired outcome.

Pay-per-use = a pricing model in which customers are charged based on their actual usage of a product or service, rather than paying a fixed subscription or contract fee. A surcharge is applied per transaction or unit of use, which can be defined as either an absolute amount or a percentage.

Porter's Five Forces = model for assessing the attractiveness and competitive intensity of a market.

Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe) = organisational framework for implementing agile development at scale.

SME (Small and Medium-sized Enterprise) = company with 2 to 250 employees, according to the EU definition.

SME segment = specific subgroups within the SME market, based on variables such as company size, sector, or mobility needs.

The Client = the client company of this project, anonymised for confidentiality reasons.

The Holding = the overarching investment label under which The Client operates.

User / Employee = an employee of the customer who uses The Client's platform, app, or mobility card.

Executive summary

This thesis explores how a business mobility provider can develop a scalable and relevant proposition for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Netherlands. Conducted at The Client—part of a larger investment holding aiming to reach one million business users by 2029—the project investigates whether and under what conditions it is desirable to enter the SME market.

Previous attempts to reach this market, such as a self-service funnel, various collaborations with distribution partners, and a proposition around a simple registration app, failed to gain traction. These efforts were hindered by factors such as overly complex products, unclear ownership, and limited internal follow-up. The main lessons: simplicity, focus, and clear boundaries are essential for scalability.

Through a combination of desk research, internal interviews, and nine SME interviews, this study explored the context, needs, and behaviour of SMEs. Most SMEs do not view mobility as a strategic priority; they prioritise continuity, simplicity, and cost control over innovation. Key barriers include administrative burden, uncertainty around regulations, and employee resistance to change. Desired gains are central insight, convenience, and trustworthy, personal service.

Market analysis shows that competitors mainly target corporates or offer limited self-service options. The Client's product stands out for flexibility and integration capabilities, but these qualities make it too complex and resource-intensive for smaller customers.

Two concept directions were developed:

- SME Standard – a simplified, standardised package for larger SMEs (100–250 employees) with public transport potential.
- All-in-One Mobility Card – a flexible travel and payment card for smaller businesses.

Evaluation using the Desirability–Viability–Feasibility (DVF) framework showed that the SME Standard offers the best balance between market fit and scalability, especially with a pay-per-use pricing structure that shortens the expected break-even time.

The research concludes that the SME market offers large potential but limited readiness under current conditions. A selective, phased approach is advised: start with the upper SME segment, maintain strict simplicity, and ensure internal alignment before expanding further.

Despite limitations in sample size and time, the study provides a grounded basis for decision-making and helps The Client move toward a clear, evidence-based SME strategy.

Visual executive summary

A visual summary (“praatplaat”) of the project is displayed on the next page.

Business mobility for SMEs in The Netherlands

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The problem

The client company — a corporate mobility provider — aims to grow toward one million business users in the Netherlands. Therefore, the desire is to expand the focus beyond large enterprises and public tenders and include small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). However, earlier internal initiatives to serve SMEs failed to scale due to unclear target definitions, complex products, and lack of internal ownership. The question arose: Is it desirable and feasible to enter the SME market with a scalable proposition?

Main findings

Most SMEs see mobility as a practical necessity rather than a strategic priority. They value simplicity, continuity, and cost control and show limited willingness to invest in complex digital tools. Only the upper SME segment (100–250 employees) shows stronger alignment with the client's existing offer.

Strategic recommendations

1. Focus first on larger SMEs (100–250 employees). Pilot a standardised “SME Standard” product for this segment, define strict service boundaries, and test scalable pricing before expanding further.
2. Hold off on smaller SMEs (2–100 employees). They are highly price-sensitive; first strengthen automation, self-service, and marketing capabilities before re-entering this segment.
3. Strengthen internal foundations. Simplify and modularise the product, standardise processes, and build a more personal yet scalable brand foundation for future SME growth.



Modularise product-service portfolio

Build towards automation and standardisation

Strengthen brand awareness

1 million business users

Research activities

To answer the overarching research question, the project combined:

- Analysis of previous SME initiatives;
- Desk research on SME market structure, trends, and competitors;
- Interviews with internal stakeholders, distribution partners, and SME decision-makers to gain insight into the ins and outs of the SME market;
- Concept development and evaluation of two propositions, including a financial model, survey validation, and feasibility analysis.

Previous ventures

- A Mobility card for public transport services
- B App and employer module for mobility administration
- C Optional paid add-ons
- D Eventual expansion with car functionality

Avoid complexity

Set up structure and boundaries

Personal approach stays crucial

No IT development and simple implementation

Product

Market

- Approx. 100–250 employees
- Knowledge- or office-intensive: consultancy firms, IT and marketing companies, and business service providers.
- Located in (sub)urban areas
- Growing business

Handwritten signature

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Part I: Project context

This first part outlines the background and context of the graduation project. It introduces The Client and explains the problem that motivated this research: the need to better understand and define the role of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in The Client's growth strategy. In addition, this part explains how the project was structured and approached. It provides an overview of the research design and methods used to explore the market, customer needs, and internal assumptions surrounding the SME strategy.

Finally, the analysis of previous SME ventures is included to help position the current project within The Client's ongoing strategic development. Understanding these earlier initiatives—what worked, what did not, and why—offers valuable lessons that inform the rest of this report and contribute to a more grounded and effective approach moving forward.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Shaped by trends such as an increase in hybrid working, sustainability goals, and emerging technologies, business mobility has undergone major transformations in recent years and is still evolving rapidly. Employers are challenged to provide flexible and efficient travel options while keeping costs and regulations in check. This project, carried out for The Client, examines how such providers can respond to these shifts. This chapter first introduces the broader context and the project Client, before outlining the assignment, objectives, and approach.

1.1 Project context

Mobility is a broad research field, encompassing not only the movement of people and goods, but also the significance, structures, and relationships that shape and emerge from this movement (Adey, 2017). One area where this complexity becomes apparent is in the changing landscape of commuting and business travel. Over the years, there have been many developments in how we travel to and from work. Driven by factors such as environmental regulations, increasing road congestion, hybrid working patterns, and a wave of technological innovation, the way people commute is undergoing a major shift. From e-bikes to electric vehicles and from improved public transport to mobility-as-a-service, the landscape is becoming more diverse. As such, business-related mobility has become a dynamic and rapidly evolving field.

In this graduation project, the following definition for business-related mobility is used:

Mobility refers to all forms of work-related travel and the policies, systems, and facilities that enable this.

Where major players in the industry used to predominantly be direct suppliers of mobility means such as automobile OEMs or public transport companies, the evolution of the mobility field has also led to a diversification of the stakeholder network. In the Netherlands, an especially large growth can be seen in the industry of professional services, and in particular in IT-services (CBS, 2025a), where many new players have entered the market.

1.2 Project client

An example of one such company is The Client, a scale-up dedicated to corporate mobility that supports employers with services such as a mobility administration system. With about 150 employees, it operates as the largest division of an Investment Holding that offers mobility solutions for different target groups. The Holding's vision is to improve everyday mobility, ensuring that travel between daily destinations becomes hassle free. With its different labels, The Holding provides services across private, business, and public mobility, including access to transport means, administrative processing, and consultancy.

The Holding's mission is to enable the "Way to Zero", i.e. becoming a trusted partner in helping customers achieve objectives in sustainability, vitality, safety, and cost of ownership. For the coming four years, this mission is expressed through the following big hairy audacious goal (BHAG): "In 2029, The Holding services 1 million paying business users in The Netherlands." This number is based on the size of the market. According to Statistics Netherlands (CBS, 2025b), the Dutch working population amounts to 9.8 million people. The Holding aims to serve 10% of this total, since they consider this percentage to be representable in order to be considered market leader—explaining the 1 million paying business users in the BHAG.

The client of this graduation project is the largest label within The Holding. While The Client's services are very broad, their core proposition includes a portal for employers to create user groups, conduct compliance checks, and organize reports. Employees, on the other hand, have access to the The Client's app to register commuting, remote workdays, and business trips, and in many cases, a mobility card to travel via public transport at their employer's expense. The backend administration is handled through accounting files or API integration with payroll or HR systems. The Client offers a tailor-made mobility platform for employers, aligning with the trend of increased demand for customisation in business markets (Brotspies & Weinstein, 2017).



1.3 Project assignment & objectives

In their early years, The Client's focus lay on software development, relying mostly on the marketing and acquisition of external distribution partners. However, in recent years The Client has grown and now operates as its own brand, doing its own marketing and acquisition. They compete for tenders and are active in the free market, with a focus on large corporates and semi-governmental organisations. Initially, this proved to be an effective approach, since these customers have many employees and therefore paying users of the The Client's platform. In The Client's business model, the employer is the customer, but mainly the employees (users) generate monetary value through a user fee, one of two main sources of revenue. In addition to user fees, kickback fees from mobility providers like the Nationale Spoorwegen (NS) forms the most important stream of income. In addition, implementation costs are charged on a case-by-case base, forming an additional source of income.

At the same time, this approach brings with it certain risks. When a tender is lost, The Client loses large amounts of users at the same time. Therefore, in recent years the company has diversified its services from only access to public transport and administration to full mobility support—leading to the signing of several large customers in the free market as well.

However, as mentioned The Holding has set out to service 1 million users in the coming years, causing for a desire to grow at a higher pace. In addition, larger user volumes are expected lead to a better bargaining position with parties such as the NS for kickback fees, leading to better margins and therefore more sustainable growth.

To reach 1 million users, shareholders of The Holding believe the current approach with large corporations as primary target audience will not be enough. They believe also smaller companies active in the free market will need to be attracted. Internally, there is the belief that the The Client's product can also be of value to smaller employers: Small and Medium-sized



Figure 1: visualisation of the problem frame.

Enterprises (hereafter referred to as SMEs).

Internal discussions suggest that prior efforts to develop a proposition for this target group were driven by assumptions rather than grounded research into the wants and needs of the customer. Internally, these propositions lacked clear management and therefore did not receive priority, leading to poor results. It was clear that customers stayed away but there was little to no evaluation on why this was and what efforts could be made to improve.

In addition, there seems to be no clear definition of the SME target group and there is no substantial evidence the product aligns with the needs of this type of customer. Among The Client's employees, there is doubt about whether this is the type of customer to focus on and there are concerns when it comes to scalability of a new approach due to expected added work pressure. Some believe The Client's strong suit

is the total unburdening of large customers rather than servicing small business with small amounts of users. This lack of internal agreement, clarity and coherence has resulted in a weak market proposition and internal confusion and frustration about the SME strategy. A summary of this problem frame is visualised in Figure 1.

Therefore, the goal of this graduation project was to unravel some of these complexities and translate them into a well-founded, structured and decision-ready recommendation to management on the relevance and feasibility of entering the SME market with a scalable proposition. In doing so, the project aims not only to provide input for a business decision, but also to help bring clarity and alignment within the organisation. It is important to note that not entering the SME market was also considered a realistic outcome of the research.

The advice was required to consist of the following aspects:

- Clear market analysis, target audience segmentation, trends, and needs.
- Testing of hypotheses about target audience and product.
- A global business case (investment and revenue estimates, ROI time).
- A concrete overview of opportunities, risks, and boundary conditions.
- A final recommendation (for example: go/no-go and/or scenarios)

By researching these topics and developing an advice, The Client hoped to finally be able to settle the debate about the SME strategy of and make a well-grounded decision for the next 5 years.

1.4 Project approach & reading guide

The design process for this project can be roughly divided into four phases that align with the Double Diamond model developed by the UK Design Council (n.d.).

This model distinguishes two main stages of divergence and convergence: first in understanding the problem, and then in developing solutions. The first diamond represents the research and problem definition phase, in which the project explored the context of business mobility, analysed previous SME initiatives, and investigated the needs and behaviour of SME customers to define the strategic challenge. The second diamond represents the concept development and validation phase, in which these insights were translated into new product-service concepts, evaluated on their desirability, viability, and feasibility, and ultimately consolidated into a strategic business recommendation for The Client.

This report is structured as follows: this first part introduces the background and motivation of the project. Chapter 1 describes The Client, the broader mobility context, and the assignment. Chapter 2 presents the underlying assumptions and research questions that guided the work. Chapter 3 analyses previous SME initiatives within the organisation, highlighting key lessons that shaped the current approach.

The second part explores the SME market in depth. Chapter 4 explains the research methodology. Chapters 5–9 present the main research results: the definition and size of the SME market, contextual developments, customer needs and challenges, segmentation through company profiles, and an analysis of the competitive landscape. Together, these chapters provide a comprehensive picture of the market and its dynamics.

Part III translates the research insights into new propositions for The Client. Chapter 10 explains the ideation and evaluation methods. Chapters 11 and 12 then describe two concept directions — SME Standard and All-in-One Mobility Card — including their target audiences, propositions, and value for The Client.

The final part evaluates the proposed concepts and

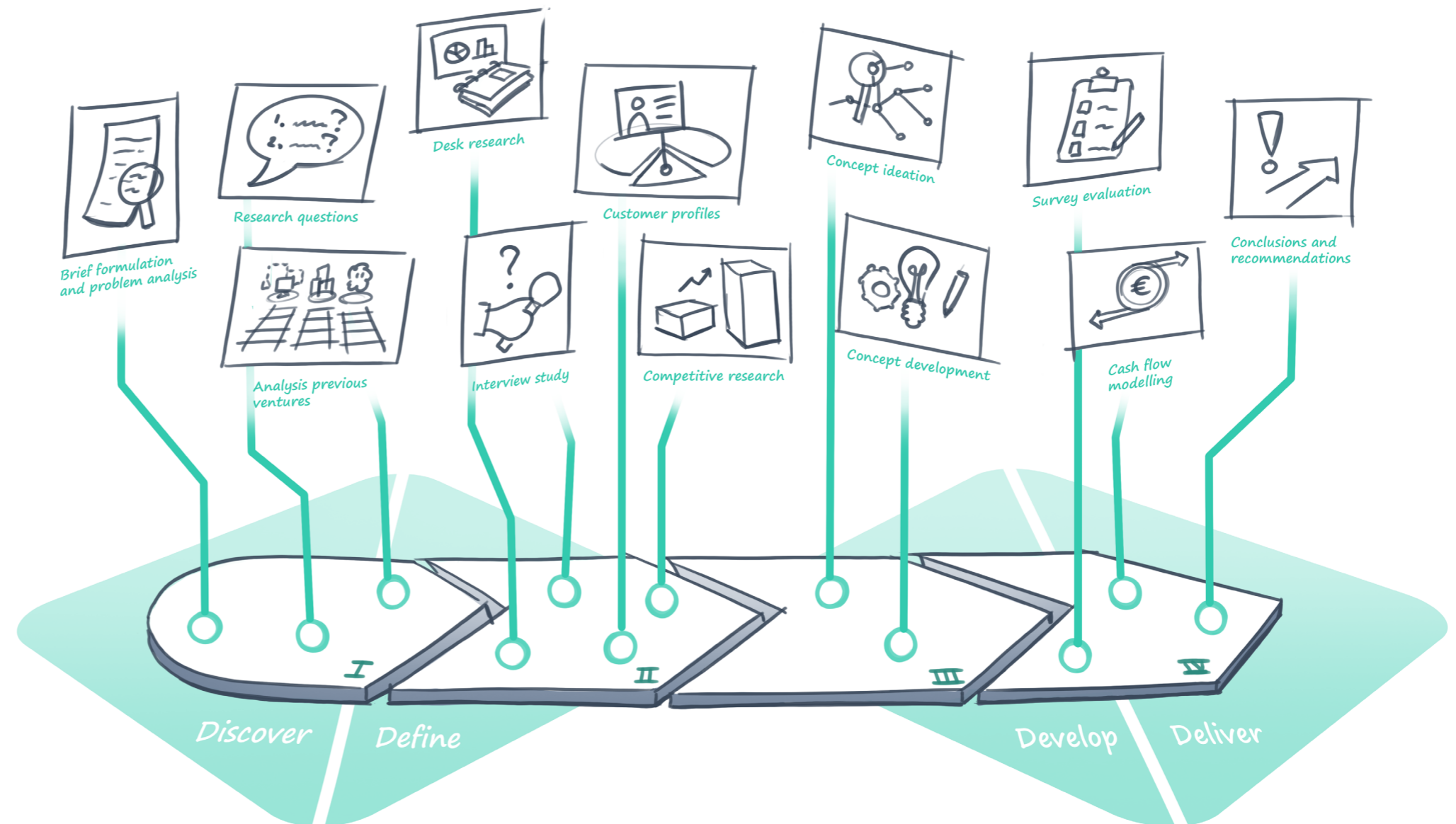


Figure 2: visualisation of the design process divided into four phases that roughly align with the double-diamond model.

integrates the results into a strategic recommendation. Chapter 13 outlines the evaluation methodology and frameworks used. Chapter 14 assesses overall market attractiveness. Chapters 15 and 16 evaluate the two concepts in terms of desirability, viability, and feasibility. Chapter 17 discusses the broader implications and reflections. Finally, Chapters 18–20

present the conclusions, limitations, and additional recommendations for future strategy.

For readability, all appendices have been compiled in a separate supporting document accompanying this thesis.

Throughout the writing process, ChatGPT was used as a supportive tool to improve clarity, structure, and language, primarily for refining formulations and checking grammar and spelling; all analysis and conclusions presented in this report remain the author's own.

Assumptions and research questions

Since the Investment Holding works with the Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe), it was required to write down a so-called epic-statement. For the sake of brevity, the theory behind this framework shall not be explained in this report. The epic-statement required for a clear project description, outlining what the project is about, what the underlying assumptions are that need to be validated, and what will actually be researched, which was scoped through a set of research questions.

Based on talks with a variety of people within the organisation, a clearer understanding of the assignment was formed. It became more clear why there is a need for a solution and what the underlying assumptions are. In a back-and-forth with several key internal stakeholders, a set of assumptions and research questions were drawn up, which further informed the design process.

2.1 Underlying assumptions

This strategic direction presents a shift of relationship type, described by Freitag & Clarke (2001). Where The Client's primary focus is currently on 'complex relationship management', their desire is to move towards a 'simple market transaction' for SME customers. This spectrum and the characteristics of both ends is visualised in Figure 3. The primary assumptions are based on this shift and are highlighted on the right.

The Client needs to diversify by investing in a SME-approach rather than focusing solely on further growth in the large enterprise segment because:

- We assume that SME companies are in need of mobility solutions:
 - SMEs are helped with an easy to implement product without interference of account- or implementation managers.
 - Decision Making Units (DMUs) in SME companies value ease of use, time and cost saving, and sustainability.
- We assume that The Client has a position in the market to attract SME companies or is sufficiently working toward such a position.
- We assume that there is demand for The Client's product, an assumed scalable, self-service mobility solution.

2.2 Main and sub research questions

To give further guidance to the design process, a set of research questions was developed. The main research questions further define the scope and the sub questions help to give more guidance and test assumptions. These questions were aligned with internal stakeholders at The Client. The main research questions of the project can be found on the right.

These questions align roughly with the design statement mentioned in the original project brief from the start of the project (see Appendix A). These main questions were further divided into sub questions over six categories: learnings from previous ventures, target group definition, current and future needs target group, current and future product/proposition, alternatives/competition, and implementation.

Each categories features several sub questions that lay at the base of the activities carried out during the project. All sub questions can be found in Appendix B.

To what extent is it desirable for The Client to pursue a strategy for SMEs in the free market?

- Which SME segments show the greatest need and willingness to purchase The Client's current mobility solution in the short term (1 year), and how can the existing offering be tailored to this?
- Which (new) propositions best match the needs of specific SME sub-segments in the longer term (2-5 years) and how can these contribute to a scalable market approach?

Simple market transaction:

- No cooperation
- No bonds
- No switching costs
- Non-adapted product
- "Zero-touch"



Complex relationship management:

- Close cooperation
- Strong bonds
- High switching costs
- Highly adapted product
- "Support-heavy"



Figure 3: the spectrum between market transaction and customer relationship. Adapted from Freitag & Clarke (2001)

Analysis of previous ventures

Introductory meetings with various employees at The Client highlighted the need for thorough background research into earlier attempts to serve the SME market. Several people noted that these previous initiatives were only partly successful, but detailed knowledge about what happened is scattered—often remaining in the heads of staff or in internal reports.

The Client therefore strongly expressed the desire to make this knowledge explicit, to identify which bottlenecks and barriers contributed to the limited success, and to come up with lessons for future SME propositions. To address this, a series of internal (informal) interviews (see Appendix D) was conducted, supplemented by an analysis of relevant internal documents.

While initially six ventures were mentioned during initial conversations, they were reevaluated and grouped into the following three:

- The SME Self-Service Funnel
- Partner Distribution Strategy
- Travel registration app Freddi

In this chapter, each of these ventures is analysed by providing general information about the initiative, the goal and approach, the outcomes and underlying causes for these outcomes. The chapter ends with a conclusion on which lessons can be learned from these ventures and how they can inform a future SME proposition.



3.1 The SME self-service funnel

The first initiative aimed directly at SMEs was the introduction of the self-service funnel, internally referred to as the mkb-wasstraat. This online process allows employers to order standardised mobility packages through the The Client's website. The idea originated both from a distribution partner who requested a simple order flow for their customers, and from internal concerns about the time-intensive onboarding of large corporates. The funnel is meant to enable scaling by simplifying both the product and the contracting process.

3.1.1 Initiative and outcomes

The target group consists of companies with fewer than 100 employees. For them, three bundles were offered through an online order flow (Figure 4):

- Mobiliteit Basis: focused on travel registration and reimbursements, with optional integration into HR or payroll systems.
- Mobiliteit OV: added a mobility card for public transport and the NS OV-bike, with possible extensions such as taxis or shared mobility.
- Mobiliteit Auto: included fuel and charging cards for company cars, plus the features of the other packages.

Launched at the end of 2023, the project was greeted enthusiastically. However, since then, adoption was minimal. Only a small number of companies have visited the landing page, and those who did often abandoned the online flow and instead contacted The Client's staff directly. In practice, the expected efficiency gains do not materialise: each SME customer still required the same level of support and custom implementation as larger corporates.

*The WPM-reporting obligation was recently announced to soon be abolished after it proved ineffective in stimulating hybrid working or cycling (Koole, 2025), further eliminating the need for dedicated tooling for SMEs.

3.1.2 Causes and conclusions

Several reasons explain why the funnel fails to deliver. First, the offering is not as simple as intended. Overlapping features and unclear information on the website appear to create confusion, for instance about whether packages were per employee or how modules interacted when combined. Even small options, such as shared mobility, still require manual consultation with the customer.

Second, customisation remains the norm. Although positioned as a standard solution, the website mentioned integrations and additional services "on request," which leads almost every interested company to demand tailored features. As a result, The Client's staff spend just as much time configuring solutions for SMEs as they did for corporates.

Third, there seems to be a mismatch between product features and customer needs. SMEs often look for straightforward solutions to one problem, while the funnel still resembles a scaled-down version of the complex corporate platform. Including CO₂ monitoring in every package, even though WPM-reporting obligations only apply to firms with 100+ employees, is one example of this misalignment*.

Finally, internal ownership and marketing are lacking. After the initiator left, no one actively monitored or improved the funnel. Employees often do not even know if a customer had entered via the funnel or via the regular route, so both are treated the same. On top of this, almost no targeted marketing is directed at SMEs, meaning that few in the target group ever become aware of the offer.

In sum, the ambition to create a scalable, standardised solution was valid, but execution fell short. Without genuine simplicity, clear internal ownership, and targeted marketing, the offer cannot attract SMEs or reduce The Client's workload. See Appendix C.1 for a more detailed explanation.

"It was a nice idea, but really no customers show up."

Employee of a distribution partner of The Client.

The screenshot displays a comparison interface for three mobility packages. At the top, there are three steps: 1. Pakkeselectie, 2. Bedrijfsgegevens, and 3. Controle en akkoord. The main heading is 'Vergelijk en kies uit onze drie pakketten'. Below this, three columns represent the packages:

- Mobiliteit Basis:** € 3,99 per gebruiker per maand. Features include: Woon-werk en zakelijk reizen (Eigen vervoer), Functionaliteiten (CO2-rapportage, Km-registratie (incl. GPS), Thuiswerkvergoeding, Reisplanner, Km-vergoeding), Vervoermiddelen (Alleen eigen vervoer), Portals, app en kaart (Werkgeversportal, Werknemersportal, Mobiele app), and Services (24/7 werknemers support, Werkgevers support).
- Mobiliteit OV:** € 4,99 per gebruiker per maand. Features include: Woon-werk en zakelijk reizen (Eigen vervoer, Openbaar vervoer), Functionaliteiten (CO2-rapportage, Km-registratie (incl. GPS), Thuiswerkvergoeding, Reisplanner, Km-vergoeding), Vervoermiddelen (OV binnen Nederland, OV-fiets, NS station fietsenstalling), Portals, app en kaart (Werkgeversportal, Werknemersportal, Mobiele app, Mobiliteitskaart OV), and Services (24/7 werknemers support, Werkgevers support).
- Mobiliteit Auto:** € 5,49 per gebruiker per maand. Features include: Woon-werk en zakelijk reizen (Auto van de zaak), Functionaliteiten (CO2-rapportage, Km-registratie (incl. GPS), Thuiswerkvergoeding, Reisplanner), Autodiensten en vervoermiddelen (Tanken en/of laden in NL, Straatparkeren, Garage parkeren, Autowassen, E-tickets OV Nederland), Portals, app en kaart (Werkgeversportal, Werknemersportal, Mobiele app, Tank- en/of laadpas), and Services (24/7 werknemers support, Werkgevers support).

Figure 4: excerpt from the order funnel on the The Client's website.

3.2 Partner distribution strategy

As mentioned earlier, the SME self-service funnel was partly created at the request of a distribution partner of The Client. Since its early days, The Client has explored how distributing partners could help reach potential customers. In the beginning, the company relied heavily on partnerships with 'trusted brands' because The Client mainly had IT expertise and lacked capabilities in marketing and sales.

In recent years, The Client has developed its own brand and become more independent. However, there is still a belief that partnerships can accelerate growth by leveraging the partner's name and network. Over the years, The Client has worked with distribution partners from different sectors (see Figure 5), using various partnership structures and with mixed results.

3.2.1 Initiative and outcomes

The idea was that well-known "trusted brands" could open doors to SMEs more easily than The Client itself, which had little brand awareness and limited marketing power. In return, partners could use The Client's product as an extra service in their portfolio, while The Client could grow faster at lower cost.

In practice, the results were disappointing. Only a small number of SME customers came in through partners. Many partners presented The Client's product only as a side product, next to their main services like fleet management or public transport cards. Their sales teams often lacked the knowledge to explain or set up a complex product like The Client's. As a result, The Client's staff still needed to step in for sales and implementation.

Partnerships also created confusion. Several distributors offered the same product under different labels, sometimes even targeting the same customers. Public transport providers such as NS also pushed their own solutions, competing directly with The Client. In the end, most new SME customers still came through The Client's own marketing and sales, so in the end there was no increase in efficiency.

3.2.2 Causes and conclusions

There are a few clear reasons why the strategy did not work out as planned. First, the product was too complex. Partners were used to selling simple products such as lease contracts or transport passes. Selling The Client's product required knowledge about payroll integration, allowances, and compliance, which partners did not have.

Second, the product was not only too complex for partners, but for its target audience as well. Partner's noted that most small companies were only looking for basic access to public transport, not for a full mobility platform. Competitors with simpler offers, especially NS, were more successful in this market.

Third, incentives were limited. Partners earned a commission on sales, but the effort needed to explain and support The Client's product was too high compared to the reward. This meant the product was rarely a priority for them causing them to focus on their core offering, only mentioning The Client's product occasionally or through a flyer.

Finally, The Client still had to do most of the work itself. In most cases, each new customer required direct support, so the strategy did not save time or resources.

In short, partnerships looked like a promising route into the SME market, but without a simpler product and clearer roles, they could not deliver real growth. The lesson is that partnerships can only work if the offer is easy to explain, easy to sell, and directly relevant for SME needs. In addition, a distributing partner should feel responsible for the offering and see it as their own, for example through a whitelabel construction (see Appendix C.2 for more information).








Figure 5: current and previous distribution partners of The Client.

3.3 Mobility registration app Freddi

Freddi was a plug-and-play app developed at the Louwman Group innovation department. Since Louwman is one of the shareholders of The Holding, knowledge about this initiative was shared with The Client. The app allowed employees to register commutes, hybrid workdays, and business trips using a very simple interface. All records were automatically sent to the employer portal, where payroll staff could view travel patterns and generate files for tax-free allowances. The design required no sales support or implementation, making it a good example of a light, scalable SME product.

3.3.1 Initiative and outcomes

The app was launched in response to changes in Dutch tax rules in 2022. In The Netherlands, employees can only receive a fixed travel allowance tax-free if they commute at least 128 days per year, which employers need to prove towards tax authorities. Because of the COVID-19 crisis and the resulting increase in hybrid working, many employees no longer automatically met that threshold, so employers were expected to record travel movements more precisely. Freddi was positioned as a solution to help SMEs comply with these rules while keeping administration simple.

Freddi was introduced through pilot campaigns and product demos, and it was initially welcomed for its ease of use (see Figure 6). Some employers saw it as a convenient way to capture commutes and hybrid days, and employees found the app intuitive. However, actual adoption remained low. Many SMEs showed interest in discussions, but in practice few implemented Freddi at scale, and those who did often used it only sporadically.

3.3.2 Causes and conclusions

Several reasons explain why Freddi did not gain traction. The most important was the lack of urgency. Interviewees agreed that accurate records might become important, but in practice tax authorities were less strict than expected. Employers therefore did not feel pressured to improve their registration, and manual administration continued to be seen as “good enough.”

Second, the added value was found to be limited. While the app was easy to use, it did not significantly reduce the workload of HR or payroll staff. Many employers said they would only adopt Freddi if it integrated directly into existing systems such as HR or payroll software. Without this link, Freddi felt like an extra tool with little real benefit.

Third, there was a high barrier to adoption. Even though the app was designed as simple, it was still “one more task” in already busy routines, especially since employers were not used to having to do this. For employees managing hybrid work and travel reimbursements, registering trips in a separate app was seen as an extra step rather than a simplification.

In hindsight, it can be argued that Freddi may have been launched too early. At the time, most employers were still accustomed to pre-pandemic routines and had not yet internalised hybrid work administration as a standard process. However, in the mean time, organisations have likely become more experienced with registering office and home-working days (e.g., due to CO₂ reporting or remote-work policies) and may now be more receptive to tools that streamline this administration.

In conclusion, Freddi illustrates that SMEs do appreciate simple, plug-and-play tools, but only if they solve a problem that is both urgent and unavoidable. Without strong external enforcement or seamless integration with existing systems, even straightforward solutions will struggle to gain adoption. Please see Appendix C.3 for a more detailed explanation.

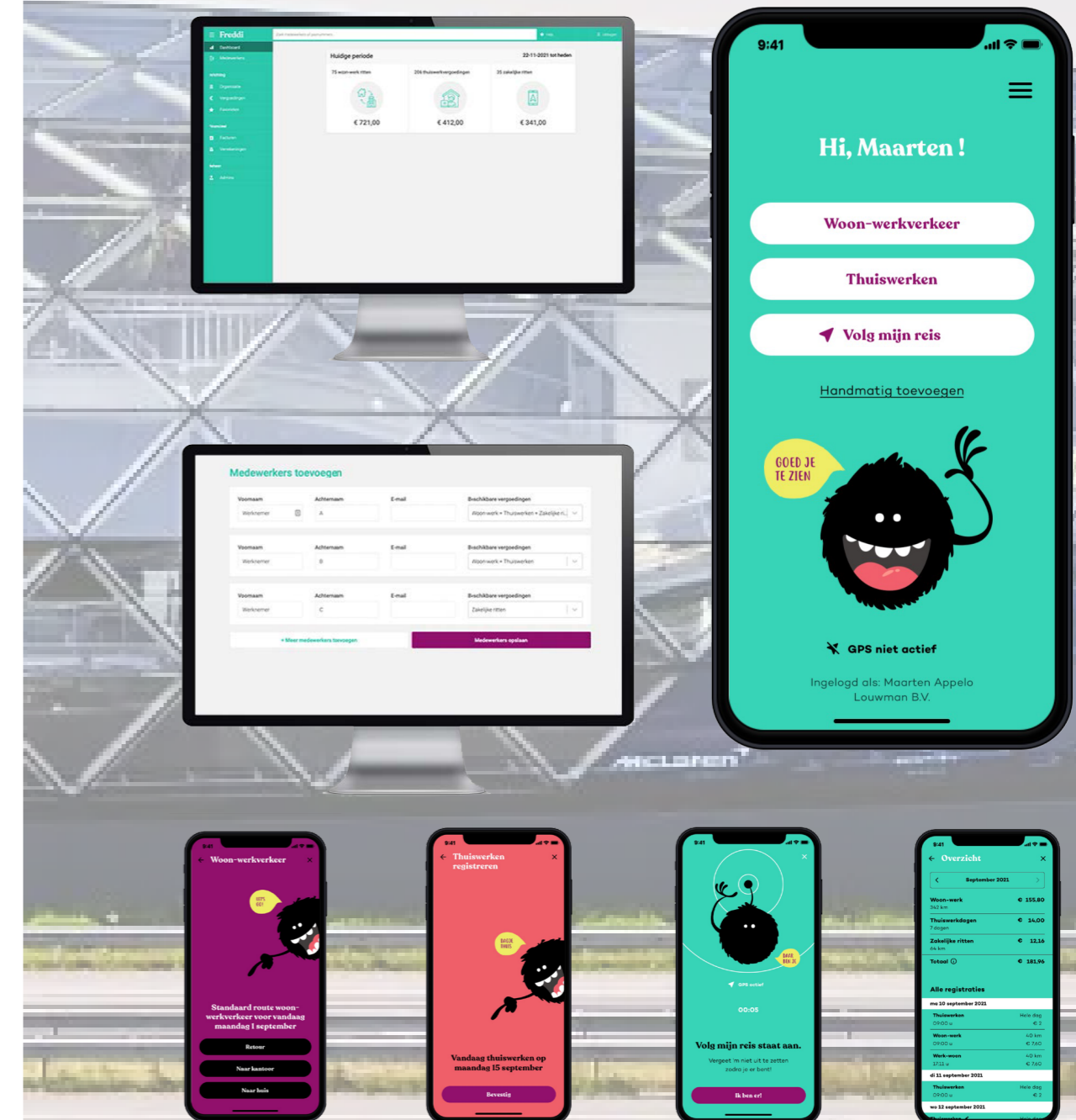


Figure 6: the simple user interface that was appreciated by customers.

3.4 Key takeaways

This chapter examined the main initiatives The Client and its partners have taken in recent years to serve the SME market. The goal was to identify bottlenecks and barriers that led to the limited success of the initiatives and to draw lessons that can inform the

development of a future SME proposition. Several approaches were analysed, including the SME self-service funnel, partnerships with distribution partners, and the Freddi travel registration app. The analysis shows that all these initiatives faced significant challenges and barriers, resulting in only limited success.



A major challenge was that the The Client's product is simply too complex for the relatively straightforward needs of most SMEs. The demand for full-service mobility solutions among SMEs is much smaller than previously assumed. Most small businesses are looking for simple solutions for a specific need, rather than an all-in-one platform. Splitting the The Client's platform into three standard packages did not solve this problem; the packages remained too complex, and their presentation on the website was often confusing and unclear. As a result, the product offering still did not match the actual needs of SMEs.

Another recurring challenge is the tension between standardisation and customisation. Many SMEs still requested tailored features, which led to high workload for The Client's staff—sometimes as much as with large corporates. For the future, it may be important to draw a clear line between standard and custom offerings, and to prioritise only those customers who fit the chosen approach.

Internal factors also played a role. The lack of clear ownership for new propositions led to lost momentum and insufficient follow-up after launch. In addition, most marketing efforts were not targeted specifically at SMEs, so awareness and interest remained low.

Another key lesson is that distribution partners are only valuable if they fully embrace the product as their own, invest dedicated resources, and actively promote it to their customers. In practice, most partners saw The Client's product as an optional add-on, which limited their effort and impact. Clear agreements about roles, responsibilities, and expectations are essential for any future partnerships.

The Freddi concept also shows that accurate, reliable and cost-efficient administration was not a priority for SMEs at the time of its launch. Mobility is low on the agenda and the willingness to pay for solutions is therefore limited. A proposition focused on registration seems to have little potential.

These lessons offer concrete guidelines possibly relevantly for future propositions: keep the offer truly simple, make choices about customisation, communicate clearly, ensure strong internal leadership, and select partners who will truly invest in the product.

Part II: Customer- and market research

Earlier SME initiatives at The Client were driven largely by assumptions, without clear evidence of customer needs. Internal discussions showed that definitions of “SME” varied widely, creating confusion and resistance around the SME strategy. This highlighted the need for a shared definition and for evidence-based insights into the characteristics and size of the target group, which are essential for segmentation.

The research therefore combined internal discussions, partner interviews, desk research, and an extensive semi-structured interview study with both SMEs and existing customers. This provided insights into context, purchasing behaviour, and specific needs, which were then synthesised into nine customer profiles that each represent a typical SME with its mobility needs and decision-making dynamics.

In addition, the analysis included a review of the competitive landscape to understand alternatives SMEs currently use for business mobility and to identify lessons from competitors. Together, these insights form the foundation for developing a well-grounded SME proposition.

This chapter describes the main research activities and methods that were applied to gain insights into the market and SME customers. A combination of desk research, internal interviews, distribution partner interviews, and customer interviews was used. Together, these methods provided a broad and in-depth understanding of the mobility needs and purchasing behaviour of SMEs in the Netherlands.

4.1 Desk research

The research started with an extensive desk study. Data from Statistics Netherlands (CBS) was used to analyse the demographics of the SME market and to map its overall size. CBS Statline was applied as the main tool, as it provides flexibility in generating custom tables and graphs. In addition, trend reports from both governmental and commercial sources were consulted to obtain insights into the daily reality of SMEs. These reports highlighted general concerns, purchasing behaviour, and developments in the field of business mobility.

Desk research was also used for competitor analysis. This included reviewing websites, customer reviews, and relevant news articles. Existing internal competitor analyses from The Client were used as a check, and gaps were supplemented with an additional structured competitor scan by ChatGPT.

4.2 Internal interviews

To understand the internal perspective on the SME market, semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders across several departments, including management, strategy, product development, sales, and operations. These conversations took place either at the The Client's office or via MS Teams. Some were formally recorded and transcribed, while others were too informal for transcription but still provided relevant input.

The transcripts were coded and transferred to a Miro board for systematic analysis. This step made it possible to capture and compare different viewpoints. The internal interviews revealed a wide variety of

perspectives and sometimes conflicting opinions on SMEs and on The Client's current and future approach.

4.3 Distribution partner interviews

To complement the internal view, interviews were held with two employees of an important distribution partner of The Client. These partners are closely connected to the SME market and have many years of experience with this target group. They were therefore able to share valuable insights into the needs, challenges, and decision-making processes of SMEs.

The participants included a commercial manager and an account manager. The interviews were conducted online, following semi-structured interview guides (see Appendix D.2). All conversations were recorded, transcribed, and coded. The results were also processed in Miro to make comparison and clustering easier.

4.4 Customer interviews

The most important step in the research consisted of interviews with SME decision-makers themselves. In total, nine semi-structured online interviews were conducted. Two participants were existing customers of The Client with fewer than 250 employees, while seven were non-customers recruited through personal contacts. An anonymised overview of all participants is presented in Appendix D.2.

Separate interview guides were developed for general respondents and for existing customers of The Client. The interviews explored several themes: the current mobility situation, past experiences, needs and expectations, market orientation and purchasing processes, perceptions of suppliers, and future wishes for ideal mobility solutions. The complete interview guides are provided in Appendix D.

All interviews were recorded in MS Teams and automatically transcribed using the MS Word transcribe

function. Transcripts were anonymised and, together with the original audio files, used for thematic coding. Coding was performed directly in Miro by placing digital post-its. First, codes were clustered per interview around recurring topics. These clusters were then combined across all interviews, which resulted in a set of broader themes.

This process is visualised in Figure 7. A thematic analysis was carried out on these clusters. Five categories were used as a structure:

- Jobs-to-be-done
- Pains
- Gains
- General purchasing behaviour
- Trends and structural developments

The final set of themes is included in Appendix D.4.

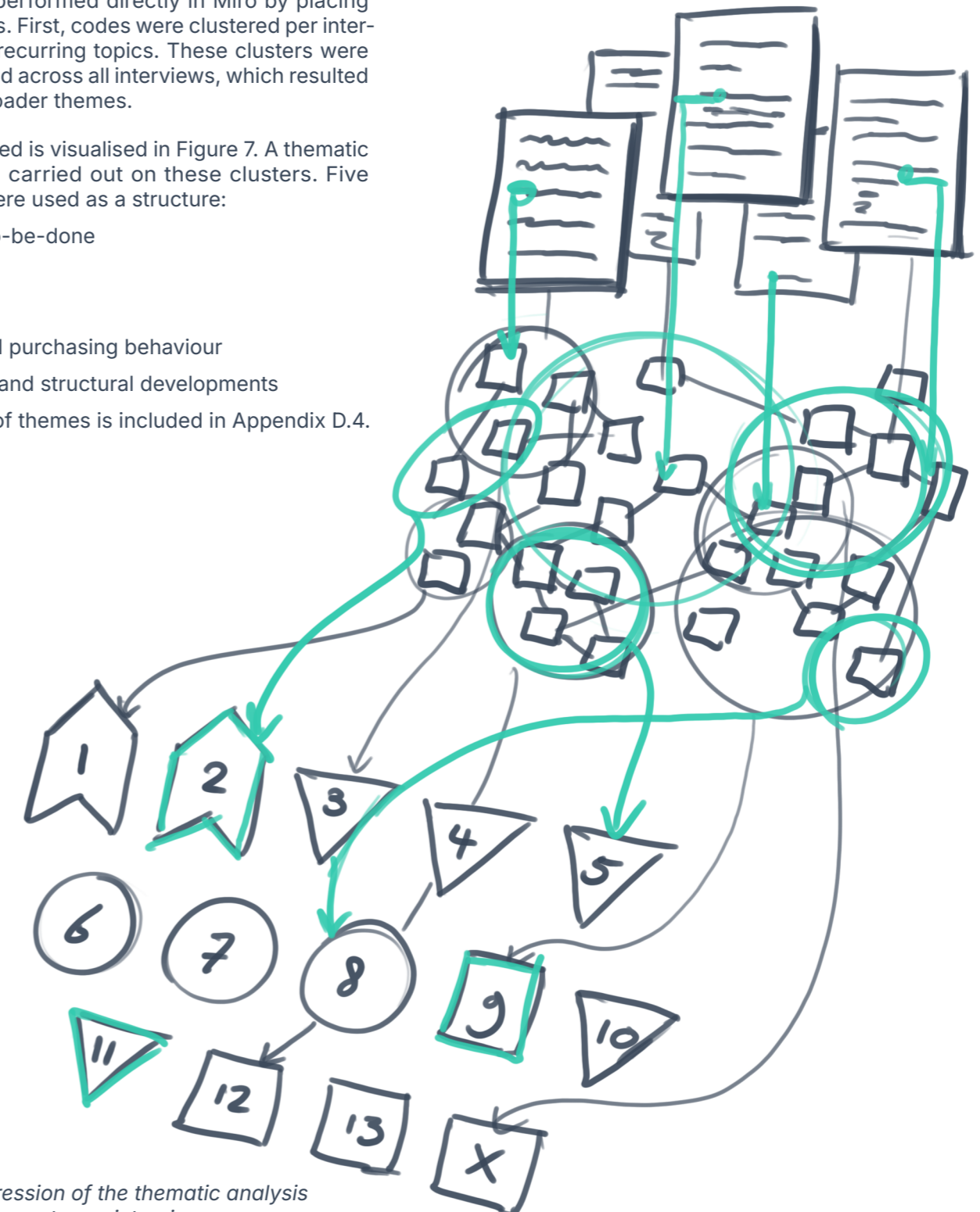


Figure 7: impression of the thematic analysis process of the customer interviews.

Definition of SME market

Talks with several of The Client’s employees who regularly interface with customers revealed key characteristics that set SME customers apart from large corporate customers. They described SMEs as companies with a relatively small number of employees—usually with a maximum of 200 to 500. They noted that SMEs typically have horizontal organisational structures and quick decision-making processes in small teams, in contrast to the slower, multi-department procedures common in large corporates.

While these features help to distinguish SMEs, the definition remained somewhat vague. To gain a clearer picture of the target group and determine which subset of companies and data are included in this project, Statistics Netherlands (CBS) was consulted. In addition, it was found to be useful to assess the size of this market as well to paint a more nuanced picture of the broad market landscape of SMEs.

5.1 Formal definition

CBS defines SMEs as companies with up to 250 employees (CBS, 2021). However, this definition also includes freelancers and self-employed workers, which is less relevant for The Client, since its services focus on organisations arranging mobility for employees. Therefore, it is more useful to exclude businesses without personnel.

The European Commission’s definition makes this distinction and adds two more criteria: annual turnover and total asset value (European Commission, 2020). According to this definition, SMEs are companies with:

- a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 250 employees;
- an annual turnover of less than €50 million;
- or a total asset value of less than €43 million.

In practice, the 2–250 employee range is the most workable definition, most commonly found on websites and in reports. Moreover, Statistics Netherlands often uses company size as the main variable, making it suitable for data gathering.

Beyond size, turnover, and asset value, another distinction is important for The Client. Targeting SME customers is intended to differentiate The Client from its business in the public tender process; thus, the focus is on organisations in the business economy (the free market). Research reports often exclude certain sectors—such as government, agriculture, financial services, education, healthcare, culture, sports and recreation, interest and hobby associations, and personal services—from the SME definition (Span et al., 2018; CBS, 2021). The remaining sectors are displayed in Figure 10, along with an impression of the amount of SMEs per sector.

5.2 Market size

The SME definition outlined above was used to estimate the size of the target market. In total, over 2.5 million companies are registered in the Netherlands. However, when applying the criteria of 2–250 employees, excluding those without personnel and focusing only on the business economy, there are more than 420,000 registered SMEs (Karthaus, 2025; CBS, 2024).

Breaking this down by company size shows that the vast majority of SMEs have between 2 and 10 employees, with a much smaller number employing 10 to 50 people (Figure 8). Despite their small size, these companies still account for most of the jobs within the SME sector (see Figure 9).

In terms of customer and user numbers, the smaller SME segments could be considered most attractive. However, it is important to consider whether these customers are a good fit for the current offering of The Client, or whether a new proposition would better meet their needs. Larger customers, although fewer in number, may be more attractive due to a better fit with the product or a larger number of users per customer. Moreover, since The Client’s approach is limited by the capacity to onboard and serve customers, focusing on a handful of corporate customers may be more efficient than serving many small companies. Therefore, while these statistics help paint a picture of the total addressable market, more research was needed to determine potentially attractive sub segments.

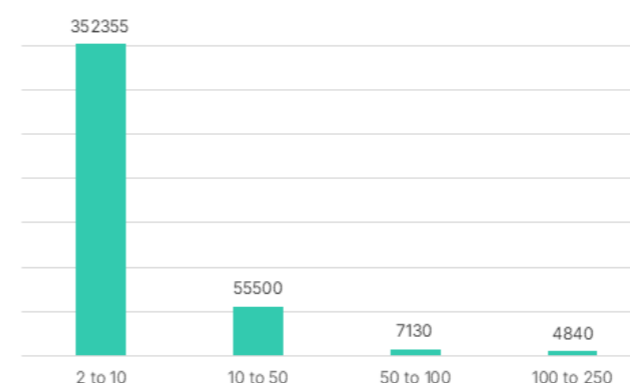


Figure 8: number of SME companies in The Netherlands by amount of employees (CBS, 2024a).

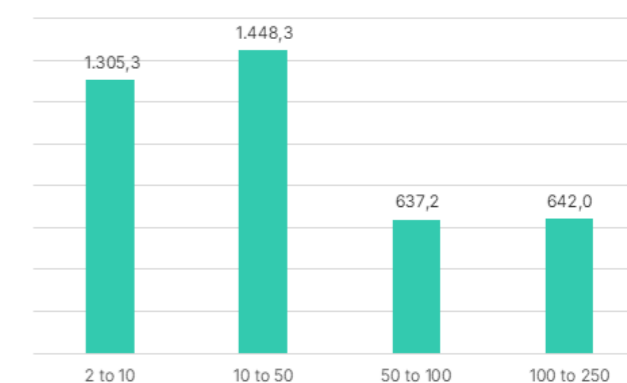


Figure 9: Number of jobs by company size in 2024 (CBS, 2024b). Figures for 100-250 are estimates based on surrounding data in dataset.

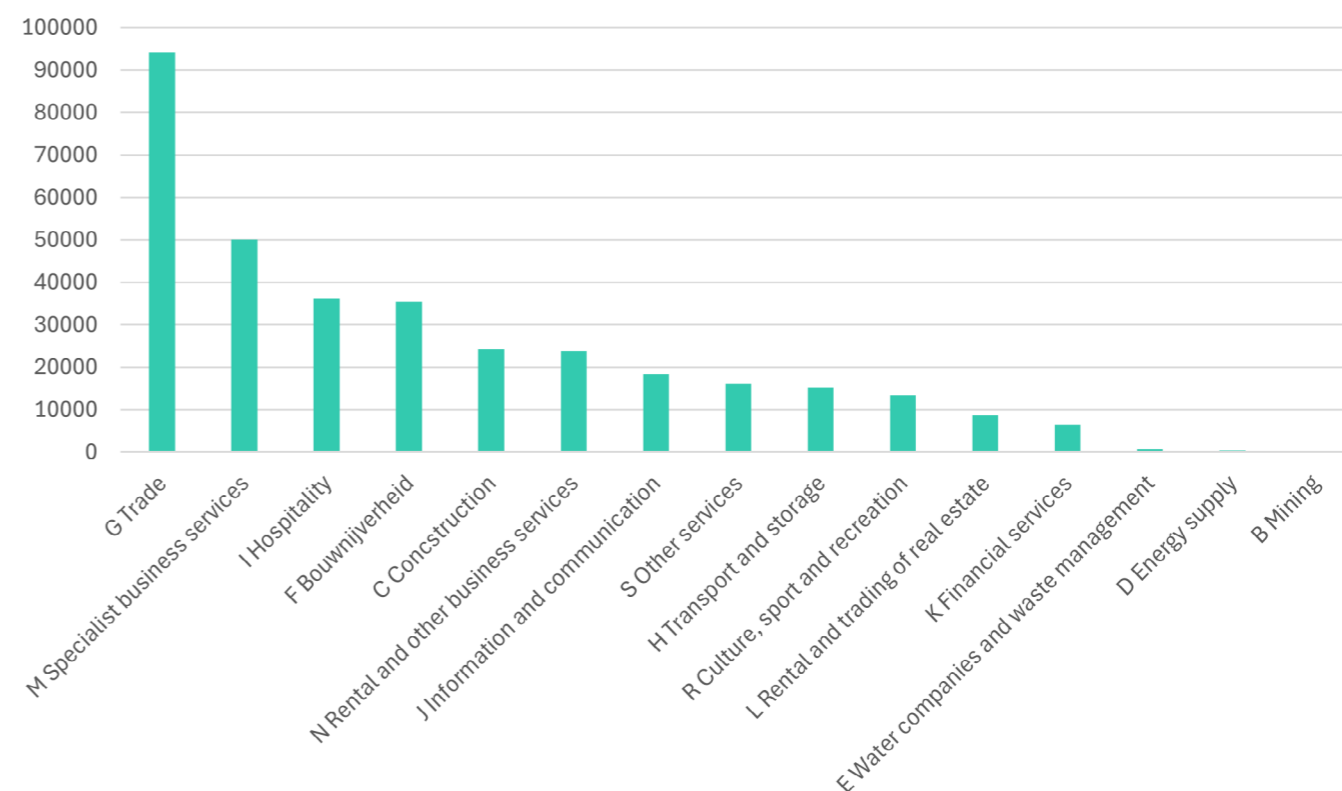


Figure 10: number of SME companies per industry, using SBI2008 classification (CBS, 2024c).

SME context and behaviour

After establishing a workable definition, the next step was to gain a deeper understanding of the target audience. Conversations quickly revealed that even within SMEs in the business economy, there is a great deal of diversity. The main aim of the research was to better understand the different types of SMEs, especially in relation to their mobility needs.

To achieve this, an interview study was conducted with nine decision-makers from eight different companies, including two current customers of The Client. These online semi-structured interviews explored how each company organised mobility and their experiences with it. Details about the interview setup, interview guides, and transcripts are available in Appendix D.

Thematic analysis of the interview data identified 22 themes across five categories. Two categories relate to general context factors—namely, trends and structural developments, and general purchasing behaviour in SMEs. The other three categories, taken from the Value Proposition Canvas, are jobs-to-be-done, pains, and gains (Osterwalder et al., 2014). The main findings for each category are summarised in this chapter. These contextual insights form the basis for understanding the underlying needs and challenges SMEs experience when organising mobility, which are explored in the next chapter.

6.1 Trends and structural developments

Interview insights, supported by desk research, revealed several key trends shaping the business mobility landscape for SMEs: growing complexity, increased demand for customisation, and rising interest in automation and AI (see Figure 11).

The most significant trend is the **growing complexity**

of business mobility. New transport modes, alternative fuels, hybrid working, and stricter sustainability regulations have created a dynamic and interconnected system (KiM, 2023; Mobiliteitsalliantie, 2020). This complexity is evident in SMEs' daily operations. Interviewees noted that managing mobility has become more challenging due to the variety of transport options, shifting employee preferences, and diverse company policies. There is a noticeable shift away from lease cars, mainly because of rising costs, the rise of hybrid working, sustainability ambitions, and the changing expectations of younger employees—particularly in urban areas like the Randstad, where public transport and shared mobility are becoming more popular.

These changes have also increased the administrative burden for those managing mobility. Unlike large corporates, SMEs rarely have dedicated mobility managers; instead, responsibilities are spread across different roles, leading to a fragmented approach. As a result, many SMEs expressed a desire for greater simplicity and uniformity in their mobility policies.

A second trend is the **growing demand for customisation.** As Brotspies et al. (2019) note, almost every business customer now expects tailored products, whether in quantity, features, delivery, or technical specifications. This has contributed to the rise of B2B service providers, such as The Client, that offer customised solutions.

Finally, SMEs are increasingly investing in **automation and AI** to improve efficiency, driven by labour shortages and rising costs. In 2025, one-third of SMEs use AI in their daily operations, up from only 6% the year before. Nearly 60% of entrepreneurs list automation as a priority, and most allocate budgets for it (Exact, 2025). While many interviewees expressed a desire to streamline processes and reduce costs, some remain hesitant to invest in digital solutions due to concerns about costs, implementation, and transition challenges.

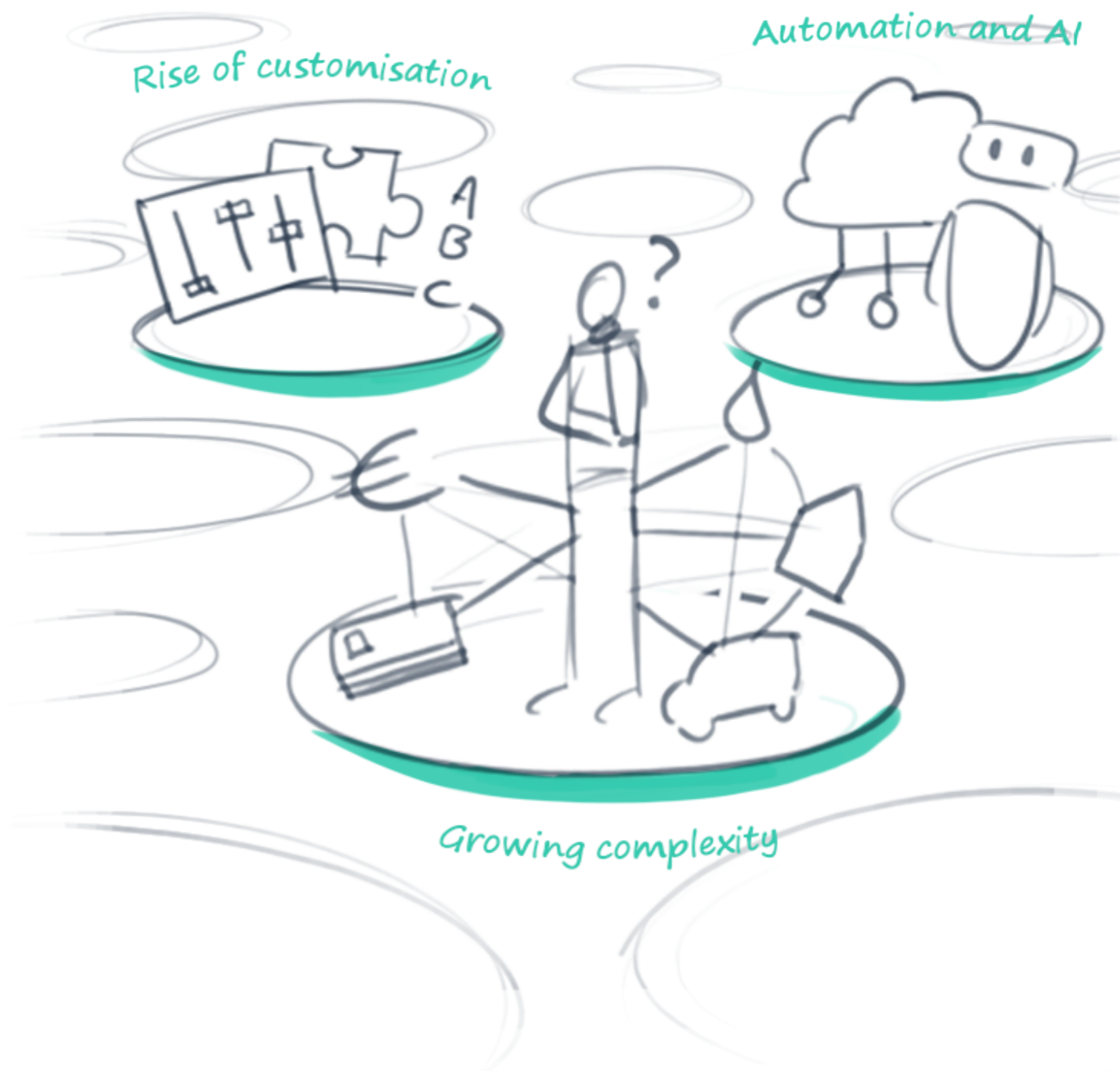


Figure 11: key trends that emerged from the analysis.

6.2 General purchasing behaviour

The interview study with internal stakeholders, distribution partners, and SME decision-makers revealed several key insights into the purchasing behaviour of SMEs—insights that are relevant for The Client. Three main themes emerged: the influence of employees, the value of personal contact, and the importance of references and networks.



Employees play a significant role in the decision-making process

Unlike in larger organisations, where decisions are usually top-down, SME employees have real influence over company policies. Requests for benefits like bike plans, public transport cards, or company cars are often taken seriously and can shape company offerings. Managers place high value on employee satisfaction, which can sometimes make it harder to implement changes or introduce innovations. On the other hand, this highlights the dual nature of a business model like that of The Client; both the primary customer as well as the actual end-user are important stakeholders that can be designed for an targeted to in marketing efforts.



Personal contact with suppliers is essential for SMEs

Decision-makers value strong relationships, not just during the orientation and implementation phases but throughout the partnership. Choices are often based on multiple conversations with sales representatives, and a positive impression can be decisive. SMEs prefer to have a dedicated contact person who is accessible, proactive, and invested in the relationship. High-quality service is seen as a key differentiator, especially when price differences between suppliers are small.



References and personal networks are crucial in supplier selection

SMEs often begin their search by asking contacts in their network about their experiences and recommendations. Personal connections to a supplier are frequently the first step towards a partnership. If no direct network is available, decision-makers turn to online information, with reviews and testimonials from similar businesses playing a decisive role. Trust and shared experience carry more weight than abstract product specifications or marketing claims.

SME needs and challenges

The final category of thematic analysis clusters of interview results roughly follows the customer profile side of value proposition canvas framework. Together, these form a comprehensive view of the daily reality of mobility for decision-making units at SME companies.

In this chapter, the follow definitions are used (adapted from: Osterwalder et. al, 2014):

- Customer jobs refer to what customers are aiming to accomplish in their work. This includes the tasks they want to complete, the problems they hope to address, or the needs they wish to fulfil.
- Customer pains are the frustrations or obstacles customers experience before, during, or after trying to achieve their goals. These also include potential risks or negative consequences that might occur if the job is done poorly or not at all.
- Customer gains are the positive outcomes and advantages that customers are looking for. These might be required, expected, or simply appreciated, and sometimes they even exceed expectations. Gains can take the form of practical benefits, social rewards, positive feelings, or financial savings.

7.1 Jobs-to-be-done

This section outlines the core themes from the thematic analysis that roughly resemble the “jobs” that SME employers aim to accomplish through their mobility arrangements. These jobs reflect the underlying motivations that guide their choices — from ensuring operational continuity to managing costs and keeping employees satisfied. The following subsections describe these functional, emotional, and strategic dimensions in more detail.



Continuity of operation is the primary objective

A key theme in the interviews is that operational continuity is the top priority for most SMEs. Mobility and sustainability are often seen as secondary, unless they directly support daily business activities. As a result, mobility policies are mainly viewed as practical tools to help employees do their jobs, which explains why SMEs are cautious about investing in new systems or changing established routines.



Cost saving forms a core motive

For many SMEs, cost savings are the main driver behind mobility decisions. Whether by encouraging remote work or optimising delivery routes, the focus is always on reducing expenses. Rising costs push entrepreneurs to seek more efficient solutions, and price is a key factor when choosing suppliers or digital tools. As a result, cost awareness underlies nearly all choices related to business mobility.



Satisfied employees drive decision makers

Keeping employees satisfied is a major factor in how SMEs make mobility decisions. Because attracting and retaining staff is increasingly difficult, companies offer appealing benefits like mobility budgets or bike plans. However, meeting these expectations can make employers reluctant to change established perks, such as company cars, which in turn can slow down the adoption of more sustainable or efficient mobility policies.



Flexibility needs to be balanced with manageability

Flexibility for employees is a key goal for many SMEs, as it boosts satisfaction and engagement. However, allowing individual choices in mobility and work arrangements makes policies more complex and harder to manage. SMEs therefore seek a balance between offering flexibility and maintaining simplicity and control in their mobility policies.



Sustainability comes last

Although SMEs generally value sustainability, it is far from a top priority. Operational continuity, cost control, and employee satisfaction rank much higher. Most SMEs only invest in sustainability if it does not conflict with these interests. External pressure is limited: customer demand for sustainable practices occurs occasionally but rarely drives structural change. Consequently, sustainability remains more of a wish than a strategic focus. Recent figures confirm this trend, as SME investments in sustainability have declined (Berenschot, 2025; CBS, 2025d).

In addition, policy pressure is also likely to be weakened. Since 2024, SMEs with 100 or more employees were obliged to report on their carbon footprint through the WPM regulation. However, this obligation was recently announced to be abolished after it proved ineffective in stimulating hybrid working or cycling (Koole, 2025). Research by Sira Consulting (2023) already showed that regulatory pressure on small companies is considered disproportionately high, and the repeal of the WPM is expected to reduce this burden. While the regulation initially forced larger SMEs to reflect on sustainability, its removal will likely result in even less attention to the topic in the SME sector.

7.2 Pains

This section summarises the main frustrations and obstacles SME employers experience in managing mobility. These pains reveal the practical, regulatory, and behavioural challenges that complicate the organisation of daily travel and hinder progress toward more efficient or sustainable practices. The following subsections highlight the most common themes emerging from the interviews.



Employee registration burden hinders reliable administration of mobility

SMEs spend a lot of time chasing employees to accurately register travel and remote work days. This administrative burden causes frustration for both staff and employers. Poor compliance often leads to incomplete data, making it hard to evaluate policies, process reimbursements, or meet legal requirements. Employers worry about inaccurate reporting but also want to avoid overloading staff with extra admin tasks.



Changing policies cause for uncertainty and frustration

As mentioned, sustainability is not an intrinsic driver for decision-makers. However, compliance with regulation is, also when it comes to sustainability. They see changing government policies and regulations as a major barrier, leading to uncertainty and hesitation to invest. Expanding environmental zones also creates practical challenges. Many entrepreneurs feel that policies do not fit the reality of small businesses and express a need for more clarity, support, and input from the government on mobility issues.



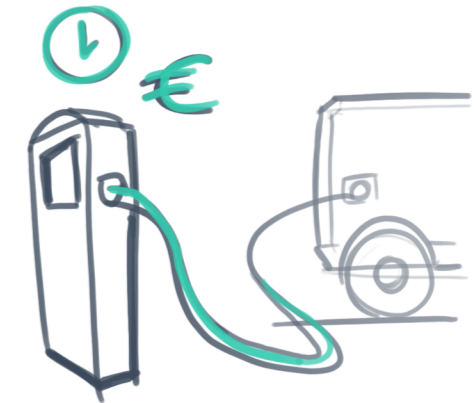
Employee behaviour change forms a challenge

SMEs often face employee resistance to changes in mobility policy, especially when it requires adjusting daily routines or habits, like stepping away from a company car or getting used to driving an electric van. Employers spend considerable time informing and guiding staff, but low engagement makes behaviour change a key challenge for achieving mobility goals.



Doubts about usefulness and necessity of digital mobility solutions

Many SMEs doubt the value of mobility software, citing high costs, complex implementation, and limited benefits for most staff. Without a strong need for change, some are content with manual processes and don't see a lack of central systems as a problem—as long as daily operations run smoothly. For most, regulations play a minor role, and incomplete administration is not viewed as an urgent issue.



Electrification forms a major challenge

Many SMEs see the electrification of their vehicle fleet as a major recent change, driven by government policy, customer expectations, and their own sustainability goals. While some have begun the transition, others remain hesitant due to high costs, operational concerns, required behaviour change, and practical issues like charging infrastructure. Still, there is growing pressure—both external and internal—to move towards more sustainable mobility.

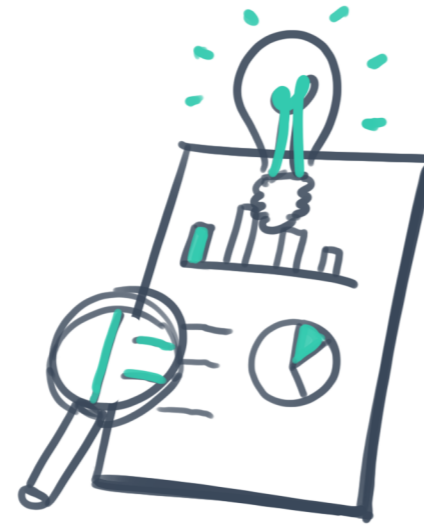


CO₂ reporting as a mandatory but disputed administrative burden

Entrepreneurs are aware of the legal obligation for CO₂ reporting and begin preparing when they approach the threshold. Opinions are mixed: some see the reporting as burdensome or question its usefulness, while others find it manageable. Concerns include reliance on employees for data collection and doubts about accuracy. To prepare, some seek support from software providers, while others research solutions independently.

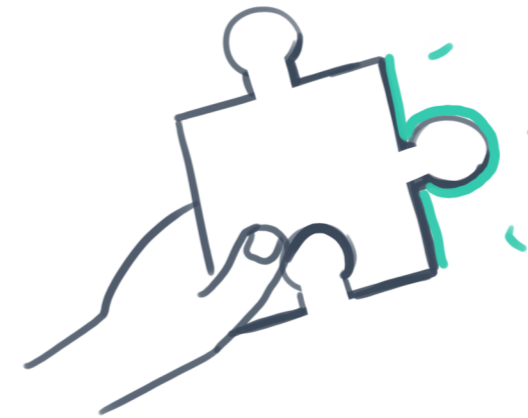
7.3 Gains

This section outlines the key benefits and improvements SME employers seek in their mobility arrangements. These desired “gains” highlight what motivates them to adopt new solutions—such as better insights, more tailored support, and reduced administrative effort. The following subsections describe the main types of added value SMEs aspire to achieve through improved mobility management.



Desire for overview and insight

SMEs struggle to get clear and useful mobility data. Some still use Excel, but many find it inefficient and unprofessional. There is often little detailed insight into travel distances, modes of transport, or fleet costs. This fragmentation makes it hard to use mobility data strategically. Many entrepreneurs want centralised information for better control, benchmarking, and managing costs and employee behaviour.



Customisation and proactivity as added value

SMEs value mobility solutions that fit well with their existing processes, systems, and culture. They expect suppliers to offer customised, flexible solutions that can grow with the company—without extra work or hidden costs. Transparent pricing is essential. Additionally, SMEs want proactive suppliers who advise, support, and bring expertise, acting as true partners rather than just an extra step in the process of mobility management.



Full unburdening as a dream solution

Ideally, SMEs would like an integrated solution where mobility, HR, and payroll are centrally managed and easy to use for both employers and employees. They want clear insights into travel behaviour to guide decisions. However, most expect that a truly all-in-one platform is hard to achieve, mainly due to limited system compatibility and challenges integrating with other tools like fleet management software.

Modelling the SME market

To get a better understanding of the different types of customers and their specific needs, the insights from the previous chapter were used to identify nine archetypical SME companies. The goal was to be able to identify different segments to ultimately be able to select the most attractive ones for strategic focus. In this chapter, the approach to setting up the profiles are explained, and the profiles themselves are discussed.

8.1 Influencing variables

To work towards a useful segmentation of the market, it was first important to determine which variables that influence the mobility needs for SMEs should be used for segmentation. Cortez et. al define two types of variables for business to business market segmentation (2021):

- Macro variables are broad, often objective-organisational characteristics. They are visible from the outside and often form the starting point for segmenting the market. Examples are company size, sector, geographic location and ownership type. These factors are often relatively easy to find and are also easy to use in targeting marketing efforts.
- Micro variables are finer grained characteristics that capture why and how a company buys. They concern behavioural or psychographic factors such as needs and priorities, decision making structures, degree of innovativeness or risk aversion, and sophistication on problem. These factors are more difficult to discover and are also more challenging to target in marketing.

Through thematic analysis of the interviews with internal stakeholders, the distribution partner, and SME decision-making units, eight influencing variables were identified (see Figure 12). In the following paragraphs, these variables are presented, along with a discussion on how they influence the mobility needs of SMEs.

8.1.1 Company size

Company size was found to often influence the mobility needs of a company. A significant threshold is 50 employees, since from that size on, companies in the Netherlands are obliged to have a works council representing employees' interests in workplace matters and company policies (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, n.d.), including mobility agreements. In practice, this can add complexity to decision-making processes and lead to longer sales trajectories, although internal stakeholders noted that this only becomes structural from around 500 employees, when processes can take several months or even years. For SMEs, decision-making is generally still relatively quick, and smaller organisations tend to decide faster than corporates.

In addition, larger companies often have more complex mobility structures in terms of travel modalities, policies, and allowances. They are therefore more likely to need an all-in-one solution tailored to their organisation. This highly customised nature of the product creates lock-in, making it difficult to switch suppliers. Smaller organisations, on the other hand, tend to have simpler and more uniform policies and structures, resulting in lower switching costs. In practice, they switch suppliers more easily based on price and are generally more suited to standardised products.

“Smaller companies easily switch suppliers based on a lower price.”

| Distribution partner

In Table 1, key differences between smaller and larger SMEs are summarised. It should be noted that the threshold between these two groups is somewhat arbitrary and that characteristics of smaller SMEs may also apply to larger ones — and vice versa. Nevertheless, the distinctions outlined provide a useful overview of the general differences between them.

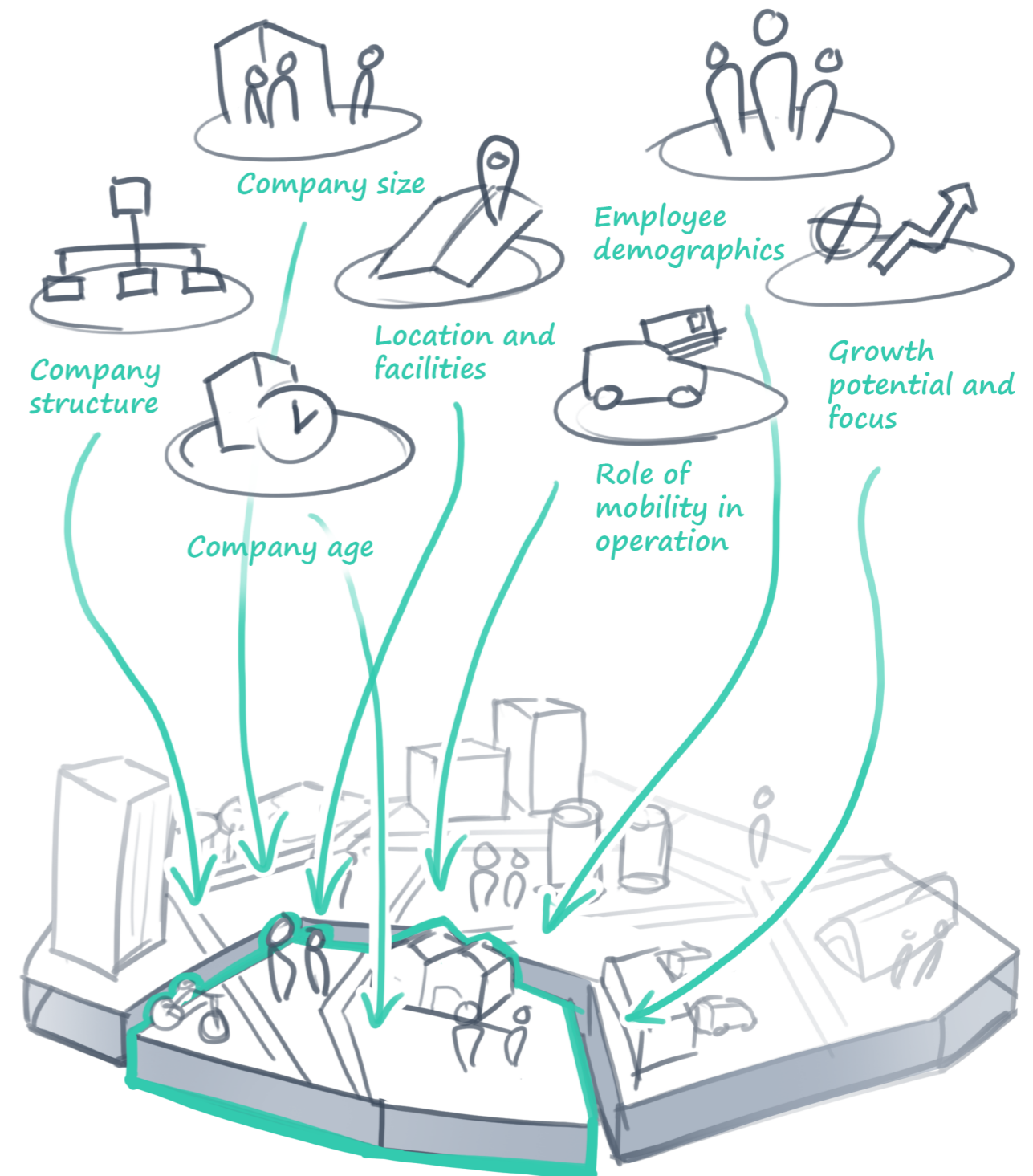


Figure 12: seven different variables were identified that could be used as a base for segmentation.

Micro- and small SMEs (≈2-100 employees)	Middle to large SMEs (≈100-150 employees)
Usually simple policies and arrangements with a high degree of uniformity	Often more complexity due to multiple regulations and arrangements
Quickly switch between providers based on price, due to short communication lines and relatively standard solutions — or no solution at all	More prone to lock-in because of long decision-making processes and a higher degree of customisation
Often simple needs, requiring a standard one-dimensional product	Typically more complex needs, with a stronger demand for integration with existing structures and processes, and for an all-in-one solution

Table 1: overview of some of the key differences between smaller and larger SMEs.

8.1.2 Company structure

The second variable is company structure. In The Netherlands, there are many different organisational structures, each with different consequences for laws and regulations. For the purpose of this research, the exact different types were not considered. However, the most important factor is about the complexity of the company's structure.

Several of the interviewed decision-making units from the target group worked for a company that either worked with a central holding and several underlying labels or a company with multiple locations. In practice, this often means the different aspects of mobility are very fragmented. Different locations or labels may have different HR policies. Similarly, different locations might cause for different travel patterns due to varying distances and modalities. It was therefore noted that companies with complex structures often lack overview and insight in the different aspects of their mobility, whether it concerns work related travel modalities, fleet management, policies, registration, administration, or compliance. This is also strengthened by the fact that responsibilities for each of these aspects are often distributed over different roles. Where in larger companies there are often employees specifically responsible for mobility, in smaller companies these responsibilities are shared.

8.1.3 Geographic location

Geographic location was found to have a significant impact on the mobility needs of SMEs. The most important distinction is between companies located in the Randstad and those outside this urban area. In the Randstad, the advanced public transport infrastructure leads to a naturally higher demand for mobility solutions related to public transport and shared mobility. Conversely, in the provinces and more rural areas, companies depend much more on cars, making car-related mobility solutions more relevant.

Urbanisation and increasing congestion in cities, especially in the Randstad, have also influenced mobility preferences. Policies aimed at sustainability—such as low-emission zones and reduced parking availability—have led to a decline in the use of company cars and lease vehicles in city centres. At the same time, younger, highly educated employees in the Randstad are less accustomed to car ownership compared to older generations, which increases demand for public transport and shared mobility options.

Furthermore, travel distances influence the way people commute. In rural areas, employees may use scooters or electric bikes instead of walking or using a regular bicycle, while the choice between car and public transport also depends on the accessibility and distance to the workplace.

8.1.4 Company age

Company age was found to influence the mobility needs of SMEs, mainly through the rigidity of established policies and organisational structures. Interviewees at older companies, or at firms that were the result of mergers between long-standing businesses, often mentioned that it was difficult to get employees on board with new mobility policies—such as shifting away from company lease cars in favour of more sustainable options. Similarly, companies with long-standing habits around fossil fuel-powered cars found it challenging to switch to electric vehicles, as this required significant changes in employee behaviour and routines.

8.1.5 Employee demographics

As became apparent from the interviews with different stakeholders, the interest of employees strongly influences the behaviour of decision-making units in SME companies. The needs and preferences of these employees are often influenced by their demographics. For instance, many interviewees mentioned how young, educated employees often show a stronger desire for fitting public transport arrangements or a mobility budget, more so than one or two decades ago. This was attributed largely to the fact that in The Netherlands, free public transport is an important factor in the lives of university students, making them more used to this mode of transport. In addition, those living in the city often do not see the use for a car as much as before.

Conversely, interviewees also mentioned that when these young professionals reach the age at which they start a family, the demand for company cars increases. Where some employers go ahead with these desires, others consciously choose to not offer company cars, either to save costs or to meet sustainability targets.

Finally, related to company age, older employees often are used to company cars and are protective of this. Employers mentioned struggling with getting people out of the car and into shared or public transportation

8.1.6 Growth potential & focus

Growth in staff numbers and company acquisitions often prompt many SMEs to reassess their approach to mobility. These developments raise questions about the efficiency, scalability, and long-term viability of existing arrangements, and can create momentum for innovation and improvement. Such periods are typically when employers start to explore the market for mobility providers.

However, entrepreneurs also report that the daily pressures of operational growth often outweigh the opportunity to step back and improve internal processes. During these phases, the main focus is on keeping up with expansion and maintaining day-to-day operations. As a result, there is often little time or attention left for strategic reflection on more efficient or sustainable mobility solutions. In this way, a focus on survival rather than innovation lowers the readiness to invest in new solutions.

“The most important thing right now is keeping up with the growth and delivering on time, I don't have time for anything else.”

Operational manager, delivery pharmacy

8.1.7 Role of mobility in operation

When mobility is an essential part of daily operations, companies tend to develop greater knowledge of mobility issues and a higher awareness of available solutions and providers. This higher level of sophistication often results in a greater willingness to invest in new mobility products or services but also more strict purchasing criteria

The role of mobility in operations also varies by sector. For example, companies in wholesale and retail often manage an operational vehicle fleet, while organisations in professional services may provide lease cars for customer visits. These sector-specific practices influence both the attention given to mobility within the company and the types of solutions that are most relevant.

8.2 Profile creation

Based on the insights from chapter 4.2, nine company profiles were developed to represent archetypical SMEs. The aim was to highlight the diversity within the SME segment and provide a clearer picture of the differences between these companies.

This was done using the help of ChatGPT. By providing the AI with a detailed description of the influencing variables and a specific prompt, it was able to come up with archetypical SME companies showcasing the insights from this research. The results formed a good base for the customer profiles, but needed iteration. By going over the research insights again and discussing with The Client employees, the profiles were manually made more striking by adding visuals and making them more specific (see Figure 13).

Each profile includes key characteristics, a typical mobility need, and a description of the typical decision-maker, along with their jobs, pains, and gains. The complete set of profiles as well as the AI prompt are provided in Appendix E.



Figure 13: an overview of the nine company profiles that were made.

Competitive landscape

Having established who the potential customers are, the next question is what alternatives they currently have. This chapter therefore explores the competitive landscape The Client operates in. The first step into understanding the competitive landscape was to define what alternatives SME's currently have for organising their business mobility. After this, a closer look was taken at the competing organisations, with a focus on direct competitors. In addition, Porter's Five Forces were used to further understand the playing field. Key takeaways are formulated at the end of the chapter.

9.1 Levels of competition

Based on the interviews and desk research, a wide variety of services and approaches to business mobility were identified. These include other full-service mobility providers, lease solutions, mobility cards, administrative software, separate mobility apps, external consultancies, and manual efforts.

Each of these alternatives competes with The Client, but at different levels. Therefore, it is useful to make a distinction. Four levels of competition are defined (adapted from Hultink, 2024):

- **Product Form Competition:** similar features with similar value (direct substitutes).
- **Product Category Competition:** same product category (different variants/positioning).
- **Generic Competition:** other products that fulfill the same need; organising mobility.
- **Budget Competition:** competition on the same euro-budget (broad substitution).

In Figure 14, some of the most prominent competitors/alternatives are visualised per level. They are also explained below.

9.1.1 Product Form Competition

This category contains direct competitors: other full-service mobility providers that combine access to mobility with administration and sometimes consultancy. Competitors include Shuttel, NS (Go), Gaiyo,

Fynch, Figo, Xximo, and Mobility Concept. They offer very similar features, such as a mobility card, digital registration, reporting, and integrations with HR or payroll software.

9.1.2 Product Category Competition

Beyond these direct substitutes, there are providers in the same product category that focus on specific parts of the mobility offering. Examples include traditional lease companies and in-house fleet management teams that primarily provide access to vehicles, fuel and charging card issuers such as TravelCard and MKB Brandstof, and HR/payroll software providers like AFAS or Visma that integrate basic mobility registration into their systems. Standalone solutions also fit this category, such as bicycle schemes, parking apps like Yellowbrick or Parkmobile, or individual public transport subscriptions.

9.1.3 Generic Competition

At a broader level, SMEs often rely on generic alternatives that still fulfill the need of "organising mobility." This includes manual methods such as Excel or ad hoc arrangements for cars and public transport. Industry-specific tools are also common: in healthcare, systems like Nedap Ons support kilometre registration; in logistics, TMS software such as MendriX or fleet telematics like Webfleet manage routes and fuel; and in construction, project tools like Bouw7 include travel registration. In addition, external consultants or regional mobility advisors provide policy advice and compliance support.

9.1.4 Budget Competition

Finally, many SMEs choose not to invest in formal mobility solutions at all, allocating their limited resources to other priorities. Mobility then competes with entirely different categories of expenditure, such as HR budgets, IT investments, sustainability measures, or simply reducing operational costs. For many smaller companies, day-to-day continuity outweighs the perceived benefits of mobility solutions, making "doing nothing" a realistic and widespread choice.



Figure 14: overview of some of the key players per level of competition.

9.2 Direct competition

In this research, a closer look was taken at competition based on product form. For this purpose, the following definition of the The Client’s core business is used: **the most complete platform for business mobility, combining mobility policy administration, access to mobility options, and mobility consultancy.**

Based on this definition, the following organisations were analysed as direct competitors: Shuttel, NS (Go), Gaiyo, Fynch, Figo, Xximo, and Mobility Concept. The analysis covers key characteristics (such as employee numbers, user base, investors, and major customers), user ratings from app stores and Google, and the scope of the product offering—with particular attention to SME-focused products, services, and communication.

9.2.1 SME offering from direct competitors

Most key competitors do not actively promote their services to SME clients. In general, their websites focus on services for larger companies, and only a few even mention SMEs at all, but not with a clearly separate proposition. Two exceptions exist however. Shuttel and Gaiyo both have a dedicated offering for SMEs. Therefore, these competitors are discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs, with a focus on their SME offering.

9.2.1.1 Shuttel

Shuttel is a Dutch mobility services provider that positions itself as a “one-stop tech platform for mobility” by offering a card-based solution that consolidates fuel, parking, EV charging, public transport, and shared mobility options into a single platform, similar to The Client. Founded in 2016 as part of the Volkswagen Pon Financial Services group, Shuttel has become one of the largest providers of mobility cards in the Netherlands and therefore the main

direct competitor to The Client, alongside NS. Their company size, customer base, and user ratings are comparable to those of The Client. However, the consensus among employees of The Client is that Shuttel has an advantage in the market due to the backing of Pon and benefits from significantly larger marketing and sales budgets than The Client.

Its standard offering is aimed at larger organisations (with at least 50 employees) and provides a mobility card that grants access to multiple modes of transport via one card and one integrated administrative and cost-reporting environment.

In targeting the SME segment, Shuttel offers a dedicated proposition for companies with fewer than 50 employees and self-employed professionals through a partnership with ANWB – namely the ANWB Mobiliteitskaart (Figure 15). The card can be ordered online with a monthly subscription fee for car services, public transport, or a combination of both. This approach resembles The Client’s SME self-service funnel, although Shuttel does not offer a separate package for mobility administration. Instead, it combines the functionalities of the other two packages into one. Moreover, Shuttel explicitly targets SMEs with fewer than 50 employees, whereas The Client applies a threshold of 100, and also includes self-employed professionals, which The Client does not.

This SME solution appears more standardised and limited in terms of backend customisation compared to Shuttel’s larger-enterprise offering—similar to what The Client aimed to achieve with its self-service funnel. Within this SME offering via ANWB, the software component is optional and the mobility card can be ordered separately, allowing smaller organisations to adopt the card without committing to the full software stack. This represents an interesting strategic choice.

Though no publicly available sales figures or customer data have been disclosed, employees of The Client mentioned the proposition allegedly generates good numbers.

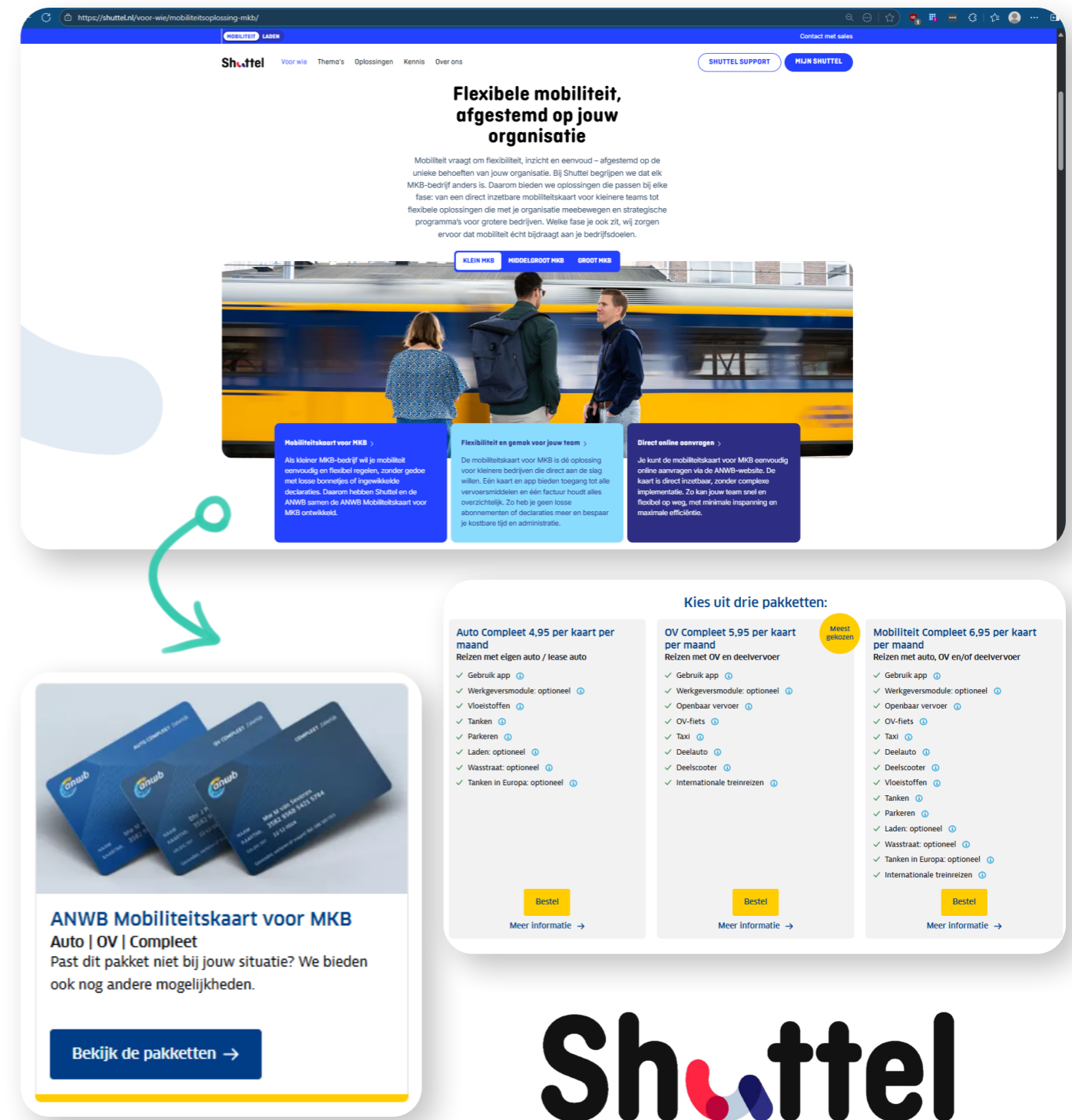


Figure 15: screenshots of the SME information on the Shuttel website (top) and the SME packages on the ANWB website (bottom).

9.2.1.2 Gaiyo

Gaiyo is a Dutch mobility platform that initially positioned itself primarily as a mobility-as-a-service (MaaS) provider for individual users and large organisations. In October 2025, the company launched a new proposition called Gaiyo Start — a self-declared “complete mobility and expense declaration solution” specifically designed for SMEs and self-employed professionals (Figure 16). The concept once again combines travel, fuel, charging, parking, and expense declarations within a single system, positioning itself around the promise of “control over mobility without complexity” — and notably, it is free to use.

With Gaiyo Start, the company appears to be the first in the Dutch market to explicitly prioritise an SME-focused approach. The offer is featured prominently on the homepage, while solutions for larger companies (100+ employees) are mentioned only as a secondary “enterprise” alternative. Internal discussions with employees of The Client revealed that Gaiyo had been losing many large-scale tenders in recent years, which may have prompted a strategic pivot towards the SME segment.

The “Start” proposition functions primarily as a lightweight platform for registering, booking, and parking trips. Mobility cards, expense declaration tools, and reporting functionalities are available as optional add-ons. It does not include shared-mobility services or integrations with HR or financial systems. The focus is on a low-threshold, self-service model — immediately accessible, free of charge, and largely

managed by the customer. Employers can activate or deactivate features and manage cards independently.

This strong self-service orientation raises questions about suitability for SMEs, as interview insights from this research suggested that many small businesses still prefer personal guidance during the purchasing process. Nevertheless, Gaiyo Start cleverly addresses the simple, low-complexity needs of very small SMEs and self-employed professionals, offering an accessible entry point at minimal cost. The proposition's low pricing and straightforward onboarding make it highly competitive compared to The Client's self-service funnel and the ANWB-Shuttel mobility cards.

The core product resembles The Client's earlier Freddi concept — focused mainly on travel registration and basic administration — a solution that previously suffered from a lack of urgency and perceived necessity among SMEs. The Gaiyo Start package may therefore function primarily as a springboard for paid add-ons rather than a self-sustaining product.

While the approach aligns well with broader trends towards modularity and automation, it's too early to draw conclusions on its success. No public data are available regarding customer inflow, backend workload, or profitability — all of which are critical indicators for assessing whether Gaiyo Start can represent a viable long-term strategy in the SME market.

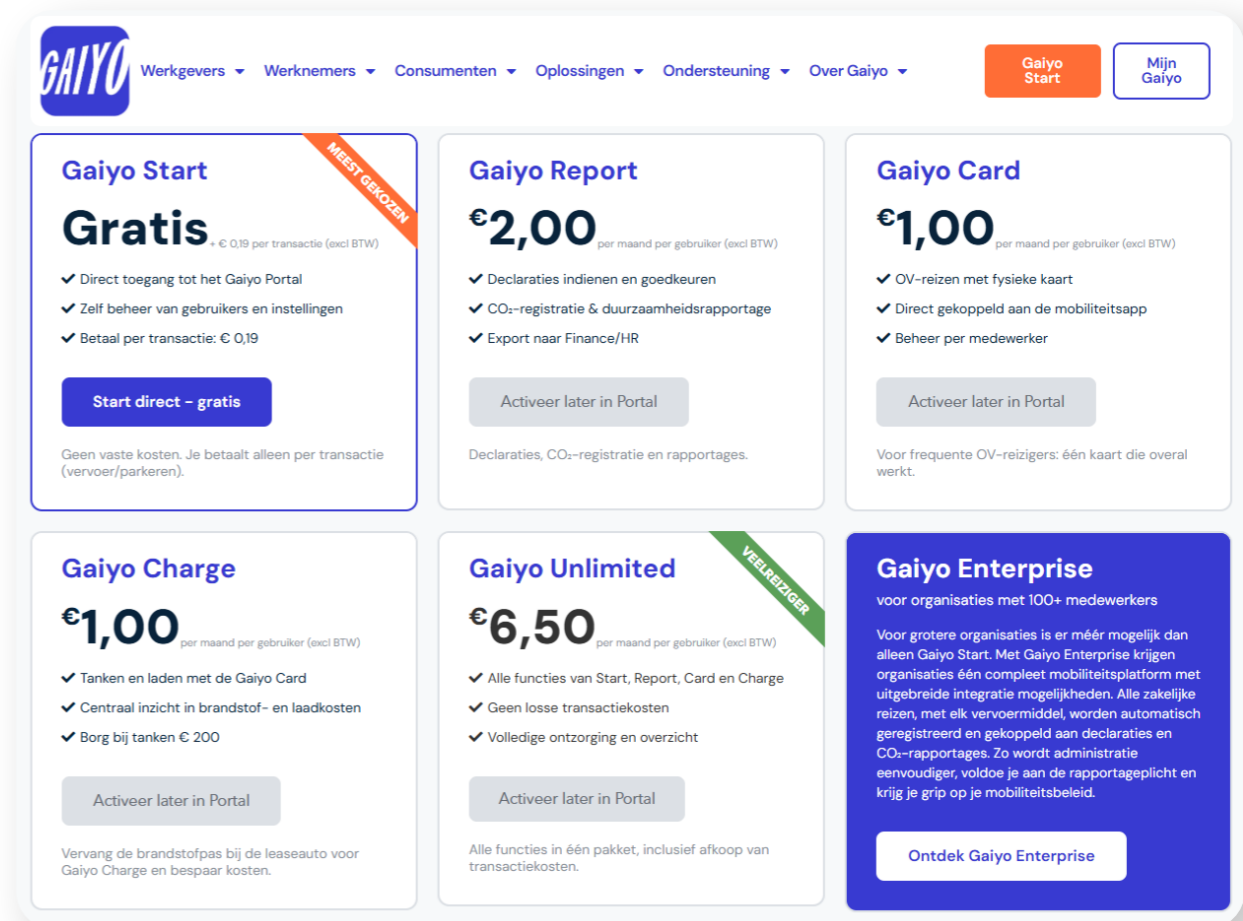


Figure 16: Gaiyo Start's launch was announced through LinkedIn (top) and the packages feature prominently on their homepage (bottom).

9.2.2 Other direct competitors

On this page, a short description of the key takeaways per competitor other than Shuttel and Gaiyo are listed. Insights are based on analysis of competitors websites, review, and internal conversations at The Client. Overlap in product features or other characteristics are not listed, the focus lies on the differences with The Client.



FIGO

- A relatively new entrant in the market but already serving notable customers, with decent review scores.
- Provides very limited website information, suggesting modest marketing capacity.
- Uses a claimed 15% reduction in administrative costs as a main selling point, but the rationale is not substantiated.
- Similar to Fynch, does not offer its own card but facilitates NS Business Cards.



Xximo

- International organisation with a primary focus on payment structures.
- Reportedly considering a strategic shift away from direct customer services towards enabling seamless mobility payments.
- Holds very poor user ratings, though this is less relevant due to limited emphasis on end-user services.
- Appears to focus on enabling other mobility providers to serve companies—essentially a B2B2B model rather than direct B2B.
- Offers a digital mobility card, seemingly without complex implementation steps.



Mobility Concept

- Smaller in employee size compared to most competitors. Most employees have a consulting role rather than IT, highlighting a service focus instead of a product focus.
- Holds relatively low user ratings, but serves several large and notable customers.
- Does not provide car-related services.
- Strong focus on customisation and consultancy rather than standardised solutions.



Fynch

- Receives significantly lower user ratings than The Client, Gaiyo, and Shuttel.
- Operates both in the Dutch and international markets.
- Appears to be modularly built, offering separate services such as mobility scans, reimbursement functions, and analytics.
- Facilitates use of the NS Business Card but does not issue its own mobility card.
- Offers a stand-alone WPM-reporting tool, despite the availability of many free alternatives
- No car-related services (refuelling, charging).
- Services are sold in three tiers: registration and reimbursement, NS Business Card facilitation and behaviour change programmes, and full customisation with HR or reporting software integrations.



NS (Go)

- One of the largest mobility players in the Netherlands, with an assumed very large market share of 700.000 users and a turnover of €600 million according to internal sources at The Client.
- Both the NS brand and the NS Business Card enjoy strong brand recognition and are often the first option considered by entrepreneurs.
- Offers a straightforward online ordering process for the mobility card, competitors only offer their card in combination with their software and often an extensive implementation process.
- Mobility access is limited to public transport and adjacent services, no car services.
- The NS Go employer platform stands out by offering integrations with company calendar software (e.g., workplace reservations), a feature not commonly provided by competitors.
- Unique position due to NS' control of the railway network, enabling them to offer subscriptions and discounts that are harder for others to match.

9.3 Key takeaways

The competitive landscape of business mobility for SMEs is diverse and fragmented. Competition exists on various levels and alternatives range from lease car solutions, fuel or transport cards and HR software to full-service mobility providers. Each option addresses part of the mobility needs of SMEs, illustrating that they do not face a single dominant solution but rather a patchwork of possibilities. This lowers the urgency to adopt comprehensive platforms such as The Client's.

Direct competitors like NS and Shuttel benefit from strong brand recognition and significant marketing capacity. Especially the NS Business Card is almost synonymous with business travel in the Netherlands, giving NS an advantage as the default choice for many entrepreneurs. Shuttel differentiates itself through broad functionality and good integrations, and explicitly offers an SME variant through ANWB. Gaiyo Start, offers a lightweight and low-cost entry model that prioritises simplicity and automation.

Partial substitutes – HR software (AFAS, Visma), tank and charge cards (TravelCard, MKB Brandstof), and simple mobility passes – are often more attractive to SMEs than full-service providers. Their success lies in low cost, administrative overview and ease of use. For many SMEs, such tools provide “enough value” without the complexity of a larger platform. As the research confirmed, doing nothing and relying on Excel or ad hoc arrangements is still a widespread choice, reflecting the limited strategic importance of mobility for this segment.

For The Client, this analysis implies that the SME market for mobility solutions is not yet mature and therefore also not yet immediately promising. In addition, no clear gaps are apparent when it comes to significant unmet needs. The absence of strong SME-positioning among most competitors also suggests that they are hesitant to double down on this target group. Success in this market would likely depend on addressing the fundamental barriers identified: limited urgency, low willingness to pay, and the perceived complexity of existing solutions.



Part III: Concept development

The analysis of previous ventures, customers, and the market formed the basis for developing a strategic proposal for The Client. The guiding question was whether it is desirable for The Client to enter the SME market, and if so, how this could be done in a scalable way. Two aspects were central: the fit with the needs of SMEs (customer fit) and the fit with The Client's internal capacity (company fit). Based on this analysis, two concrete directions for a dedicated SME proposition were developed. The first is a short-term concept intended for larger SMEs based on a repositioning of the current product. A specific sub-segment of the SME market was identified whose needs best fit with a version of The Client's software that avoids complex features and functionalities.

A longer-term concept was developed for smaller SMEs, with more room for new product development, focusing on a more concrete and simple positioning.

Both concepts are described in detail in the following chapters. Before that, this section explains the methodology used to arrive at these strategic directions.

Ideation methodology

In order to take appropriate conclusions from the customer and market analysis, it is useful to reiterate the overarching research questions:

To what extent is it desirable for The Client to pursue a strategy of entering the free market via SMEs?

- Which SME segments show the greatest need and willingness to purchase The Client's current mobility solution in the short term (1 year), and how can the existing offering be tailored to this?
- Which (new) propositions best match the needs of specific SME sub-segments in the longer term (2-5 years) and how can these contribute to a scalable market approach?

Answering these questions required translating the customer and market insights into concrete concept directions. This meant linking customer needs to SME characteristics and ideating on the resulting solution spaces. The short-term direction (question 1) was shaped mainly through connecting pains and gains to The Client's current product and identifying opportunities to simplify it (company focus). The long-term direction (question 2) came from exploring unmet needs and envisioning future offerings that align with The Client's core strengths (customer focus).

10.1 Short-term concept formation

The first step was to identify which SME sub-segments are most compatible with The Client's current offering. To do this, all pains, gains, and jobs-to-be-done from the interviews and desk research were listed. For each pain, the underlying company characteristics—such as size, sector, or type of mobility use—were determined. This allowed for linking specific pains to specific types of SMEs (see Figure 17).

The next step was to check which of these pains are already addressed by the current product. By combining the pains that were solved with the corresponding company characteristics, a picture emerged of the type of SMEs for which the current product is most relevant. This segment forms the starting point for a short-term approach.

However, internal conversations revealed an important challenge: servicing an SME with 100 employees often requires almost the same effort as onboarding a corporate customer with 1,000 employees, while the returns are naturally smaller. This raised the question of how scalability could be achieved in serving SMEs. To answer this, an internal analysis was conducted to identify which aspects of the current product create implementation complexity. Discussions with operations staff and implementation managers showed that certain functionalities were responsible for lengthy and labour-intensive processes.

The outcome was the idea of a simplified and standardised version of the The Client's product. This version would reduce complexity while still addressing the most pressing SME pains, making it more scalable for The Client to serve this segment. This concept is further elaborated in Chapter 11.

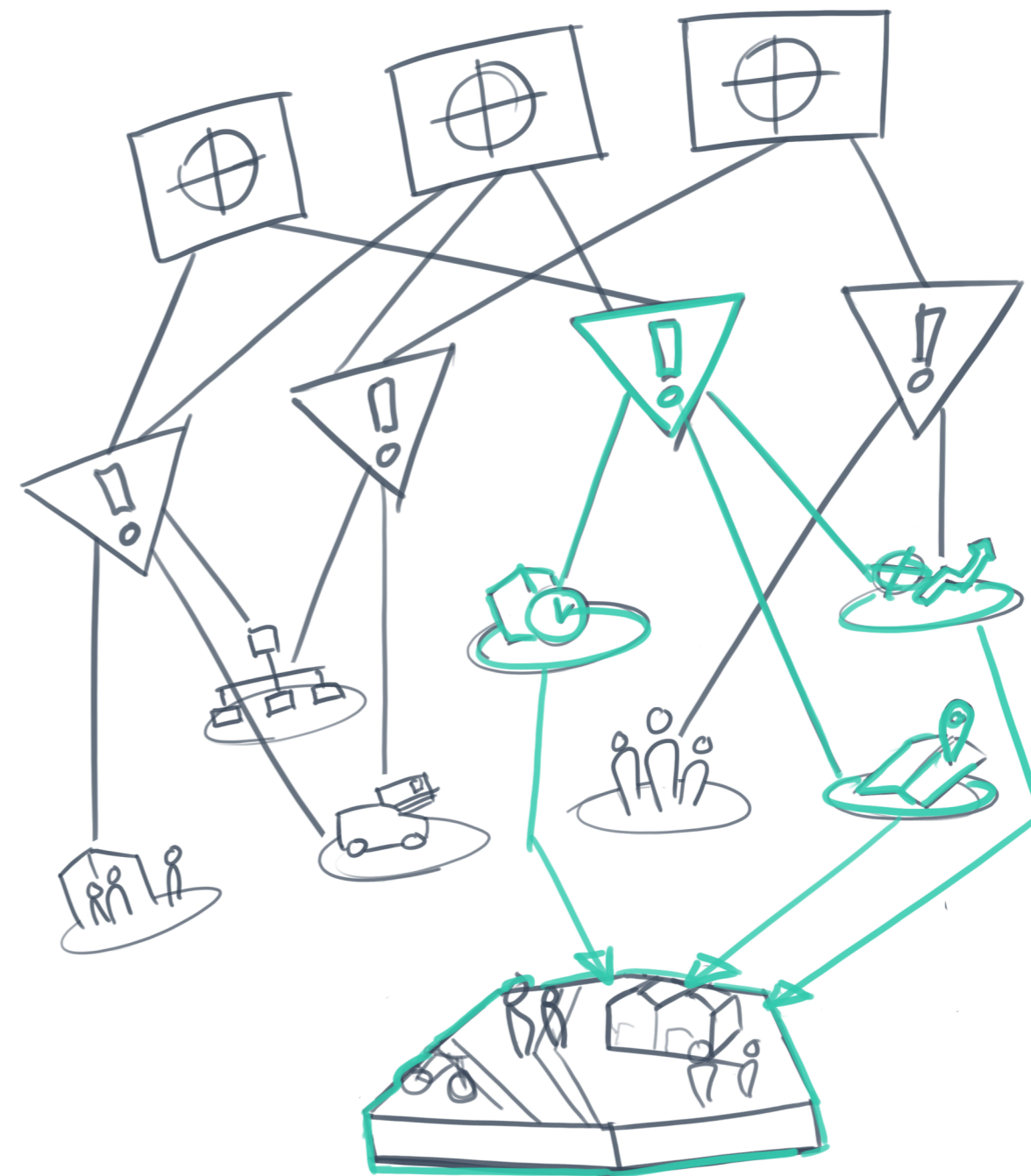


Figure 17: jobs, linked to pains, linked to company characteristics. The highlighted pains are covered by The Client's current services, and the corresponding company characteristics therefore form the most interesting segment.

10.2 Long-term concept formation

While the short-term direction focused on aligning the existing product with specific SME segments, longer-term opportunities were also explored. The aim of this exploration was to look beyond the current product and investigate how The Client could anticipate emerging needs in the SME market over the next two to five years. To achieve this, two complementary approaches were followed. The first centred on unmet pains identified during the research, regardless of current feasibility. The second concentrated on opportunities closer to The Client's existing strengths, seeking a scalable future proposition that could be realistically developed and implemented.

10.2.1 First exploration

The first exploration for long-term opportunities started from customer pains that were not covered by The Client's current services. Pains that could hardly be monetised, such as uncertainty due to changing regulations, were excluded. The remaining pains were mostly in the car and fleet domain. Examples included the transition to electric vehicles, long and inflexible lease contracts, emission zones, increasing costs, lack of insight into driving behaviour, and unsafe driving.

In an ideation brainstorm, several solution directions were generated. This included an all-in-one fleet management tool that centralises invoices, contracts, maintenance alerts, emission insights, etc. Furthermore, a solution for outsourcing the lease application and comparison process, solutions to encourage safe and efficient driving, and advisory services for fleet policy were identified as interesting directions. Additional market research, however, showed that most of these areas are already occupied by strong competitors and would require new IT capacity and expertise far from The Client's current business.

Two directions nevertheless stood out. First, a lease comparison tool seemed to address a relatively uncovered market need and was not too far removed from the IT expertise of The Investment Holding. Second, behavioural change programmes for responsible

and economical driving could potentially connect another label within the Investment Holding with a strong focus on behavioural change that recently developed an app for encouraging more sustainable travel behaviour. Where most existing solutions focus on behaviour change through insight in data, this avenue could explore creating more intrinsic motivation amongst employees.

Although these ideas showed potential, they were not developed further in this project. They were considered to require substantial investment and were unlikely to generate short-term impact. Instead, they were kept as inspiration for the future, and are further explained in Chapter 18.2.

10.2.2 Second exploration

The second exploration took a more grounded perspective, focusing on opportunities that could realistically be developed in the coming years while still meeting unmet needs of SME employers. It drew on insights from the interview study, the mid-term analysis of previous SME initiatives, and competitor benchmarks. Together, these sources pointed to a recurring theme: many SMEs value simplicity and low-threshold access to mobility solutions, rather than comprehensive, feature-rich platforms. This aligned with conclusions from the self-service funnel case, which had shown that overly complex packages deter small employers.

To determine where The Client could simplify its current ecosystem into a viable, standalone product, all components of the existing service were assessed on two criteria:

- Can it be sold and implemented without consultancy or custom configuration?
- Does it solve a concrete and recognisable SME pain point?

This assessment led to three concept directions, which were explored in parallel.

10.2.2.1 Direction 1

This direction built on an explicit need among SMEs approaching the 100-employee threshold: complying with the CO₂-reporting obligation (WPM). Interviews confirmed frustration around chasing employees for data and doubts about reliability. The Client already offered reporting functionality within its full platform, but a lightweight version could in theory meet SME demand for simplicity.

Market scanning, however, revealed strong reasons not to continue. Competing products are either comprehensive integrated tools—similar to The Client's existing platform—or free templates and surveys offered by HR-software vendors like AFAS. This left no profitable middle ground for a paid standalone product. In addition, policy uncertainty played a decisive role: as explained in Chapter 7.2, by 2026, the reporting obligation is expected to shift to companies with ≥ 250 employees, effectively removing most of the SME market for such a tool. For both commercial and regulatory reasons, this direction was not further explored.

10.2.2.2 Direction 2

The second concept examined the potential of the Ottimo Scan, an existing product within The Holding used to analyse commuting patterns and identify opportunities for more sustainable employee mobility. Originally developed by one of the other Investment Holding labels active in Italy, the scan was introduced to the Dutch market to support employers in shaping their mobility policies. Within this direction, the idea was to explore how this tool could be further developed or positioned for smaller employers. However, several barriers became evident.

First, the market for sustainability consultancy is already saturated with free or subsidised scans, offered by governmental programmes and consultancies. Competing on price or functionality would therefore be difficult. Second, as the customer research showed, sustainability is not a top priority for most SMEs; it rarely drives purchasing decisions and is typically only pursued when subsidies or regulations apply. Finally, maintaining and customising such an advisory tool requires consultancy capacity, which conflicts with The Client's ambition for a scalable, self-service model.

For these reasons, while the Ottimo Scan remains relevant within The Client's portfolio, its further expansion toward SMEs was considered not feasible within this project.

10.2.2.3 Direction 3

The third direction centred on the most tangible and scalable customer need identified: providing easy access to mobility. While other service elements—such as reporting, advice, or integrations—depend on complex customer interactions, access itself could potentially be standardised. The Client already possesses the infrastructure to deliver cards, process transactions, and consolidate invoices, making this a natural area for simplification.

This reasoning led to the concept of a modular, all-in-one mobility card: a product that grants direct access to public transport (and later to car and charging services) through one simple onboarding flow and consolidated invoice. It directly answers SMEs' wish for simplicity and reliability while fitting The Client's technological strengths and strategic ambition for scalable growth. For these reasons, Direction 3 was selected as the long-term concept, which is further detailed in Chapter 12.

Concept 1: the SME Standard

The first concept focuses on the short-term and proposes a simplified version of the The Client's platform, designed specifically for larger SMEs (90-250 employees). The idea is to focus on a limited set of core functionalities that provide the most value to a specific sub segment of the SME market, while avoiding options that require lengthy implementation, extensive customization, or complex management. By doing so, The Client could aim to deliver a product that is easy to adopt, cost-efficient, and directly addresses the most pressing mobility challenges faced by this specific group of SMEs.

11.1 Target audience

As outlined in Chapter 10, the selection of the SME sub-segment for this concept was based on the mapping of key mobility-related challenges against company characteristics. This led to the identification of firms with the following traits:

- Approximately 100-250 employees
- Based in urban environments
- Business is growing
- Operating in knowledge- or office-intensive sectors such as consultancy, IT, marketing, and professional services.

When looking at these segmentation criteria company size and sector (SBI code) best lend itself for estimating the size of the segment. Filtering data on 100-250 employees and only including SBI sector codes J, K, L, and M (according to the 2008 classification) in the Statistics Netherlands online tool leaves a total of approximately **800 companies** in this segment.

SMEs with these characteristics are expected to have a strong need for accessible and manageable public transport arrangements. The research indicated that both employers and employees are gradually moving away from the traditional company car. Younger generations increasingly reject the idea of a lease car; they value flexibility over ownership and prefer options such as public transport subscriptions, shared mobility, or personal travel budgets that allow them to choose how to travel per occasion.

Employers, in turn, are stepping back from lease fleets because of rising costs, long contract periods, and the growing pressure to meet sustainability targets.

In addition, the assumption was made that for larger SMEs (above 100 employees), more time is spent on administrative tasks, which was confirmed through a survey (see chapter 15.1). Because of this, simplicity and efficiency could be particularly valuable to this group.

The interviews also showed that firms with more than 100 employees tend to face growing complexity in their mobility policies, with multiple groups of employees requiring different arrangements and multiple locations generating diverse commuting patterns. In addition, firms approaching the 100-employee threshold were already preparing for regulatory requirements, suggesting that mobility administration becomes a concern even slightly before this size. Finally, company growth often causes for the need to re-evaluate or update mobility policies, causing for internal conversations as well as talks with suppliers and general market explorations. It is at this time that some SMEs choose to implement policies to encourage use of public transport or bike over cars.

The most concrete mobility needs for this sub-segment come from the earlier defined company profiles (see Figure 18). This group wants to be an attractive employer towards younger applicants by offering good public transport arrangements. They want to prioritise attractive public transport arrangements over company cars, and wants to manage this efficiently and coherently.

For this type of SME, The Client's product could be trimmed down into a single package focusing on mobility administration and access to public transport. This is further explained in the next section.

IT-consultancybureau in Utrecht

1. Kenmerken

- **Bedrijfsomvang:** 110 medewerkers
- **Sector:** IT en zakelijke dienstverlening (SBI: K - 62.20.0)
- **Structuur:** BV met flexibele teams, projectmatig werk, veel externe klantlocaties.
- **Locatie & demografie:** Stedelijk, jong en hoogopgeleid personeel, veel internationals. Medewerkers reizen met OV en werken deels thuis.
- **Fase & innovatiegraad:** 8 jaar oud, sterk gericht op innovatie en hybride werken.
- **Rol van mobiliteit:** Mobiliteit vooral randvoorwaarde voor flexibiliteit en talentbehoud. Toenemende vraag naar passende OV-regeling en afname in leaseauto's door parkeerdruk en verduurzaming.

2. Typische mobiliteitsbehoefte

Het bedrijf heeft behoefte aan flexibele mobiliteitsoplossingen met keuzevrijheid voor werknemers. Belangrijk zijn gebruiksgemak, eenvoudige declaratie en minimale administratiedruk. Administratie van reizen is belangrijk om door te kunnen rekenen aan de klant. De wens om duurzaam en aantrekkelijk werkgever te zijn botst soms met de kosten van all-in-one-oplossingen.

3. Typische DMU

"We willen graag af van de leaseauto en mensen stimuleren om meer met het OV naar het werk te komen."

- HR Manager

Jobs-to-be-done

Aantrekkelijk werkgeverschap voor aantrekken nieuwe werknemers

Tevreden werknemers

Pains

Complexiteit door diversiteit aan wensen en mobiliteitsvormen: iedereen wil iets anders, uniformiteit is lastig.

Administratieve druk: declaraties en vergoedingen kosten veel tijd, zeker bij verschillende locaties/werkpatronen.

Gains

Centraal overzicht over administratie en regelingen.



Figure 18: the customer profile that was identified as most relevant for concept 1: a standardised, public transport-centred version of The Client's platform.

11.2 Proposition outline

The proposition centres on two pillars: mobility administration and access to public transport. Rather than designing a completely new product—which is not desired by the internal stakeholders at The Client—this concept repackages the existing platform into a standardised version that removes some of the complexity associated with the current offering for larger customers. By narrowing the scope, implementation becomes faster and cheaper, while still addressing the most relevant needs of the chosen segment, at least in theory. The key features included in this proposition are visualised in Figure 19.

Functionalities that typically prolong implementation or require customisation—such as mobility budgets, fuel and charging services, shared mobility, and combined trip modules—are excluded from this proposition.

The value of the concept lies in its simplicity and clarity. Employers can offer an attractive public transport arrangement, meet reporting requirements, and keep administration straightforward. Instead of complex custom solutions, SMEs receive a nearly ready-to-use package that can be implemented as new policy with minimal effort. Potential customer benefits include:

- Easy registration of commuting, business travel, and remote workdays.
- Centralised insights into mobility costs and patterns through the portal.
- The ability to provide employees with a professional business mobility card.
- Optional automation of reimbursements through system integrations.
- Straightforward handling of travel expenses as deductible business costs, facilitating VAT recovery.

A mobile app for employees to register commuting trips, business journeys, and remote working days.

An employer portal that consolidates all registrations and provides clear insight into costs and travel behaviour.

Optional integrations with HR or payroll systems, enabling automatic reimbursement processing at an additional service fee.

Mobility card, allowing employees to travel by public transport and use the OV-bike for business trips and commutes. Costs are paid directly by the employer, removing the need for employees to advance expenses.

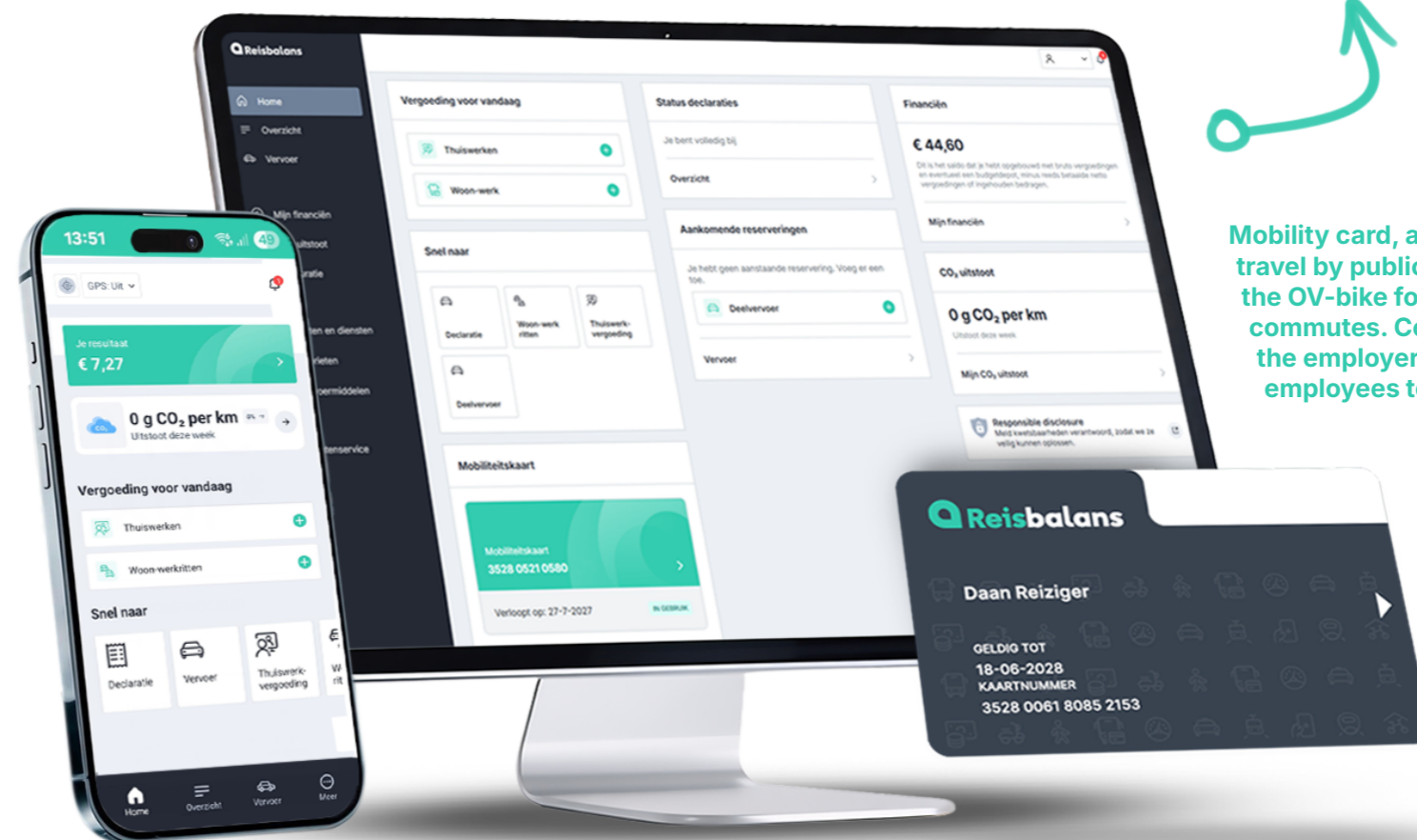


Figure 19: key features of the repackaged standard version of The Client's product for SMEs.

Concept 2: All-in-One Mobility Card

Concept 2 is focused on the long-term and builds on mobility needs of smaller SMEs (<100 employees) over the coming years. It introduces an all-in-one mobility card designed as a simple, to-the-point product that fits the evolving preferences of smaller employers and their employees. Where the first concept focuses on simplification of The Client's existing platform, this concept explores a new, stand-alone proposition that could complement or extend it in the future.

12.1 Target audience

This concept is aimed primarily at smaller SMEs with fewer than 100 employees. As the research showed, these companies typically experience less complexity in their mobility management. However, they face stronger limitations in time, knowledge, and administrative capacity. They value convenience, clarity, and affordability over extensive functionality. The interviews confirmed that many small business owners perceive existing mobility platforms as too complex, intimidating, or expensive to be worth the effort.

"For SMEs, the product should be a no-brainer. It should instantly be clear why they need it."

Former employee of The Client consulted during the analysing of the self-service funnel.

The combination of financial and environmental motives makes the lease car less attractive as a standard employment benefit. Instead, companies—especially in urban areas—are looking for simpler, more flexible mobility solutions that still help them present themselves as attractive and responsible employers.

At the same time, desk research and interviews revealed that many small employers have difficulty attracting and retaining staff and see employee satisfaction as a top business priority. They also struggle with rising costs and limited time for complex administration. Simpler digital solutions that can be implemented quickly and connect directly to existing HR or accounting systems are therefore perceived as highly valuable.

While interviews indicated that mobility is not yet consistently seen as a way to strengthen employment attractiveness, several internal sources at The Client and external interviewees suggested that its importance is growing. As the lease car loses relevance due to high costs and rigid contracts, employers are increasingly seeking alternative ways to offer flexibility and convenience to their staff. A proposition that supports attractive employer branding should therefore provide employees with freedom of choice in how they travel, while giving employers simplicity and control in managing and overseeing mobility.

A typical SME in this segment could be the one shown in Figure 20. This profile represents smaller SMEs with complex mobility patterns. For this group, it is assumed that being an attractive employer by offering modern and flexible travel benefits is important. At the same time, gaining insight and control over mobility-related costs, ensuring simplicity in administration, and avoiding extra workload are key. Finally, quick implementation without long contracts or setup processes is essential.



Figure 20: the customer profile that was identified as most relevant for concept 2: an all-in-one mobility card.

12.2 Proposition outline

The proposed solution directly addresses the main pain points identified among smaller SMEs: limited time, administrative capacity, and the desire for simplicity and flexibility. It includes an all-in-one mobility card for business use. This card allows all travel-related expenses of employees—such as public transport, refuelling, charging, parking, and shared mobility—to be managed through a single account. It can also be used for additional business-related costs like hotels or flights.

For employers, this means receiving one consolidated invoice that automatically categorises expenses, simplifying VAT returns and bookkeeping—solving a key administrative burden. The card can be used both physically and digitally (e.g., via Apple Wallet or Google Wallet) and can be issued flexibly to employees, enabling quick implementation without complex onboarding or contracts.

In essence, the proposition combines the convenience of consumer-style mobility cards with the control required by employers. It could be compared to existing products such as the NS Business Card or fuel cards like those from MKB Brandstof, but with broader functionality and a stronger focus on manageability, flexibility, and ease of use for smaller companies.

The concept therefore aims to make mobility management “a no-brainer” for SMEs—helping employers offer modern, flexible travel benefits without added workload. Figure 21 shows an overview of the potential functionalities that together deliver this balance of convenience and control. Their perceived value and importance were tested in the survey; the results are discussed in Chapter 16.1.

Whereas the first concept—an SME-standard version of The Client’s platform—focuses on access to public transport combined with administrative functionalities through software, the all-in-one mobility card offers access to all forms of business mobility in one integrated and easy-to-manage solution.

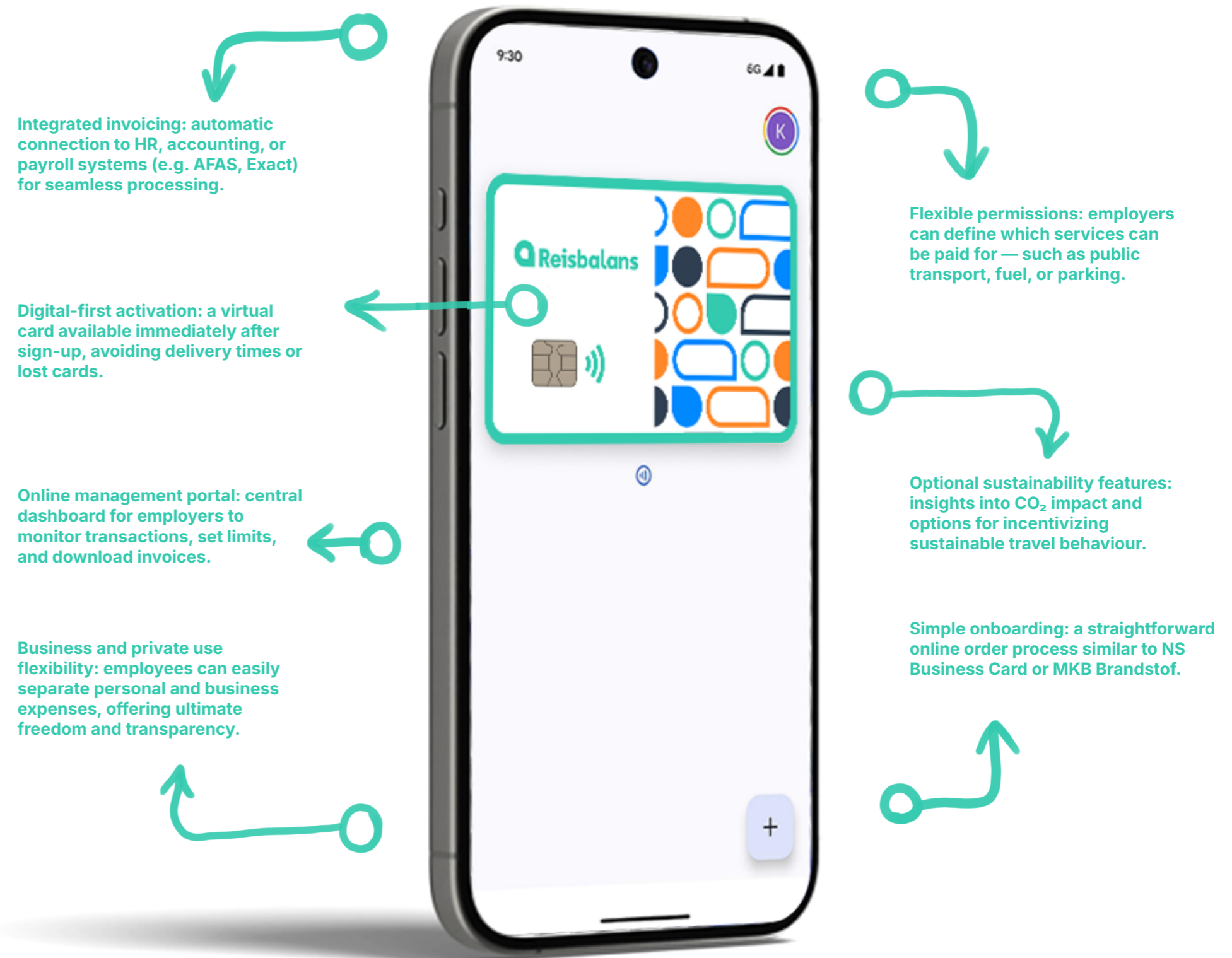


Figure 21: possible features and functionalities of the mobility card proposition.

Part IV: Evaluation and conclusions

This final part brings together the results of the concept development and assesses them through a structured evaluation. Firstly, the general attractiveness of the market is assessed by using Porter's Five Forces framework and using insights from the research phase.

The specific evaluation of the concepts is built around the three design pillars—desirability, viability, and feasibility—to determine how well the proposed concepts meet user needs, are financially viable, and can realistically be implemented within the organisation. It begins by outlining the methodology used for evaluating each pillar, followed by the outcomes and their implications.

Together, these analyses form the basis for a general verdict and an overall recommendation to management, ultimately answering the main research questions of this project.

Beyond the core evaluation, this part also presents several additional recommendations that emerged during the research. These insights do not directly influence the final concept decisions but were considered valuable for The Client's broader strategy and operations. The section concludes with a discussion reflecting on the process and findings—addressing the strengths, limitations, and implications of the project outcomes for future decision-making and research.

Chapter 13

Evaluation methodology

To answer the overarching research questions, both concept directions needed to be evaluated, as well as the general attractiveness of the SME market for The Client in general. For the latter, Porter's Five Forces were used. For the former, several complementary methods were applied following the DVF Framework—developed by IDEO in the early 2000s (Orton, 2017). This framework assesses three essential criteria for success: desirability, viability, and feasibility.

13.1 Porter's Five Forces

To assess the overall attractiveness of the market for SME mobility solutions, Porter's Five Forces framework (Porter, 2008) was used. The strength of each force was derived from insights gathered in earlier research, primarily the competitor analysis in Chapter 9. These findings were refined after feedback from the client mentor, resulting in a synthesized overview of the overall competitiveness of the SME mobility market.

13.2 Desirability

Desirability refers to whether the proposition solves genuine customer needs or pain points. It focuses on understanding customer needs and creating solutions that resonate with the target customer, increasing the likelihood they are purchased and adopted.

13.2.1 Purpose and hypotheses

While the identified needs from qualitative research informed the initial concept design, quantitative validation was required. Therefore, an online survey was developed to test desirability and perceived market fit. The survey aimed complement the qualitative interview phase by qualitatively evaluating the insights, evaluate the relevance of each concept, and test specific hypotheses (see Appendix F). Before introducing the concepts, respondents were asked about their current mobility practices—such as policies, tools, and costs—to understand their existing context. They were then asked about their interest in each concept, perceived advantages and

barriers, and pricing preferences.

13.2.2 Survey structure

The survey, designed in Qualtrics, started with general questions about current mobility arrangements:

- Which mobility solutions or policies are in place;
- What products or services are paid for;
- How respondents perceive their effectiveness and value.

This contextual information helped further understand what solutions are currently in place and why. It highlight what value customers are prepared to spend money on, which can reflect on the potential of the proposed concepts.

After this section, the survey split into three flows:

- SMEs with 90–250 employees, corresponding to Concept 1;
- SMEs with fewer than 90 employees, corresponding to Concept 2;
- And SMEs with more than 250, redirected towards the closing section since they are not the target group for either of the two concepts.

A threshold of 90 employees was chosen instead of 100, as companies close to that limit may soon exceed it—often a reason to reassess policies such as mobility, though the general target audience for the concept is SMEs with 100–250 employees.

Each flow included questions on interest, perceived advantages and barriers, and preferred pricing models. Afterwards, respondents evaluated key pain points identified in the interview study, allowing their importance to be quantified across a larger sample and ensuring alignment with real SME experiences. The full survey setup is provided in Appendix F.

13.2.3 Distribution and response

The survey was distributed through three channels:

- SME decision-makers who participated in earlier interviews;
- A public LinkedIn post shared by friends, colleagues and other connection;
- Paid respondent recruitment via the marketing agency Norstat.

A total of 116 respondents completed the survey: 71 from SMEs with fewer than 90 employees and 45 from SMEs with 90–250 employees. Most respondents held decision-making roles such as CEO, director, or manager.

13.3 Viability

Viability examines whether the concepts could become financially sustainable and align with business goals. Specifically in this project, the business goal was a break-even point within 24 months, as determined together with internal stakeholders in the early stages of the project.

For each concept, a cash flow model was built to estimate revenues, costs, and customer growth over 48 months. Assumptions were made about customer inflow, pricing, and costs to test the likelihood of reaching break-even within the set timeframe. This goal was established together with internal stakeholders at the start of the project.

Among other factors, the model included:

- Projected customer inflow based on expected market saturation over 48 months, using Low, Neutral, and High scenarios;
- Revenue assumptions per customer or user (based on travel behaviour, fees, and optional add-ons);
- Departmental labour estimates, translated into costs using average wages;
- Marketing cost per acquisition and one-time expenditures such as IT or website updates.

All input values were based on internal consultations and desk research. The model outputs included

graphs showing break-even time, user growth, and cash flow patterns for each scenario. In addition, different prices structures were tested in the model: a fixed monthly user fee (which is what The Client currently uses) and a transaction fee, either absolute or percentage. The different price structures also influence the outcome of the model. Naturally, the accuracy of the model depends on the chosen values, which were validated as much as possible through desk research, and the gathering of financial- and other data internally at The Client.

Full model details and assumptions are presented in The Confidential Appendix.

13.4 Feasibility

Feasibility assesses whether the concepts are technically and operationally achievable. Internal consultations were held with operations and implementation staff to estimate workload implications—particularly relevant for Concept 1—and with the product team to assess the IT impact. This included both functional aspects and technical details such as payment structures.

Market attractiveness

To determine the potential of the proposed concepts, it is useful to assess the attractiveness of the market for mobility solutions for SMEs in general. To do this, Porter's Five Forces framework (1979) was applied. This chapter outlines each of the five forces followed by a conclusion.

14.1 Threat of new entrants

The threat of new entrants is generally low to moderate. Several barriers make it difficult for new players to enter the market of full-service mobility providers. First, companies need licenses to issue public transport cards and must have strong IT capabilities to manage mobility administration and data exchange. These assets require significant investment and are not easily replicated. Second, brand reputation is a key barrier. Established players such as NS hold a strong and trusted market position, making it difficult for newcomers to gain credibility among employers. Third, switching costs are relatively high. Once an employer has implemented a customised solution integrated with payroll or HR software, switching to another provider becomes complex and expensive. Finally, the market operates on thin margins, with large competitors often competing on price.

Together, these factors make large-scale entry unattractive for most new providers. However, there are exceptions: in specialised digital niches, the barriers to entry are much lower. The rise of digitisation and API-standardisation has made it easier for small tech firms to enter sub-segments such as trip registration, expense declaration, or CO₂-tracking tools, think of Freddi as an example.

14.2 Bargaining power of buyers

The bargaining power of buyers is moderate, but it differs across company sizes. Like large corporates, many SMEs expect mobility providers to offer tailor-made solutions. In public tenders, customer demands weigh heavily, and even in the open market

smaller companies often request custom features. However, because of their limited size, they are usually told that no customisation is available — leaving them with a simple take-it-or-leave-it choice.

Interviews with distribution partners revealed that SMEs are highly cost-sensitive. They tend to switch quickly to cheaper alternatives when possible, yet they are also reluctant to pay for comprehensive software solutions, since mobility is rarely seen as a strategic priority. Many still manage travel administration manually or through fragmented tools such as Excel.

This combination of price sensitivity, low willingness to pay, and expectations of flexibility creates a difficult market dynamic. Buyers can easily decide not to buy at all, giving them indirect power over providers. For most SMEs, the urgency to adopt mobility solutions is low, meaning that suppliers must actively convince them of the value of their product

Among smaller SMEs (less than 100 employees), buyer power is very high due to low switching costs, high price sensitivity, and limited dependency on one provider. Among medium-sized firms (100–250 employees), buyer power is moderate to high: they depend more on integrations and consistency, but still remain selective and critical.

14.3 Bargaining power of suppliers

The bargaining power of suppliers is moderate to high, depending on the type of supplier. The Client relies on access to external systems and services such as payroll and HR software (e.g., AFAS, Visma) and mobility providers including shared mobility platforms, fuel and charging networks, and public transport operators.

On the one hand, no single supplier is indispensable. There are multiple alternatives in most categories, and customers generally value a complete and integrated offering more than exclusive partnerships. On the other hand, large suppliers hold strong negotiating power. Major operators such as NS can impose terms and sometimes extend their services to include their own

integrated mobility platforms, effectively competing with The Client.

At the same time, suppliers also have an incentive to collaborate. Platforms like The Client help them reach a broader business audience, including SMEs that individual operators would struggle to access directly. However, as some large suppliers pursue vertical integration — for example, NS with its NS Go platform — they can increasingly set conditions and capture parts of the value proposition themselves.

14.4 Threat of substitutes

The threat of substitutes is very high. For many SMEs—especially smaller ones—doing nothing remains a realistic alternative. Manual administration using Excel or basic registration tools is still common practice. Many employers consider dedicated mobility software too expensive or too complex compared to the perceived benefits.

Other substitutes include partial solutions such as payroll or HR software (e.g., AFAS or Visma) that offer limited mobility features, as well as simpler standalone products like fuel cards or the NS Business Card, which solve specific needs at a lower cost. Because mobility management is rarely a strategic priority for SMEs, these alternatives represent a serious competitive threat for full-service mobility providers but also for the proposed concepts.

14.5 Rivalry amongst competitors

Rivalry among existing competitors is high, though this mainly goes for larger client types rather than SMEs. Alongside The Client, the market is dominated by two major players — NS and Shuttel — complemented by several smaller providers such as Xximo, Fynch, Figo, Gaiyo, and Mobility Concept. Their offerings are largely similar and often centred around customisation, which limits differentiation and intensifies price-based competition. With the exception of Shuttel/

ANWB and Gaiyo, most competitors seem to focus their efforts on larger clients over SMEs.

Switching costs reinforce this dynamic. Larger employers tend to be locked in due to complex integrations with HR and payroll systems, while smaller SMEs can more easily switch between providers offering simpler solutions.

The overall market remains young and expanding, fuelled by factors such as new CO₂-reporting regulations, electrification, hybrid working, and the growing adoption of mobility-as-a-service (MaaS). This ongoing growth is expected to attract more competitors and further increase rivalry in the coming years.

14.6 Takeaways

Overall, the analysis indicates that the market for digital solutions for SMEs is not particularly attractive at this stage. Although the sector is growing and digitalisation lowers some technical barriers, the structural conditions still limit profitability. Mobility remains a low-priority topic for most SMEs, and their willingness to pay for advanced solutions is limited.

Competition in the broader market is strong, but few providers focus on SMEs—precisely because the segment offers low margins and little urgency. Most small employers still manage travel manually or rely on basic substitutes such as Excel, payroll software or fuel cards. These options are seen as “good enough,” which reduces the perceived need for dedicated mobility platforms.

At the same time, the ecosystem around suppliers and partners creates additional dependency. Large transport operators and HR software providers hold strong positions and can set conditions, while increasing vertical integration—such as with NS Go—further limits room for differentiation. Buyers, on the other hand, hold considerable power: they are cost-sensitive, quick to switch, and expect flexible solutions without wanting to pay for customisation.

In this context, new entrants face high barriers if they aim to compete as full-service providers, but digital, modular propositions could operate more easily in specific niches. The proposed concepts focus on simplicity and low implementation effort, which could allow them to bypass some of the structural limitations identified in this analysis. Still, the current dynamics explain why few competitors actively pursue this segment, and why capturing significant market share—if it all possible—will require patience, efficiency, and a clear value promise.

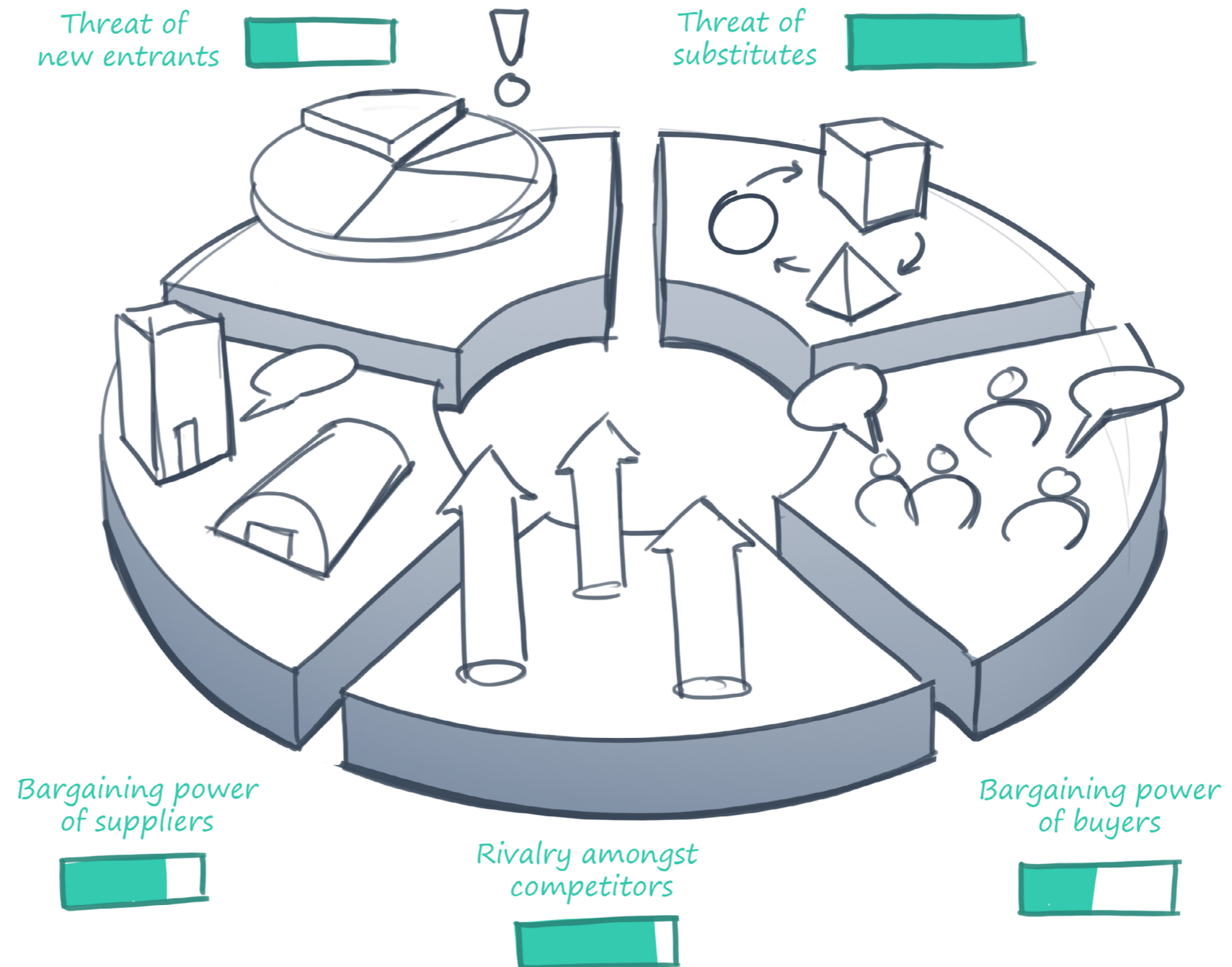


Figure 22: outcome of Porter's Five Forces framework.

Evaluation of SME Standard

This chapter presents and discusses the results from the various evaluation methods used to assess the SME Standard concept. The survey results focus on the desirability of the concept from the perspective of potential customers. The cash flow analysis examines its viability, evaluating expected revenues and costs. The implementation assessment addresses the feasibility dimension, exploring what would be required to realise the concept in practice. Finally, the chapter concludes with additional remarks and an overview of key risks associated with the concept.

15.1 Survey results

The survey was designed to test hypotheses regarding both proposed propositions. For Concept 1 — the SME Standard — the goal was to assess how larger SMEs (roughly 100–250 employees) perceive the relevance and attractiveness of a simplified mobility product focused on administration of mobility and public transport access, and what potential barriers could hinder its adoption. The complete survey design and question flow are presented in Appendix F.

15.1.1 General insights

Overall satisfaction with current mobility arrangements among larger SMEs is relatively high, averaging 7.1 out of 10 (Figure 23). Respondents rarely expressed major frustrations. Most described existing systems as “working fine.” However, several acknowledged that administrative processes could be more efficient — consistent with the finding that larger SMEs spend more time on mobility administration than smaller ones

When asked what value their current mobility solutions bring, *cost-efficiency*, *simplicity*, and *ease of use* ranked highest. Values such as *employer attractiveness*, *flexibility*, and *sustainability* were rated significantly lower. This confirms the practical and cost-driven nature of mobility management among this group, which also showed in the interview study.

15.1.2 General concept feedback

Respondents viewed the main benefits of the SME Standard package primarily in terms of *simple registration* and *clear cost insights*. More aspirational

benefits, such as *employer attractiveness* through sustainable travel or a well-structured public transport policy, were mentioned less often.

Features related to integration with HR or payroll systems ranked among the top three expected functionalities—echoing earlier feedback about the Freddi initiative and confirming that integration into existing systems is a key requirement.

“More extra costs for just another package.”

| Survey respondent

While many respondents rated the concept as “neutral” or “somewhat interesting” for their company (Figure 24), qualitative comments revealed limited perceived added value compared to current HR or finance systems. Several mentioned what could be interpreted as a sense of “software-package fatigue”: they already use multiple systems and see little reason to add another unless it significantly reduces effort or cost, which is not associated with this concept.

The most frequently cited barriers to adoption were:

- Costs: fear of additional expenses without clear gains;
- Limited use: small number of employees eligible for the product;
- Implementation complexity: concern that setup might be time-consuming.

Other expected barriers such as *limited functionality* or *internal resistance* were rarely mentioned. Respondents who seldom use public transport also questioned the concept’s relevance, reinforcing that it mainly appeals to a small sub-segment of SMEs with high public transport potential.

15.1.3 Price perception

Interestingly, the preferred pricing model was pay-per-transaction with a small markup, rather than a fixed monthly subscription (Figure 25). On average, respondents indicated they would consider a €0.75 transaction fee reasonable—substantially higher than the typical €0.19 per transaction used by competitors such as Gaiyo. While the rationale

behind this preference was not always explicit, many respondents commented that they prefer paying only for actual use, which feels fairer and more transparent.

Although the cash flow model shows that pay-per-use would likely be more expensive for the customer in practice, the perception of flexibility and control could still make this model more attractive from a marketing perspective.



Figure 23: average rating for satisfaction with mobility situation for SMEs with 100–250 employees.

“This concept is of interest to my company (Concept 1)”

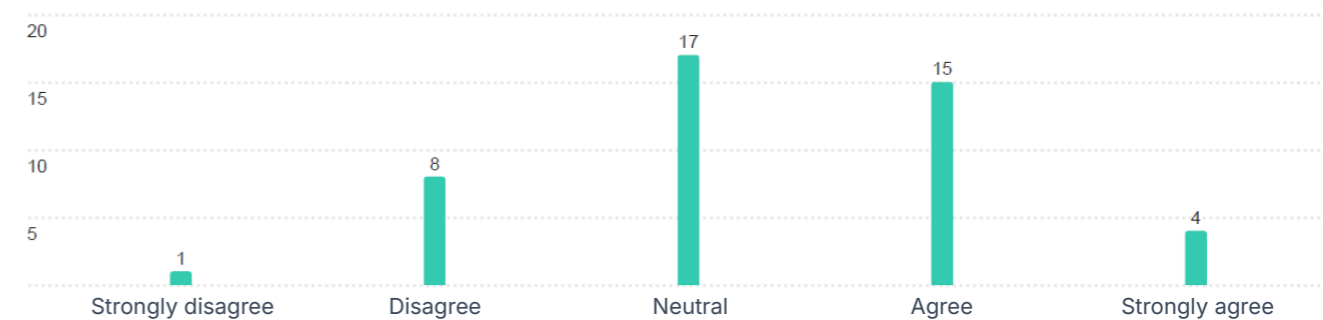


Figure 24: the general interest in the SME Standard concept seems slightly positive, but qualitative responses revealed scepticism.

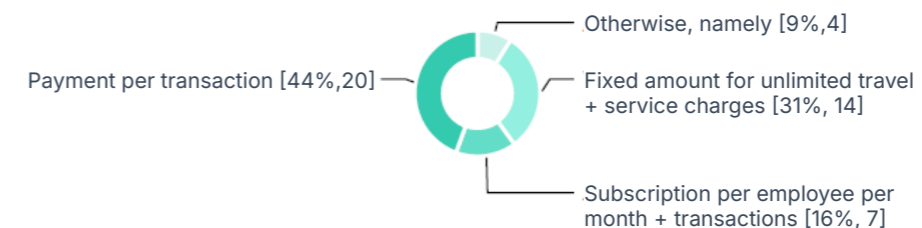


Figure 25: payment per transaction + a markup stood out as the preferred pricing structure.

15.2 Implementation discussion results

Discussions with the operations department revealed which features of The Client's current platform drive implementation complexity. Some functionalities—such as shared mobility or advanced administrative modules—generate many customer questions, are difficult to execute efficiently, and are used by only a small fraction of clients. Operations staff therefore welcomed the proposal to set clear limits to what is offered within the SME Standard. They indicated that preparing this simplified version would require little additional effort and would substantially reduce their workload in daily operations.

15.2.1 Operational feasibility

By focusing solely on essential functionalities, the SME Standard can be configured directly by the operations department, without involvement of dedicated implementation managers. The standard modules are easy to activate and require limited customer interaction, thereby reducing both implementation time and service costs. This directly enhances the feasibility of the concept and makes it scalable within The Client's existing organisational structure.

15.2.2 Organisational alignment

To avoid confusion with the broader and more flexible product portfolio, the SME Standard should be positioned as a distinct product line with clearly defined boundaries. SMEs would only have access to this standardised version, while larger customers continue to use the more comprehensive enterprise platform. This separation helps maintain efficiency and prevents the operations and implementation teams from being drawn into time-consuming exceptions.

15.2.3 Customer interaction

Although the concept aims to minimise implementation effort, personal contact remains essential. The research showed that SME decision-makers value human interaction during purchasing decisions. A personal yet lightweight commercial approach is therefore advisable. In practice, this could be

reflected in a dedicated SME webpage that replaces the former self-service funnel with easy options for human assistance, such as a call-back form or a chat function operated by an actual employee of The Client.

In sales, the focus should shift from accommodating every company through customisation to clear segmentation and disciplined boundaries. This may require deviating from the current "yes-to-all" approach but would ultimately enhance scalability and prevent operational overload.

15.2.4 Marketing requirements

To successfully introduce the SME Standard, several marketing investments are required. First, a separate webpage should clearly present the proposition apart from The Client's existing offering. Conversations with the former project lead of the self-service funnel confirmed that cost savings are a strong motivator for SMEs. Reviving his idea of a cost-saving calculator could therefore be valuable, allowing potential clients to estimate the financial benefits of simplified mobility administration—such as improved VAT reclaim and reduced manual effort—thereby reinforcing the value proposition.

The webpage should also feature clear and accessible options for contact with an employee, as well as testimonials and customer reviews, since these elements proved influential in the interview study. Finally, to avoid the pitfalls of the earlier self-service funnel, dedicated marketing campaigns should specifically target the defined SME sub-segment.

15.3 Cash flow model results

The cash flow model for the SME Standard concept shows clear differences between the current pricing structure and the proposed new one.

Under the current model, which is based on a fixed monthly subscription per user, the concept would not reach a break-even point within the intended period of 24 months. Even in the most optimistic (High) scenario, this would only happen after about 27 months*.

When switching to a pay-per-use model that includes a small fee for each transaction, the picture changes considerably:

- With a fixed fee per transaction, the model shows break-even after 17 months in the low scenario and 15 months in both the Neutral and High scenarios.
- With a percentage-based fee, the break-even point is reached a bit later: after 20 months in the Low scenario and 19 months in the Neutral and High ones.

This suggests that a pay-per-use model would not only better match the preferences of SMEs, as indicated in the survey, but would also allow the concept to reach profitability faster. The fixed transaction fee performs slightly better because it offers more predictable income and is less affected by fluctuations in how often users travel.

Overall, these results suggest that the SME Standard could become a financially healthy and realistic proposition if the new pay-per-use pricing structure is adopted. However, it is important to note that these findings depend on several assumptions, such as how quickly new customers join, how often they use the service, and what the marketing efforts will cost. The results should therefore be interpreted as an indication rather than a guarantee.

In addition, it is important to note changing to the pay-per-use structure would lead to the near tripling of monthly costs for the customer—particularly in the case of a fixed transaction fee. The survey did not

fully test the limits of what SMEs are willing to spend per month for such a solution. It therefore remains uncertain whether the customer costs resulting from this model are realistic, especially considering that cost reduction was identified in the research as one of the main priorities for SMEs.

15.4 Risks and considerations

Implementing the SME Standard concept comes with several potential risks and limitations that are worth noting.

First, the concept challenges The Client's current positioning of "doing everything for everyone," which is part of its existing unique selling proposition. Introducing a simplified SME version alongside the enterprise platform could blur brand positioning.

Second, it is assumed that the targeted SME sub-segment will be sufficiently served by a streamlined version of The Client's platform. If sales or operations staff continue to make exceptions or add features for individual customers, the efficiency gains of the concept will erode quickly. This could recreate the same operational complexity that the SME Standard was designed to avoid.

Third, the SME segment may hesitate to commit, particularly if the perceived urgency for mobility administration remains low. The projected customer inflows used in the cash flow model therefore remain uncertain and can only be validated through real market testing.

Finally, successful implementation depends on clear internal ownership across departments such as operations, marketing, and sales. Without strong governance and ongoing prioritisation, the initiative risks repeating the challenges of earlier SME ventures, where lack of focus and follow-up led to limited results.

*Specific input values from the cash flow model are omitted for confidentiality; the full model and final figures are provided in the Confidential Appendix.

Evaluation All-in-One Mobility Card

This chapter presents and discusses the evaluation results for the second concept: the All-in-One Mobility Card. As in the previous chapter, three complementary evaluation methods are applied. The survey results address the desirability dimension, assessing how potential customers perceive the relevance and attractiveness of this proposition. The cash-flow analysis explores its viability by examining expected revenues, costs, and potential profitability. The implementation assessment then considers feasibility, analysing how the concept could be realised within The Client's existing organisation and what adjustments would be required. Finally, the chapter concludes with an overview of key risks and limitations associated with this concept.



Figure 28: average rating for satisfaction with mobility situation for SMEs with less than 90 employees.

16.1 Survey results

For the All-in-One Mobility Card concept, the aim was to assess how smaller SMEs (fewer than 100 employees) perceive the relevance and attractiveness of an all-in-one card for managing mobility expenses, and to identify potential barriers to adoption. The full survey design and question flow are provided in Appendix F.

16.1.1 General insights

Responses from smaller SMEs (2–100 employees) show several differences compared to the group of larger SMEs (100–250 employees). Overall satisfaction with current mobility arrangements is slightly higher among smaller SMEs, averaging 7.5 (Figure 28) compared to 7.1 for larger firms.

As with the larger firms, respondents rarely expressed major frustrations and generally described their current systems as “working fine.” A notable distinction lies in the administrative load: smaller SMEs much more frequently indicated that they spend little to no time on mobility-related administration—an option rarely chosen by larger companies (see Figure 27). Administrative work around mobility therefore appears to be a minor or negligible pain point for this segment.

16.1.2 General concept feedback

Overall interest in the concept appears mixed, with responses evenly distributed between “agree,” “neutral,” and “disagree” on whether the concept would be interesting for their organisation (see Figure 26).

One of the main value propositions of the All-in-One Mobility Card is to strengthen the company's position as an attractive employer and satisfying current employees by offering a flexible and integrated mobility card, while maintaining administrative simplicity for employers. However, since administrative effort is already minimal for most smaller SMEs, this value driver may not be sufficiently strong.

Open-ended responses confirm that most respondents consider their current way of organising mobility “manageable” or “simple enough.” While some mentioned potential benefits such as clearer cost insight and less complexity in managing reimbursements, these aspects do not appear to represent pressing needs.

The most frequently mentioned barriers to adoption were:

- High expected costs relative to perceived benefits;
- Uncertainty of use, including doubts about how employees would utilise the card;
- Limited coverage, for example uncertainty about whether all relevant transport modes or expenses would be included.

“This concept is of interest to my company (Concept 1)”

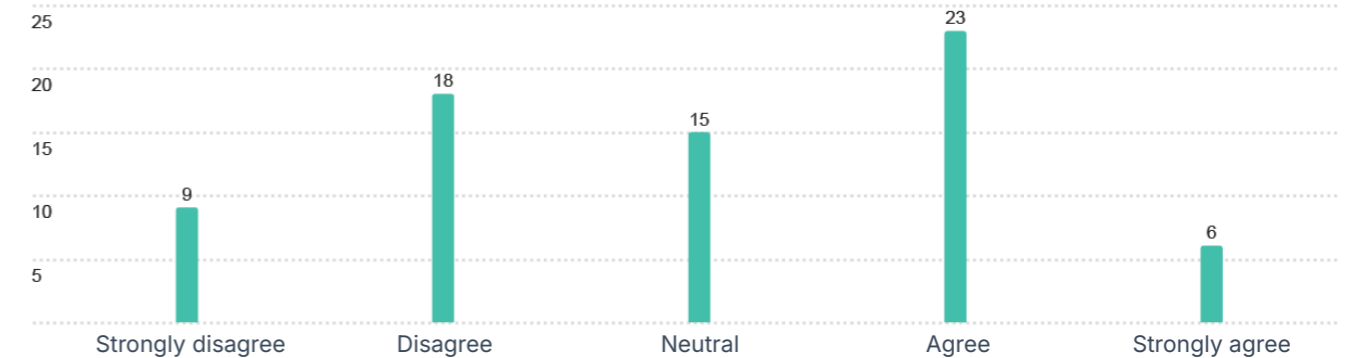


Figure 26: responses to the general interest poll, highlighting mixed receptions.

Time spent tracking and checking travel movements and days worked from home

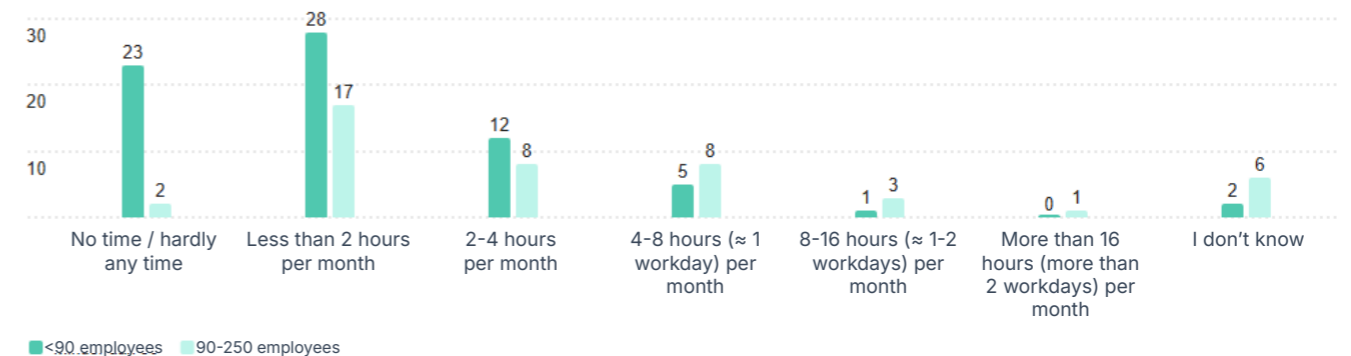


Figure 27: SMEs with less than 90 employees opted significantly more often for “no time / hardly any time” spent on mobility administration.

16.1.3 Concept functionality feedback

Because the All-in-One Mobility Card was positioned as a slightly more future-oriented concept rather than a direct extension of The Client's current product, the features presented in the survey were intentionally exploratory. Respondents were asked to rank potential functionalities based on perceived value.

The results show a clear hierarchy:

- Digital availability of the card (e.g., immediate activation via smartphone) was ranked as most valuable.

- A separate platform to manage cards, view transactions, and monitor costs followed closely.
- Direct invoicing or integration with HR or accounting software was also valued highly, aligning with earlier insights from both the SME Standard evaluation and prior interviews.

Less emphasis was placed on functionalities such as private use of the card, configurable access to different mobility modes, features to stimulate sustainable travel behaviour, or online card ordering—all of which scored notably lower.

16.1.4 Price perception

As with the SME Standard concept, respondents most frequently preferred a pay-per-use model with a small transaction fee, rather than a fixed monthly subscription. The average acceptable mark-up was approximately €0.55 per transaction, slightly lower than the €0.75 indicated by larger SMEs but still relatively high compared to current market averages.

16.2 Implementation discussion results

The development of this concept could take place in several phases, aligning with The Client's current technological capabilities, limited IT and commercial capacity, and the long-term ambition of The Holding to move toward a more modular product structure. A gradual implementation approach would make it possible to test market interest, minimise financial risk, and build the required internal systems step by step.

16.2.1 Implementation roadmap

In this section, a roadmap is proposed that outlines a possible phased development trajectory for the concept of the All-in-One Mobility Card.

16.2.1.1 Phase 1 – Launch of the standalone Public Transport card

The first step could be to introduce the current Client mobility card as an independent product. In this phase, the card would provide access to public transport, the OV-fiets, and P+R facilities, with all expenses collected on a single monthly invoice. Ordering would take place through a simple online process, and customer changes (such as activation or termination) would be handled through the customer service centre.

16.2.1.2 Phase 2 – Expansion with fuel and charging service

Once the basic product is in place, the offer could be extended to include fuel and charging cards. Combining charge and fuel cards with public transport cards under one account could provide additional

convenience and strengthen the value proposition. The same billing method could be applied, creating a unified invoice for all mobility expenses.

16.2.1.3 Phase 3 – Introduction of self-service management

In this phase, a simple management environment could be added, enabling employers to independently activate, deactivate, or modify employee cards. This step would mark a transition from manual handling to scalable self-service, reducing workload for The Client while increasing user satisfaction.

16.2.1.4 Phase 4 – Integration of travel registration features

Once the basic infrastructure is stable, The Client's product's existing functionalities for registering commuting, business trips, and homeworking days could be added. This would allow employers to meet CO₂ reporting obligations and gain insights into travel behaviour and costs, further increasing the product's relevance.

16.2.1.5 Phase 5 – Modular expansion

In the final stages, the card could serve as the foundation for a modular ecosystem of The Client's services, integrated within one self-service portal. This would allow employers to selectively add extra modules — such as shared mobility, expense management, or sustainability reporting — depending on their size and needs.

16.2.1.6 Vision

In the long term, the roadmap aims toward a fully digital mobility card that centralises all business and personal mobility expenses in one simple, online-accessible solution. This would represent the next step in The Client's transition from a complex, tailored service model to a scalable, user-driven mobility platform that can also be relevant to smaller clients.

16.2.2 Roadmap evaluation

While the roadmap provides a clear and phased path toward the All-in-One Mobility Card, internal discussions indicated that the practical impact and required investment for implementation would still be substantial.

The early phases, in particular, pose challenges. Offering mobility cards as a standalone product would require developing a new online sales process and order platform. Currently, all card requests are processed through The Client's main platform, meaning that separate sales and onboarding infrastructure would have to be built from scratch. Additionally, most customer changes are still handled manually through account management, operations, or customer service. Although The Client is planning to expand self-service functionalities, a fully self-service ordering system would represent a significant additional step.

The modular vision outlined in the later phases aligns closely with The Client's strategic direction and The Holding's broader goal of modularisation. However, the earlier phases—especially the standalone card offering—would place The Client in direct competition with well-established players such as the NS Business Card and MKB Brandstof. These competitors already have strong brand recognition and deep operational expertise in this segment, making market entry both risky and resource-intensive.

In summary, while the later stages of the roadmap are strategically aligned and technically feasible in the long term, the initial phases would require significant IT development and carry considerable competitive risk.

16.3 Cash flow model results

The cash flow model was based on the first two phases of the proposed roadmap: the separate offering of public transport and fuel/charging cards for SMEs, in the first and second year respectively. The model uses the pay-per-use price structure which emerged as the preferred option from the survey, with a markup. Assumptions were validated where possible through market data and internal benchmarks.

However, the model for this concept does not approach a break-even point within 24 months. In the most optimistic scenario (High), the break-even point is expected significantly later, after month 43.

The main reasons for this are twofold. First, the target group consists of very small companies with relatively few employees, resulting in a limited number of users per client and, consequently, low recurring revenue. Second, it is assumed that substantial marketing investments would be required to compete effectively with established players in this segment. These factors together make it difficult to achieve the necessary revenue within the short-term horizon considered.

Overall, the financial analysis suggests that the early stages of the roadmap—especially a standalone mobility card offering—are not financially viable under the current assumptions. Profitability could only be expected if customer volumes were to grow significantly or if The Client were to integrate the concept into its existing infrastructure at minimal additional cost.

Chapter 17

Discussion

With both concepts evaluated, this chapter discusses the broader implications of these findings, summarises the main findings of the research and evaluates what they mean for The Client's strategic direction. It brings together the insights from analyses of previous ventures, the market research, and concept development- and evaluation. The insights are placed into perspective against the project background (summarised in Table 2) and ultimately inform the final conclusions and advice for The Client.

17.1 Project background

Business mobility is a field of growing complexity, influenced by sustainability regulations, hybrid working, electrification, and the increasing number of available travel modes. This complexity is not only experienced by large corporates, but also by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In this field, The Client has, over the past decade, positioned itself as a full-service mobility provider for employers who wish to arrange and manage employee mobility. The company's focus has primarily been on large corporations, both in the free market and through tender acquisition processes. With the increasing complexity of the mobility domain, The Client has continuously expanded its product to assist employers in managing this complexity—resulting in a solution that is, in many ways, just as complex as the challenges it aims to solve. While functionalities have gradually become easier to implement over the years, The Client's platform still requires significant explanation, coordination, and custom agreements with customers throughout both the orientation and operational phases. It remains a labour-intensive product to sell and service.

Against this background, management has long debated whether the SME market (2–250 employees) could provide a new growth avenue. Several attempts were made to serve this segment, but most lead to disappointing outcomes. The result was a growing sense of internal tension: some employees saw the SME market as the next logical step, while others questioned its relevance and feasibility. There was no shared definition of the target group, no evidence-based

understanding of its needs, and no agreement on whether The Client's product could be made scalable for smaller employers.

The ultimate goal of this graduation project was therefore not only to assess the market potential of SMEs but also to help bring clarity and alignment within the organisation. By grounding assumptions in research and evaluating the potential of several proposed concepts, this project aimed equip The Client with the necessary insights to make a well-informed strategic decision for the coming years—and to finally replace uncertainty and frustration with a clear direction forward.

17.2 Learnings from previous initiatives

An early step in the project was to revisit The Client's earlier SME efforts. Three initiatives were analysed in detail:

- The SME Self-Service Funnel – an online ordering flow for standard mobility packages: failed because the offering remained too complex, confusingly communicated, and still required manual onboarding support.
- The Partner Distribution Strategy – selling through trusted brands providers: partners lacked the knowledge and incentive to sell a complex product and saw it as an optional add-on rather than their own offering.
- The Freddi App – a simple travel registration app for small employers technically successful but launched at a time when the problem it solved was not yet urgent; employers did not feel pressured to formalise mobility administration.

Together, these cases exposed recurring problems: too much complexity, too little internal ownership, and no clear product-market fit for SMEs. They underline that The Client can only succeed in this market if its offering becomes truly standardised, simple to understand, and backed by focused marketing and leadership.

17.3 Understanding the SME market

Desk research, interviews, and national studies together painted a nuanced picture of the SME landscape. The majority of Dutch SMEs are small in size and operate without formal mobility policies. Mobility management is usually a side task handled by a CEO, HR manager or finance staff rather than a dedicated role.

Key patterns emerged:

- SMEs value simplicity, trust, and personal contact with suppliers more than comprehensive feature sets.
- Purchase decisions are informal and relational— Influenced by employee requests and personal recommendations rather than procurement procedures.
- Mobility ranks low on the strategic agenda compared to pressing challenges like staff shortages, rising costs, and compliance with sustainability or tax rules.

This means that while the SME market is large and diverse, its immediate demand for mobility solutions remains modest and highly price-sensitive. Success therefore depends not on convincing SMEs that mobility is important, but on offering a tool that is self-explanatory, saves time, and requires almost no setup.

17.4 Market and competition

Few competitors have successfully positioned themselves for SMEs. With the exception of Shuttel and Gaiyo, most established providers focus on large accounts and tenders. Smaller players target SMEs, but their offerings are narrow—often limited to a fuel card or basic expense registration. The market for integrated SME mobility management is therefore still fragmented and immature, which represents both an opportunity and a warning sign: if even the largest players have not found a profitable formula yet, the barriers are likely structural rather than incidental.

17.5 Concept 1 development and evaluation

The SME Standard is a simplified version of The Client's existing platform, designed for the sub segment of larger SMEs (roughly 100–250 employees) with a high need for public transport arrangements that already reimburse travel expenses or offer basic mobility benefits but lack a structured system. It offers a streamlined package containing the core functionalities of The Client's product—registration, administration, and reporting, with access to public transport—without custom development or dedicated implementation support.

17.5.1 Desirability

Feedback on the SME Standard concept was generally neutral to moderately positive, but not enthusiastic. The results confirm earlier findings that only a niche segment of SMEs—those with substantial public transport usage—are likely to find the proposition relevant. For most SMEs however, existing systems and manual processes are considered sufficient.

The efficiency gains promised by the SME Standard address a real but relatively minor pain point. The intended added value in terms of employer attractiveness did not resonate; these larger SMEs do not seem to prioritise mobility as a differentiating HR factor.

Cost sensitivity and low perceived urgency remain major adoption barriers, consistent with earlier findings from the project that investments rank low on SMEs' strategic agendas.

17.5.2 Viability

The cash flow analysis of the SME Standard highlights that the concept's financial viability depends strongly on the chosen pricing model. While the current fixed subscription model does not reach break-even within two years, the proposed pay-per-use structure shows a significantly faster path to profitability—around 15–20 months depending on the fee type and scenario. The fixed fee per transaction performs best due to

its predictable revenue. However, this model also substantially increases monthly costs for customers, raising doubts about affordability given SMEs' strong cost focus. The results therefore indicate financial potential, but under assumptions that still require market validation regarding customer willingness to pay and user growth.

17.5.3 Feasibility

From an organisational and technical perspective, the SME Standard is the most feasible of the two concepts because it builds on existing systems and processes. Implementation could start with relatively limited development work. However, clear boundaries need to be set for different customer types and clear agreements need to be made and how each different type of client is treated, to avoid falling into the pitfall of once again wanting to satisfy each customer at every costs.

17.6 Concept 2 development and evaluation

The All-in-One Mobility Card is aimed at small employers (2–100 employees) who want a simple, self-service solution that combines all mobility expenses—public transport, refuelling, charging, parking, and shared mobility—into one payment method. Employers receive a consolidated monthly invoice, and employees can use the card both physically and digitally.

The concept deliberately breaks away from The Client's traditional full-service model and instead emphasises access to business mobility means with values such as ease of use, flexibility, and control, aligning with SMEs' need for simplicity.

17.6.1 Desirability

Overall, the All-in-One Mobility Card received a mixed response. The concept did spark interest with some respondents, but does not seem to address a broadly felt pain point. In contrast to the larger SMEs targeted with the SME Standard, this group

Concept	SME Standard	All-in-One Mobility Card
Desirability	Medium – appeals to mid-sized firms with administrative pain points and high public transport potential	Medium/High – relatively strong customer appeal for simplicity and control
Viability	Medium – leverages existing assets but will likely not lead to significant differentiation or large market share	Low/Medium – low margins, high marketing costs, but strategic value
Feasibility	High – technically easy to implement	Low – requires new systems and automation, but fits in long-term vision
Overall	Short-term option	Long-term innovation option

Table 2: overview of the evaluation results of the proposed concepts.

experiences little administrative burden and therefore perceives less need for additional digital tools to simplify mobility management. The intended value of the card—strengthening the company's image as an attractive and flexible employer and satisfying current employees—did not emerge strongly from the results.

At the same time, the clear interest in features such as digital availability, central cost insight, and integration with administrative systems indicates that the underlying idea of unifying mobility expenses in one tool is conceptually appealing.

17.6.1 Viability

The cash flow evaluated the first phases of the roadmap: the separate offering of mobility cards with a pay-per-use price structure. The cash flow model demonstrated that with realistic user and marketing assumptions, profitability within 24 months is unlikely.

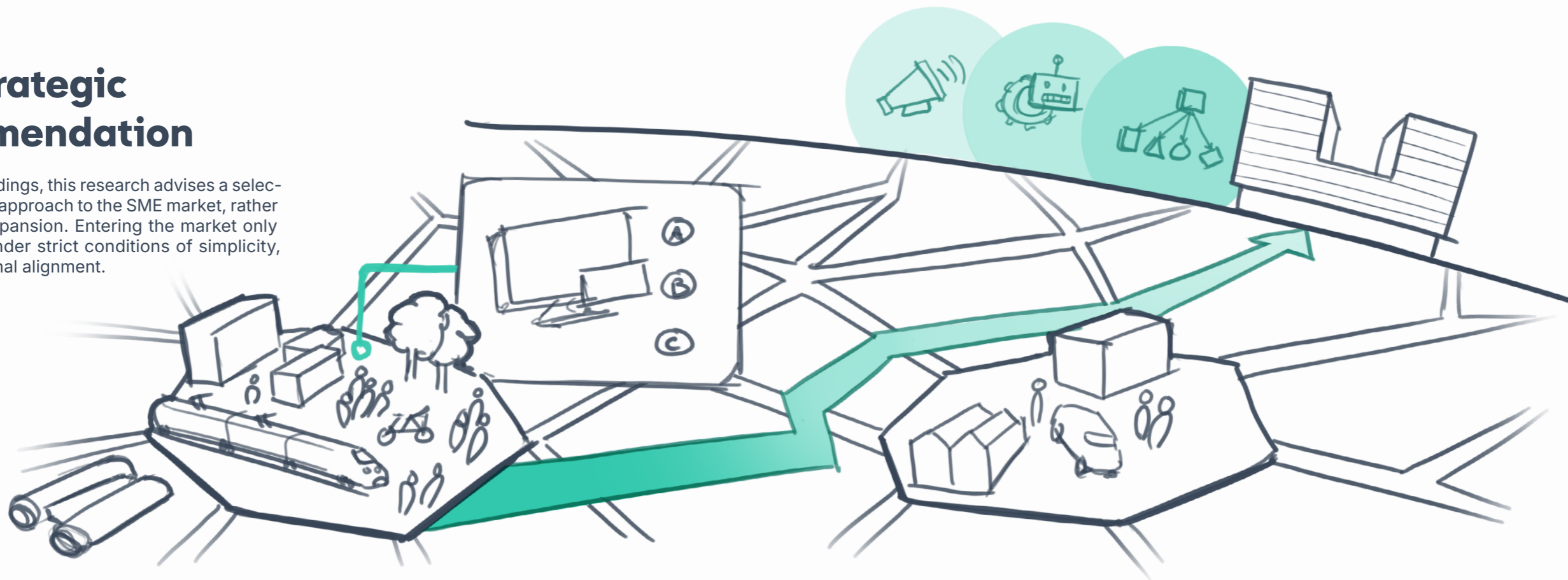
This is mainly due to the small revenue potential of the target customers due to their small sizes, as well as the assumed high marketing costs that come with directly competing with established competitors.

17.6.1 Feasibility

Technically, the concept would require a more automated, retail-like sales and support system. Organisationally, The Client is not yet set up to run a high-volume, low-touch service model centred around transport cards. While feasible in principle, it would demand significant investments in automation, customer self-service, and marketing. Therefore, the concept scores low on short-term feasibility but high on strategic relevance if The Client aims to evolve toward a scalable, digital-first proposition.

18.2 Strategic recommendation

Based on the findings, this research advises a selective and phased approach to the SME market, rather than a broad expansion. Entering the market only makes sense under strict conditions of simplicity, focus, and internal alignment.



1. Focus first on the upper SME segment (100–250 employees) with high public transport potential.

This sub segment shows the highest potential, due to the match with the standardised packaging of The Client's product. With a desire to move towards a more public-transport-focused mobility policy and wanting to centralise mobility administration, the SME Standard concept could be relevant. Therefore, the recommendation is to:

- Pilot the SME Standard as a standardised product package for this group.
- Clearly define the boundaries of the offering: no additional functionalities should be made available beyond those included in the SME Standard concept. If successful, experiment in a later stage with adding fuel and charging services to broaden appeal — but avoid introducing new layers of complexity.

- Establish clear internal ownership and service boundaries to ensure scalability and avoid reverting to the “customisation trap” that hindered previous initiatives. It is recommended to experiment with new pricing structures in case the desire for additional functionalities keeps surfacing.

Because the SME Standard requires little additional investment and builds on existing systems, it provides a low-risk opportunity to test the market, bring internal clarity, and define clear boundaries for SME servicing.

To prevent another half-implemented pilot, the SME Standard should have dedicated ownership and measurable success indicators. If results once again disappoint, The Client should abandon the SME approach for the time being and refocus fully on larger corporates.

2. Avoid entering the small-SME segment (2–100 employees) for now.

This group is highly price-sensitive and would require a fundamentally different, more automated service model. Rather than attempting to serve them immediately, The Client should:

- Monitor market developments and customer readiness.
- Gradually invest in automation, self-service capabilities, and marketing infrastructure to prepare for a future low-touch, less complex product offering. Once these foundations are in place, the company could revisit this segment with a truly self-service product such as the All-in-One Mobility Card.

3. Strengthen internal foundations for the future.

Regardless of short-term outcomes, the SME trajectory should contribute to The Client's long-term ambition to:

- Simplify and modularise the current product, reducing its dependency on custom development.
- Build automation and standardisation across sales, onboarding, and support.
- Strengthen brand awareness and communicate a more personal yet accessible image.

Once this modular foundation is established, The Client can re-evaluate the SME market with renewed capabilities and potentially reintroduce a low-touch, self-service proposition based on validated customer insights at that time.

Chapter 19

Limitations

Although the research aimed to provide a solid foundation for strategic decision-making, several limitations should be acknowledged, which are outlined in this chapter.

First, the number of qualitative interviews was relatively small, which means that not all subgroups within the SME market were equally represented. The results therefore indicate trends and motivations rather than statistically generalisable patterns. Moreover, much of the data relied on self-reported information from interviews and surveys, which may be subject to social desirability bias or differences in interpretation. Researcher bias in the analysis and synthesis of qualitative data cannot be entirely ruled out.

Another limitation lies in the available time and scope of the graduation project. The seven-month period did not allow for testing or practical implementation of the developed concepts. As a result, the concepts and business cases remain at a conceptual and financial-model level rather than empirically validated in the market. Many parameters in the cash-flow models—such as customer inflow—are reasoned estimates, but they cannot be considered predictive or binding.

In addition, the research mainly focused on the employer perspective. The views of employees and end-users were only indirectly captured, which limits the understanding of user-level motivations. The internal nature of the case also introduces a degree of dependence on company information: some insights about previous initiatives and internal challenges are based on the accounts of employees and may therefore reflect organisational perspectives.

Finally, the findings should be seen in the light of a rapidly changing mobility landscape. Regulations and technological developments evolve quickly, which means that certain assumptions or recommendations may lose relevance over time.

Despite these limitations, the research provides a realistic and evidence-based view of the opportunities and challenges of serving SMEs. More importantly, it offers The Client a structured and well-substantiated foundation for decision-making. The insights and scenarios presented in this thesis are intended to support The Client's management in creating clarity about the role of SMEs within the company's growth strategy and in making an informed, balanced choice for the years ahead.

In addition to the main outcomes of this project, this chapter presents several additional recommendations that emerged during the research. While these insights did not directly contribute to the final design directions, they represent important strategic considerations for The Client to take into account. Section 17.1 discusses the value of personal contact in SME service delivery, while section 17.2 explores additional market opportunities in the car and fleet domain. Together, these recommendations highlight complementary opportunities to strengthen The Client's SME strategy beyond the developed concepts.

20.1 Value of personal contact in service

While the SME concepts proposed in this project focus on scalability and simplicity, it is equally important not to overlook what has historically set The Client apart: personal contact and custom-made service. Customer satisfaction surveys have repeatedly shown that customers notice a growing distance in communication as the company expands. In interviews, several customers explicitly mentioned that the willingness of The Client's employees to think along, adapt to specific processes, and provide personal contact was the main reason they chose the company over competitors in the first place.

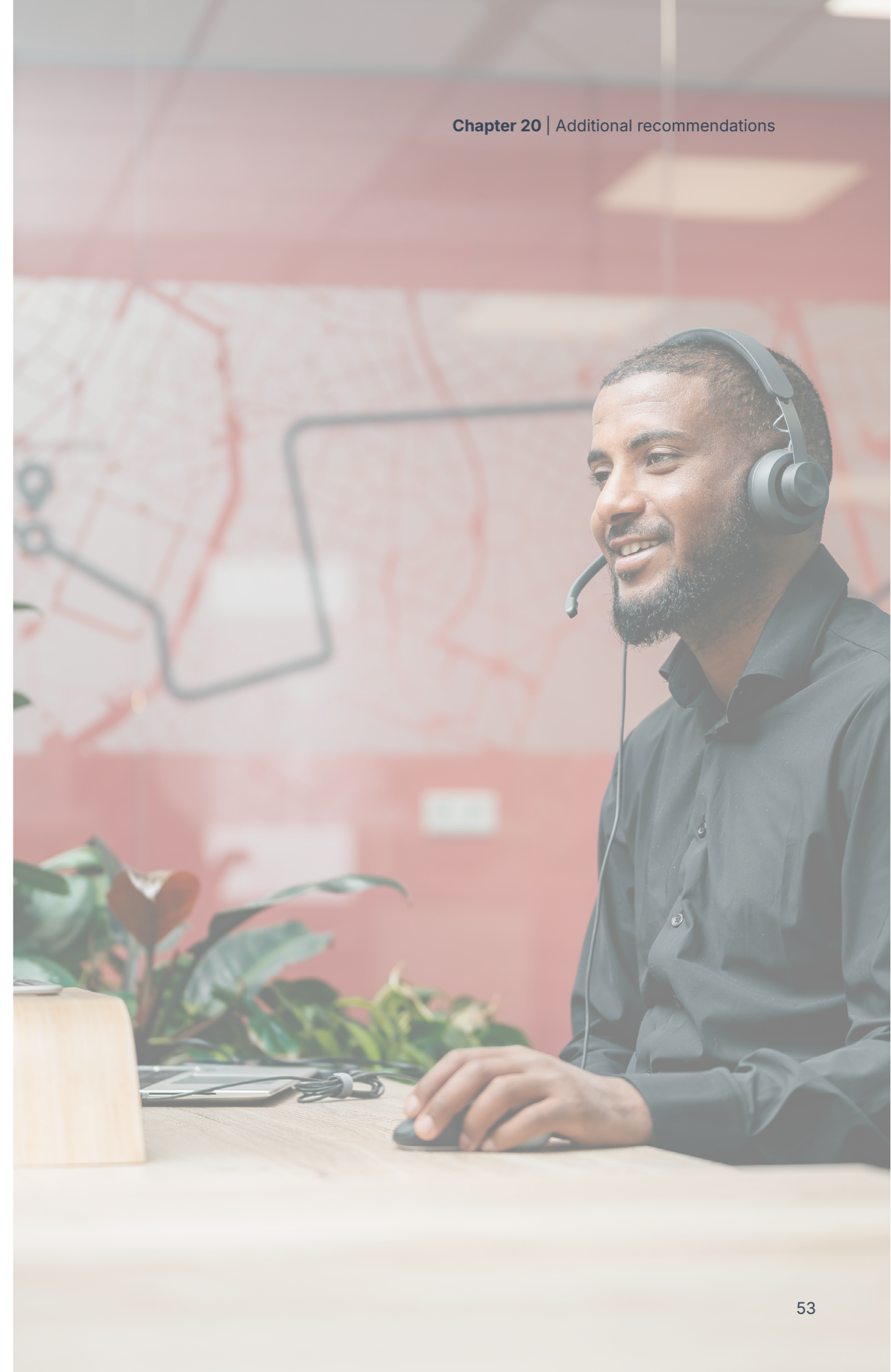
This aligns with a broader trend: as companies grow, efficiency often becomes the dominant narrative, sometimes at the cost of the customer experience. As Rory Sutherland notes, "Today, the principal activity of any publicly held company is rarely the creation of products to satisfy a market need. Management attention is instead largely directed towards the invention of plausible-sounding efficiency narratives to satisfy financial analysts." (Sutherland, 2019b). In other words, efficiency can easily become a goal in itself rather than a means to deliver value.

The importance of service is also visible in public discussions. A recent LinkedIn post about changes in the lease market in The Netherlands features discussions in the comments of industry experts highlighting how "customers are becoming numbers in process-driven organisations" (Philippo, 2025).

Interestingly, Sutherland also points out that emphasising the potential downsides of a product or service can actually increase trustworthiness and credibility (Sutherland, 2019a). Applied to The Client, this means that its more complex and human-centred way of working should not be hidden or framed as inefficiency. Instead, acknowledging that some personal contact or implementation effort is required can strengthen the perceived honesty and reliability of the brand.

Moreover, both the interviews and desk research showed that accessibility and service remain major frustrations for business customers. When companies are perceived as "unreachable," trust and loyalty quickly erode. For SMEs in particular—who often lack dedicated mobility managers—having a partner that is responsive and willing to tailor its support is critical.

Therefore, while the search for increased efficiency and automation is understandable, The Client should take care not to lose sight of its strength in personal contact and tailor-made service. In fact, there is a strong argument to invest further in the capacity and training of sales and operations staff. Personalisation should not be treated as inefficiency, but rather as a form of value creation that strengthens relationships and long-term retention. This also means that personal contact should be made more visible in how The Client presents itself—for instance, by showing more real people on the website and inviting visitors to "schedule a conversation with [employee X], who is happy to think along." Such small but tangible touches can make the company's personal approach more evident, even in a scalable digital environment.



20.2 Additional market opportunities

As explained in Chapter 10.2, the ideation phase of this project generated several interesting concept directions for The Client in the fleet domain that were not further developed within this project.

From interviews with the distribution partner and internal conversations at The Client, it became clear that the car still plays a dominant role in the SME market—more so than in larger corporates, which are gradually shifting their focus toward public transport and shared mobility. The Client has traditionally focused on services related to business mobility in public transport and only in recent years started to expand its scope by developing features for lease cars. To gain market share in the SME market, it could therefore be valuable to explore these aspects further and develop propositions that are more centred around cars. The most important insights from this brief exploration are discussed below.

20.2.1 Target audience

As stated, leasing plays a large role in the SME market. In fact, almost 75% of total leasing volume is found within SME companies rather than large corporations. Moreover, leasing is relevant across all sectors (Bentein, 2024).

When it comes to leasing and fleet management, different types of roles are responsible for managing arrangements within SMEs. Some companies have dedicated fleet managers, while in others, the owner handles it personally—sometimes simply because they enjoy the process. In many cases, it is an additional task next to someone's regular work. From the interviews and resulting customer profiles, two distinct types of target customers were identified (see Figure 30).

These profiles are not directly reflected in the pain points and proposition directions described in the following sections, but they are important to bear in mind when further exploring a lease car proposition in the future.



The car enthusiast

- Has a strong passion for automotive.
- Enjoys comparing lease contracts, negotiating, and diving into price details.
- Sees fleet management as the most enjoyable part of the job.
- Often holds a specialised role, or consciously takes on this responsibility alongside other tasks.



The accidental manager

- Has “inherited” the responsibility for fleet management by coincidence.
- Has little prior knowledge of or interest in automotive.
- Experiences it as a collection of scattered tasks and additional workload.
- Would prefer to focus on other responsibilities.

Figure 30: two possible types of target customers for a lease- or fleet management proposition.

20.2.2 Pain points

In relation to lease cars and fleet management, several pain points were identified among SME employees responsible for managing company vehicles (see Figure 31). The most relevant and concrete ones, deemed valuable for potential proposition development, are highlighted and explained below. In addition to these points, many SMEs also mentioned challenges around electrification of their fleets, dealing with changing regulations such as emission zones, and uncertainty about charging infrastructure and costs.

20.2.2.1 No insight into usage or maintenance

While the use of automation and AI is increasing (see Chapter 6.1), many decision-makers still perceive mobility as a fragmented area within their organisation—and their company fleets are no exception. As one interviewee stated:

“Ideally, I’d have one system to manage all vehicles and maintenance reports, where I can easily find everything I need. Right now, I have to look everything up manually — it would save a lot of time.”

| *Planning & Coordination Manager at a wholesaler in machine tools.*

Several interviewees mentioned how difficult it can be to manage all aspects of their fleet, while also expressing concerns about the costs of all-in-one fleet management solutions.

20.2.2.2 Time spent on quotes and contracts

Beyond general fleet management, the process of purchasing new vehicles stood out as a major source of frustration. One interviewee specifically mentioned this as an area where significant efficiency gains could be made:

“We track cars from several lease providers in Excel, which takes about four hours a week to update and compare offers. It would help a lot if requesting and comparing lease quotes were automated — no more calling, emailing, or manual calculations.”

| *Partner at a software service provider.*

20.2.2.3 Unsafe driving behaviour

Another key pain point concerned unsafe or irresponsible driving behaviour by employees. Some interviewees expressed a desire for more insight into fleet usage to provide feedback to drivers where necessary. This was motivated both by the wish to maintain a professional image toward customers and the public, and by the aim to encourage economical driving and route optimisation. Notably, promoting responsible driving behaviour was identified as the third most pressing challenge for fleet managers in the coming three years, according to Ipsos and the Arval Mobility Observatory (2025).

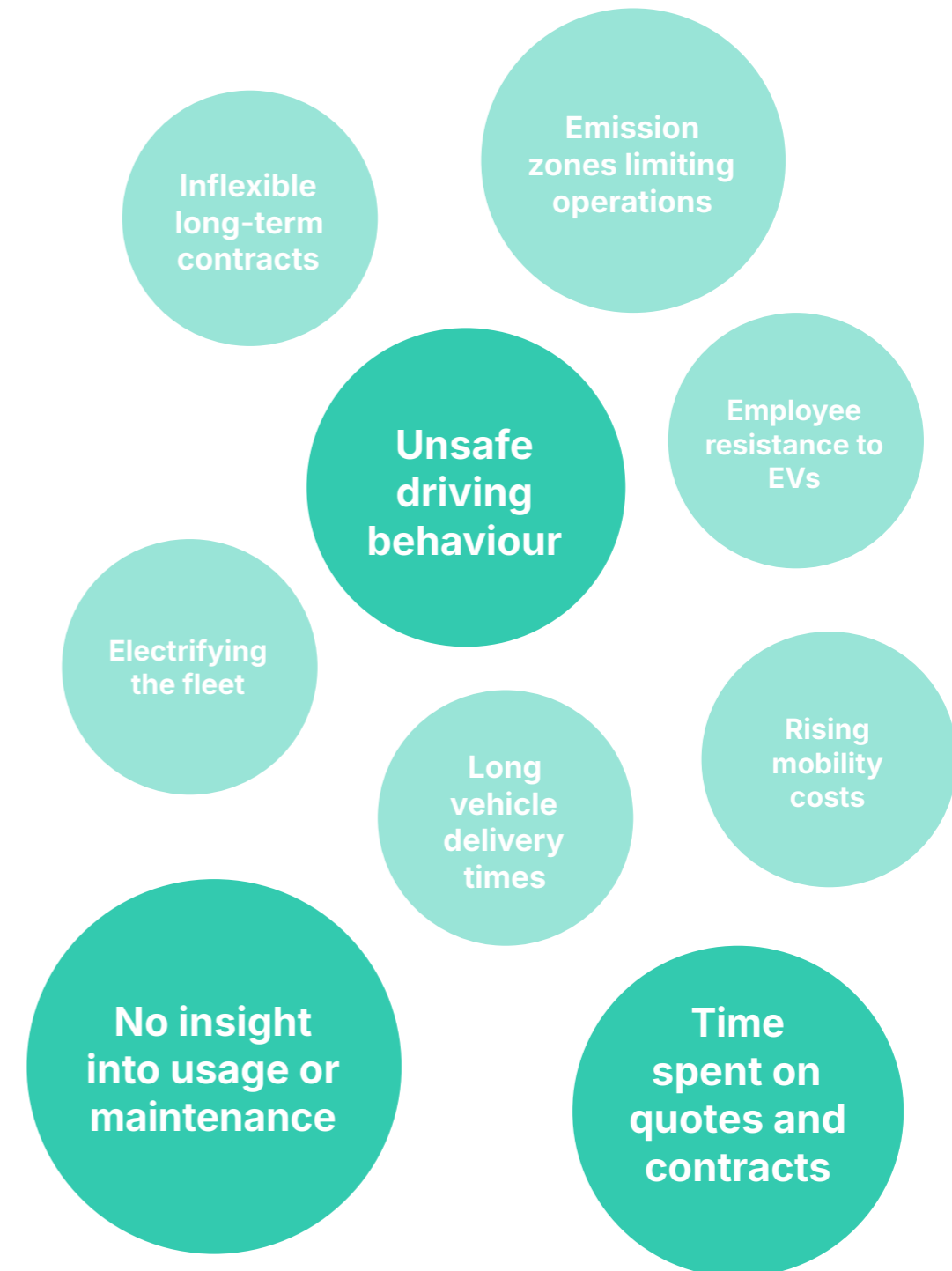


Figure 31: most significant pain points surrounding fleets that emerged from the interviews with SME decision-makers.

20.2.3 Possible proposition directions

Based on the most pressing pain points described earlier, several interesting proposition directions were generated.

Some of the pain points could be addressed by extending the consultancy capacities of The Client into the car domain, or by taking up some of the key activities of fleet management companies. However, since the market for these type of lease solutions was considered to be quite mature and saturated, strong competition exists, making these directions less appealing. Nevertheless, three other possible directions show more promise.

20.2.3.1 Smart Lease Comparison

Firstly, the pain point of time spent on quotes and contracts points to a potential gap in the market, even explicitly mentioned as a frustration by one of the interviewees. A short exploration of solutions around this problem revealed little to no alternatives for decision-makers to accurately compare lease car quotes. While comparison tools exist, they mostly feature cars from a single provider and link to external websites without offering much detail. In addition, they generally display only surface-level information, leaving employees with more work when trying to compare contract costs and total cost of ownership.

Considering The Client's strong focus on IT development, this could be an interesting area to explore further — particularly in the form of a simple, self-service tool. Such a tool could allow users to input their requirements, after which The Client would collect market data on availability and pricing in the background to generate accurate total cost of ownership predictions. This could significantly reduce the manual effort of comparing offers while increasing transparency and trust.

20.2.3.2 Fleet Insight Platform

Next to a tool for comparing and purchasing lease contracts, an all-in-one management tool for fleets could also form an interesting direction. Interviewees mentioned not having centralised insight into the usage and costs of their fleet and expressed a wish for more data on aspects such as fuel consumption, charging behaviour, and maintenance. Additionally,

administrative processes such as managing invoices could be integrated into the same platform.

When data from lease cars could be integrated, the tool could serve as a one-stop shop for fleet management, enabling fleet managers to steer employees based on data and detect cost inefficiencies. Right now, all facets of fleet management are often fragmented, and combining these into one intuitive interface could create value for many SMEs.

However, interviewees also expressed concerns about cost and complexity. Many SMEs perceive fleet management systems as expensive and time-intensive to implement, making them unsuitable for smaller budgets. Therefore, any new solution would need to strike a balance between functionality and simplicity — focusing on the essentials, avoiding unnecessary features, and using modular pricing to keep it affordable.

Additionally, some brief desk research into competitors in this field revealed how there are already several solutions that aim to satisfy the need for an all-in-one fleet management platform. Therefore, further research should be done to determine the actual potential of this direction and the possibility for a USP for The Client/Investment Holding.

20.2.3.3 Smart Driving Rewards

The final direction relates to promoting responsible driving behaviour. While many decision-makers want to positively influence how employees drive, the only available solutions typically rely on monitoring driving data and confronting employees about their behaviour. This approach is often perceived as punitive and does not lead to sustained change.

An alternative, more positive route could be to foster intrinsic motivation by using rewards and incentives. Behaviour change programs based on gamification, feedback, and rewards could offer a new approach to creating safer and more efficient driving within SMEs. This direction is especially relevant considering one of the other labels within The Holding which focuses on behaviour change and has recently developed an app called to encourage this.

The app is designed for travellers across the Netherlands who want to travel more sustainably, healthily, or efficiently. The app automatically registers

trips in the background and rewards users with points, vouchers, or medals for participating in travel challenges. For employers, customised challenges and goals can be created to stimulate positive mobility behaviour among their employees.

The capabilities that The Holding already possesses in the domain of behavioural change, both in terms of IT infrastructure and expertise, could therefore be leveraged in this new context. This might enable the creation of a stand-alone proposition tailored to SMEs, focusing on safe and efficient driving as a step toward broader sustainability goals.

20.2.4 Key takeaways

The findings presented in this section reveal that while the fleet management domain is mature, there are still relevant unmet needs among SMEs that could align with The Client's competences. Of the three directions explored, the Lease compare tool appears most promising in the short term, due to its simplicity, clear pain point, and strong fit with The Client's technical strengths. The Fleet management tool could offer greater strategic value but would require careful scoping to avoid becoming overly complex or costly. Finally, the Behaviour change program offers an innovative, longer-term opportunity, leveraging existing expertise within The Investment Holding to create synergy between labels. Together, these directions illustrate how The Client could expand its relevance in the car-oriented segment of the SME market while staying true to its core strengths of digitalisation, simplicity, and behavioural insight.

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