

Introducing modular products to the medium-end B2B foodstuffs market



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Image provided by Candy Inc

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Candy Inc	Confidential

Preface

This thesis was made for and in collaboration with Candy Inc (pseudonym for confidentiality). I would like to start by expressing my gratitude to my company supervisor. You have given me many great opportunities for this project and are always open to my ideas. I am humbled by the trust and freedom you gave me during the project to explore and question. Also for your flexibility and willingness to make time for the coaching, discussions and meetings this project required.

I also want to extend a big thank you to all the people that took the time to be interviewed, discuss or generally helped with my project from Candy Inc but also their business partners and of course their agents. I have learned a lot about the confectionary and bakery industry, but also about agency, business-to-business marketing and more.

Next, I want to thank my TU Delft supervisory team. Firstly, Erik Jan Hultink as my chair for helping me focus this project on the benefit for Candy Inc. For his recommendation of a solid but arduous research phase with transcription and coding. But also, for being clear and letting me know when I was doing well and supporting me when I was struggling. Secondly, Willemijn Brouwer as my mentor during the project. In particular for sparking my creativity and helping me set pen to

paper when I was stuck in my head. But she was also understanding and patient through all my questions and doubts during the project. All my supervisors showed great enthusiasm for my project and gave me confidence in my work.

Finally, I want to thank my family and friends for all the support during the lead up to and execution of this project. After finishing my master's electives, I let the momentum of my education slip and got demoralized searching for a graduation project and supervisors. But you guys helped me get the ball rolling and I could not be happier with where it took me.

At the start of my university career would not have imagined graduating from Strategic Product Design. I started in engineering, first mechanical then maritime before I took the time to understand what I wanted from my education and enrolled at IDE. But when faced with the choice of masters at the end of my IDE bachelor the choice for SPD was obvious. It encapsulates my duality of focusing on business, strategy and viability but also the creativity, systems thinking, and teamwork taught at IDE.

I have enjoyed my time as a student immensely and I look forward to the future.

Enjoy reading!

Mark de Wringer 27.06.2023

Executive summary

Candy Inc is a Dutch company specialized in designing and manufacturing process equipment for the global confectionary industry. Their brand is built on high quality custom projects for the high-end market. To lower their prices and appeal to the medium-end market, Candy Inc has implemented Configure-To-Order practices (Aqlan, et al., 2014). To help Candy Inc reach these new medium-end customers this report presents a strategic marketing plan.

Research for the strategic marketing plan included ten semi-structured interviews with a mix of internal sales managers, agents and external strategic partners. Six interviews were recorded and transcribed. These interviews were analyzed using the Grounded Theory Method (Strauss, A.L. & Corbin, J.M., 1990). This process starts by coding interviews by writing down the most important statements. These 308 statements were then categorized by subject. Finally, these categories are put together into overarching clusters, summarizing the themes of the interviews.

This process led to two superclusters. The first is named 'Agents are asked to be superhuman but are under supported'. This reflects the insight that agents are valuable to companies like Candy Inc for marketing across borders and cultures. But they feel underequipped and prepared.

The second supercluster is named 'Selling is complex and needs a human touch, but tech could support them more'.

The personal relationships between agents/sales managers and customers are an essential aspect to sales in this business. But there is a lack of use of digital tools like targeted advertising and customer relationship management systems. The research phase ended with the formulation of a statement that would serve as a guide for ideation.

From ideation came five recommendations, which were tested at Interpack or with agents. To give Candy Inc a concise guide for implementation a roadmap was made. The recommendations are implemented over the span of 3 years to help Candy Inc integrate with their agents and market more effectively without interfering with the personal relationship-building of the sales process.

The first step is a communication platform for sales managers and agents to connect on. Using features like topic channels on these platforms allows Candy Inc to efficiently convey information to their team of agents. This platform also allows agents to connect and exchange ideas.

The second step is to supply agents with an organized library of marketing material. Any marketing material Candy Inc produces can be stored on the previous communication platform so agents can easily find and use these.

The final step is to use an implemented CRM system to inform better marketing, like digital advertising campaigns on LinkedIn.

Document structure

Double diamond structure

This report is structured according to the double diamond created by the Design Council, U.K. (2015). The form of the double diamond has been adapted, but the key features remain. Those being two moments of divergent- followed by convergent thinking and methods. The adaptation is shown to the right in figure 1. In pink banners are the chapters to this thesis, from top to bottom in order.

Introduction will set up the context and problem statement. After which the first diamond and thus divergence are the semi-structured exploratory interviews. Then these interviews were coded and converged into a design statement, the central lead for the second diamond.

In the second diamond ideation (divergence) led to multiple ideas in different stages of development. Then an implementation plan in the form of a roadmap was the second moment of convergence.

Finally, the conclusion with discussion and final recommendations closes out the report.

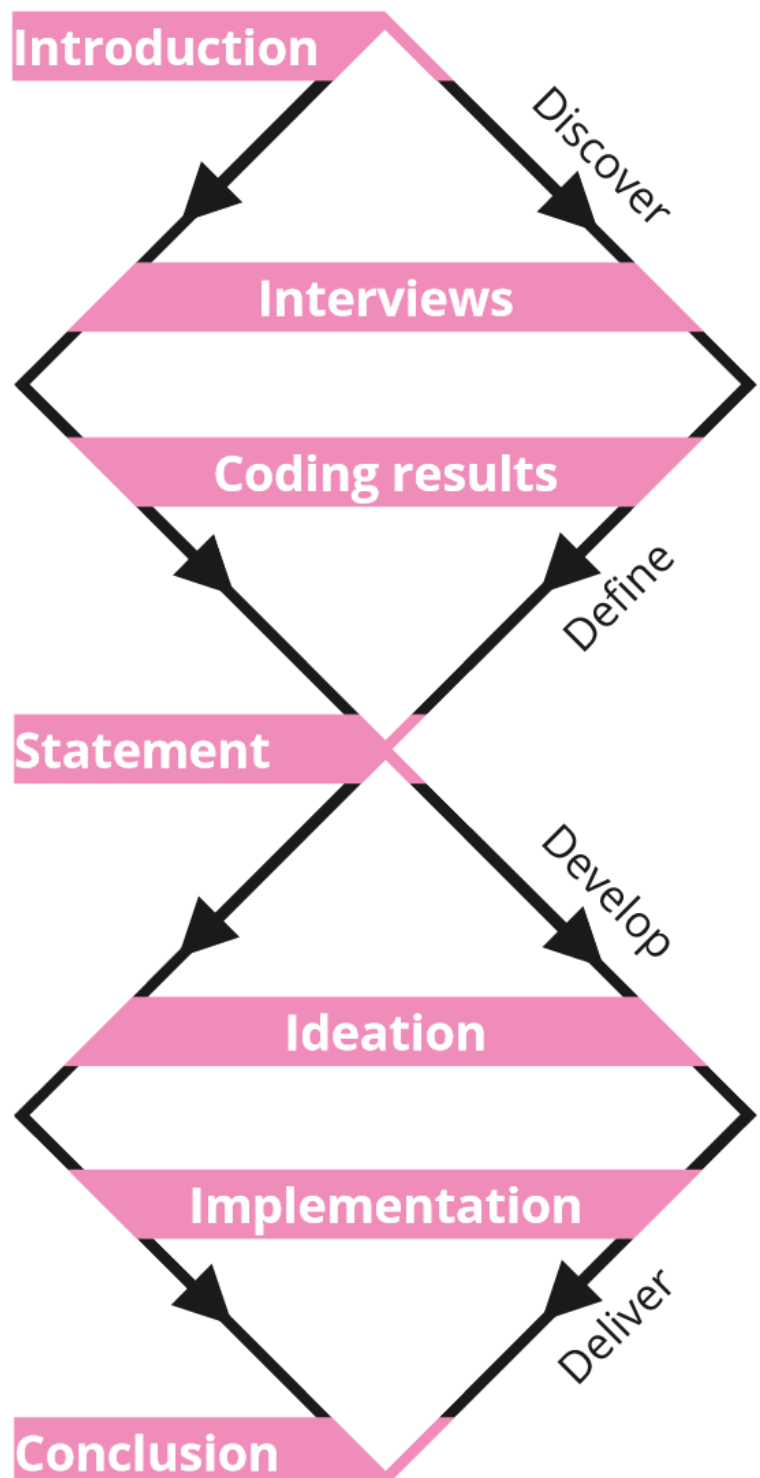


FIGURE 1: AN OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS IN THIS THESIS, IN THE FORM OF AN ADAPTED DOUBLE DIAMOND.

Reading guide

Chapter introductions are written in the pink banner like this and do not follow the 2 column structure.

Colour

Throughout my project and thus my report I have used 3 colours to signify different aspects. Pink is used as the thematic colour for Candy Inc and thus also as the colour for their employees and sales managers.

Green is used when referring to Candy Inc's agents. Blue is used more broadly but refers to technological topics or the strategic partners (in the case of the interview coding).

Colour legend

Internal / sales managers

Agents

Technology / strategic partners

FIGURE 2: A LEGEND OF THE COLOURS USED IN THIS THESIS AND WHAT GROUP OR CONCEPT THEY SIGNIFY.

These textboxes will summarize the main insights to take away from this chapter for the next.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis is made in collaboration with Candy Inc, a Dutch company that specializes in the design, development, and manufacturing of process equipment for the food industry. Candy Inc has become a leading supplier of food production lines for the confectionary industry in the past three decades. Candy Inc's products include a wide assortment of equipment like mixing, blending, cooking, cooling, and depositing machines used in the production of confectionary, bakery, dairy, and other food products.

Candy Inc's customer base is global and includes large multinational corporations as well as smaller regional businesses. They are known for their high-quality equipment, reliable performance, and customer service. In recent years Candy Inc has been merged with another Dutch company from the confectionary industry and they combine their strengths to compete in the fierce global foodstuffs market.

One of Candy Inc's core strengths is its ability to develop custom solutions tailored to their customer's needs. Candy Inc works closely with its clients to understand their production requirements and develop equipment that can optimize their processes, improve product quality, and increase efficiency. Recently Candy Inc has shifted their operational model towards a configure-to-order (CTO) approach which leads to reduced costs.

1.1 Configure-to-order

Candy Inc is a company with a focus on quality and service. This has led to the company excelling in the high-end market with brands that can pay the price Candy Inc ask for their products. Sales managers work closely with customers to customize a solution fit to their specification, as well as testing in Candy Inc's lab to ensure the candy can be made with the technology Candy Inc has.

Due to customers recently becoming keener on lower priced machines Candy Inc has started implementing Configure-to-order principles across their processes. Configure-to-order (CTO) products can be produced, tested, and assembled based on a forecast plan. These components can be kept in stock until a customer orders, then the components can be assembled according to customer specifications. This provides the company with a combination of flexibility in customization and the price efficiency of mass production (Aqlan, et al., 2014).

With the cost reduction that CTO will achieve Candy Inc wants to increase their competitiveness in the medium end confectionary market. The customers in this market look for a balance between quality and affordability. Candy Inc's focus has been on quality, which has led to them being undercut in this market by competitors. The aim is for CTO to cut the price of their machines for these customers without sacrificing quality, by cutting luxury features these customers might not need.

CTO is currently mostly being implemented in production to lower the costs of producing machines. But CTO will only bring the highest efficiency if it is implemented throughout the entire sales-to-delivery process. A complete ERP system can integrate and automate this within Candy Inc and can cut time on transferring tasks to the next person in line.

1.2 Problem Statement

This 'new' portfolio of Candy Inc branded configure-to-order products can benefit them by increasing their pricing competitiveness, their reach in the market and the occupancy of their fabrication facilities. Candy Inc has the skills to develop and test these CTO products in-house and combined with a fresh take on a strategic marketing plan this could be a great opportunity to expand their business.

1.3 Strategic Market Plan

The previous paragraphs explain the context around this thesis. The goal of this thesis will be to help Candy Inc understand the market they serve and how to best use new or existing assets to reach customers. A marketing plan will detail branding and marketing material for use by Candy Inc as well as a roadmap for possible development in the next years.

1.4 Research questions

To set up the strategic marketing plan the following questions will need to be answered:

What new customers does Candy Inc want to reach and what do these new customers value? An in-depth understanding of what

customers make up the medium end market is important for Candy Inc to correctly target their products.

What are the other options available to these customers (competitors)? A lot can be learned from competition and/or partners in the market and opportunities or threats can be identified based on what competition is or is not doing.

What kind of relationship and service do these customers (latently) need? Sales in this industry come in a wide variety of forms, anything between a dealer selling a single machine and business relations lasting multiple decennia. What Candy Inc is currently used to may not apply to a lower budget market and their sales and service tactics may need to adjust to account for this.

Through what channels should Candy Inc reach these customers? A thorough understanding of their sales channels' reach and price efficiency will allow Candy Inc to prioritize their marketing expenditures better.

The technical aspects of CTO development and the machines will not be scoped in for this strategic marketing plan. This thesis assumes that Candy Inc's expertise will allow them to create the machines at a cost and quality necessary to provide a value proposition fit for the medium end market.

Candy Inc has set its eyes on a new market that asks for lower prices for machines of similar quality. Candy Inc wants to achieve the price point necessary by implementing configure-to-order. The goal of this project is to provide them with a strategic marketing plan to reach these new customers effectively.

2 INTERVIEWS

The goal of this phase is to build a foundation of knowledge to answer the questions laid out in the previous chapter. The first section explains the process of qualitative research for this exploratory and divergent phase. The second section summarizes some early insights before convergence in the next chapter.

2.1 Qualitative interview setup, sampling and coding method
This section lays out the approach to research. The first part will explain the reason for choosing qualitative research. After that the sampling method will be detailed. Finally in the coding method section the use of the grounded theory method (GTM) will be shown.

2.1.1 Qualitative setup

A qualitative approach to research was chosen for this project. This is because in this field little information is written down and most knowledge is stored in people working in the field who gained it through years of experience. Secondly, qualitative research lends itself better to exploratory interviews. The author was not familiar with the workings of the B2B foodstuffs industry before the start of this project and needed

an introduction which came best from those working in the industry. Therefore, qualitative semi-structured interviews were held, supported by interview guides based on 4C analysis.

Semi-structured interviews allow the designer to focus on certain topics without giving up the autonomy to explore ideas that come up over the course of the interviews (Adeoye-Olatunde, O. A., & Olenik, N. L., 2021).

By asking the designer to approach research from the 4 viewpoints of Company, Customer, Competitor and Context the 4C method ensures a complete foundation of knowledge for a strategic marketing plan. The 4C method is taught in the Brand and Product Commercialization course in the SPD master (Berghuis, G.H. & Bakker-Wu, S., 2021).

2.1.2 Sampling

Interviews were held with a mix of relevant stakeholders. To the right figure 3 shows the rounds of interviews held from top to bottom in chronological order. The interviews were held in four rounds, 2 internal and 2 external. The first three internal interviews were exploratory and were held with two sales managers and the head of research and development. With the knowledge of these interviews a round of external interviews were held, with two agents and a sales manager who worked for a strategic industry partner. Following that two interviews were held with another two internal sales managers to control findings found in the external round. Finally, two interviews were held externally with another agent and another strategic industry partner for validation and further data saturation.

The mix of samples helped triangulate problems in the scope by asking stakeholders who experience this from different viewpoints.

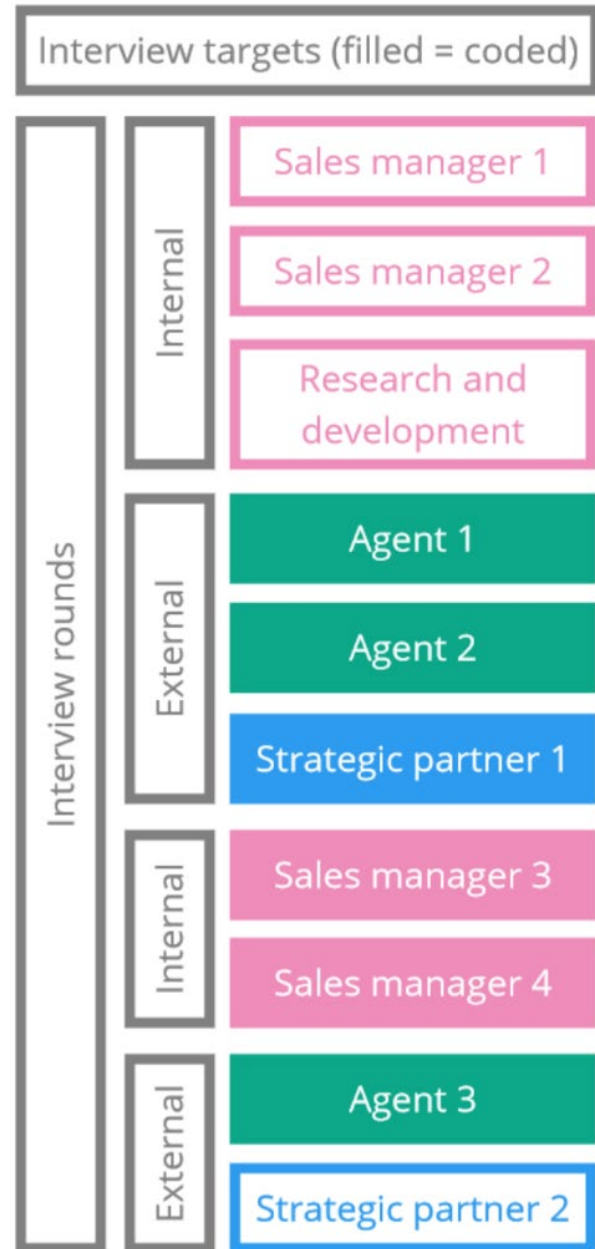


FIGURE 3: OVERVIEW OF INTERVIEW TARGETS AND SAMPLING.

2.1.3 Interview guides

The interview guides can be found in appendix A. The qualitative interviews were semi-structured to allow for deeper questioning when a new facet to the scope was mentioned. But to ensure the interviews did contain information about all relevant topics interview guides were used. The interview guides are structured with 4C, to ensure that each of these viewpoints is represented in each interview. The research questions from the previous chapter were used as overarching question topics. When new topics came up during interviews these were added to the guide to ask about again in upcoming interviews. This evolution of the interview guides made each interview more thought-provoking than the last.

2.1.4 Coding method

After the first three exploratory interviews the next six interviews were fully recorded and transcribed. The final interview with the second strategic partner was cut short and not transcribed. These transcribed interviews were analyzed using the grounded theory method.

The grounded theory method involves three main stages: coding, categorizing, and theoretical sampling. A blank example of what these stages looked like on Miro is shown in figure 4 below.

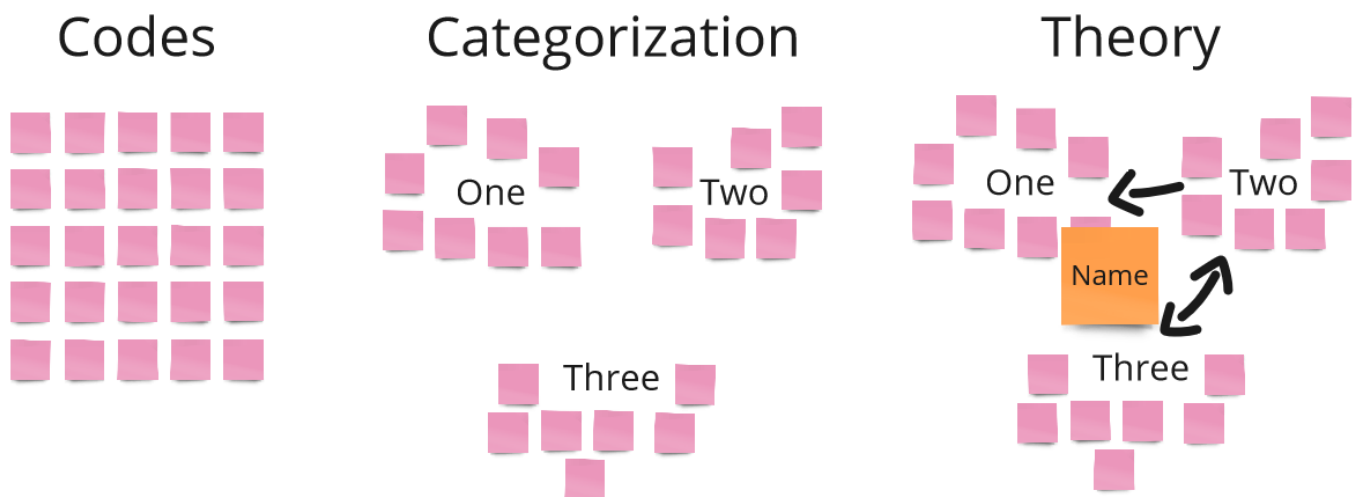


FIGURE 4: AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT THE STAGES OF THE GROUNDED THEORY METHOD LOOKED LIKE IN MIRO USING POST-ITS.

This analysis of the transcriptions starts with open coding (Birks & Mills, 2015). This is the process of picking out all relevant statements (codes) from the transcribed text. At this point of coding the designer should stay as unbiased as possible and code anything relevant. This step leads to a list of codes consisting of a few words up to a sentence. Any interviews held and transcribed in Dutch were coded in English to make further steps in the process easier. From these 6 interviews a total of 308 codes were generated.

In the next step these codes are categorized by the designer based on correlation to each other. These groups are given labels for recognizability. This is the point in the process where the designer's intuition helps categorize and cluster the code groups (Birks & Mills, 2015).

When (nearly) all codes are categorized, the designer can begin to look for ways these categories interact with each other. This leads to larger clusters of similar or opposing topics. The way these clusters influence each other will provoke a theory which will be grounded on data acquired from the qualitative interviews. This process allows designers to make sense of the rich yet disorderly data qualitative interviews provide (Birks & Mills, 2015).

The process of coding and categorizing ends when the designer notices that these categories and the relationships they are based on are reaching saturation. Saturation meaning that new interviews are not adding new codes or categories to the grounded theory, but only repeating elements (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

2.2 Pre-coding insights

Early analysis consisted of a mix of desk research and exploratory interviews and conversations with people within Candy Inc. The insights in this chapter were gained before starting to code the fully transcribed interviews. Writing these insights down before coding also lets the designer code more objectively without 'looking' for these insights during coding.

2.2.1 Company

The interviewees at Candy Inc estimated the effectiveness of their sales channels as shown below in figure 5 on the right, with most effective channel at the top.

The sales channels Candy Inc are most comfortable with are agents and trade fairs. Candy Inc does not have a strong presence on LinkedIn with only a few posts per month at maximum and advertisements in expert magazines are being scaled down because they are not seen as cost effective anymore. The interviewees estimate agents bring 90 percent of orders, with trade fairs as an important moment for agents to do their business.

Trade fairs are moments where everyone is together in the same room, so all companies bring their highlights of innovation and it is used as a moment to catch agents up on developments to prepare them for talks at the fair. Candy Inc puts a lot of focus on huge international trade fairs held in and around Europe like Interpack in Dusseldorf and Gulfood in Dubai. Candy Inc will ship machines to those locations to have them on display at their booth, this investment is worth it because

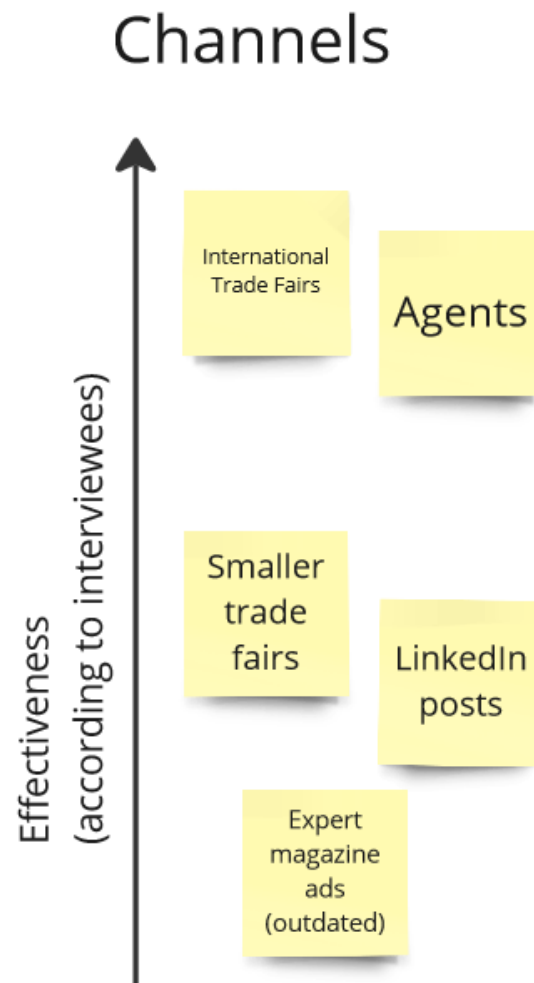


FIGURE 5: THE SALES CHANNELS CANDY INC USES, RANKED IN EFFECTIVITY BY THEM.

these fairs draw international crowds and are only once every 3 years. Candy Inc shows off their product at a huge fair about once a year, with a smaller presence at smaller fairs around 3 times a year.

Candy Inc and its owner company also used different branding and marketing tactics. With Candy Inc using images of candies (end products) and people like smiling children and parents. Whereas Candy Inc's owning company put a focus on machines, technology and quality of material. This stems from the type of customer and relation these companies relied on.

2.2.2 Customers

Candy Inc and its merged owner had different relationships to customers. Candy Inc's owner company relied heavily on a few relationships that had lasted a long time and asked for continuous throughput. While Candy Inc has a far wider reach with an established global agent network but less strong relationships. Sales managers at Candy Inc estimate that these agents bring in the majority of their projects in concert with their efforts at trade fairs.

The agents are locals in the region they operate in and know the customs. Depending on the customs of the region they keep a close, sometimes personal, relationship with Candy Inc's customers. This closeness is important because according to Candy Inc a portion of the decision-making process for their customers is still quite informal. According to interviewees, customers that are on the fence when choosing between manufacturers will also choose based on which agent/company they 'trust to grant' their order to (interviewees described it as 'gunnen' in dutch, this is the closest translation). When the customer is less familiar with the technical aspects of the business they will rely more on their trust in the brand and agent.

The medium end customers Candy Inc is looking for are described as closer to one-stop-shoppers at fairs. These customers do not have the capital to order from Candy Inc yearly or bi-yearly but will buy once and use that machine for 10~20+ years. These sales are more focused on first impressions rather than long relationships.

2.2.3 Competitors

Confidential

2.2.4 Context

Context describes the market Candy Inc participates in as a whole, their niche and practices in business-to-business marketing. Next are some insights about these subjects from the interviews.

The confectionary market, like many others, is recently putting a focus on sustainability. This is in terms of energy use and ecological footprint of the machines used. But also, sustainable source material for sweets like ethical sourcing of more natural and healthy produce.

In this market, and likely many others, big fish are eating smaller fish. Leading to a larger percentage of market share being dominated by fewer, larger companies. This is having a variety of impacts on business. Firstly, fewer companies lead directly to fewer agents being necessary in a market. But also, because big multinationals will often have a sales and project management team in place to bypass an agent's fees by doing business directly with manufacturers. These big companies also have increasingly complex hierarchies, making it more difficult for manufacturers to speak directly to decision makers. This also means that

orders go through a procurement division which often have stricter goals in terms of budget than a manager at a smaller company would have. This is placing an increasing focus on price over quality.

Branding is not a common term in this market yet it has been shown to be remarkably effective. An example is different companies painting their motors in company colours, like Candy Inc paints the motors on their machines pink. This has grown brand recognition because the source manufacturer of machines like these would otherwise be unidentifiable on first sight.

Digital marketing has also not become common practice yet. Certain companies are just now becoming comfortable with it through campaigns on LinkedIn with posts about recent developments, where to find them at trade fairs, and showcases of completed machines. Yet as LinkedIn is used by nearly everyone in the industry, it is also possible to target certain job descriptions with ads on LinkedIn. So, the hierarchy at big corporations could be circumvented that way.

This chapter shows the set up of the research: semi-structured interviews for exploration, with early insights written down. Then 6 of the total 10 interviews were fully transcribed and coded. This coding will allow the next chapter to converge into a grounded theory from these exploratory interviews.

3 CODING RESULT

The first section of the previous chapter described the research set up, now this chapter is devoted to showing that process and the results from it. Firstly, some journey maps bring insights to the agent's job. Then the coding, categorizing and clustering process is briefly described. Afterwards the superclusters are explained in detail. Finally, these superclusters are made into more concrete design directions through design goals and resulting statements.

3.1 Interview process and two agent journey maps

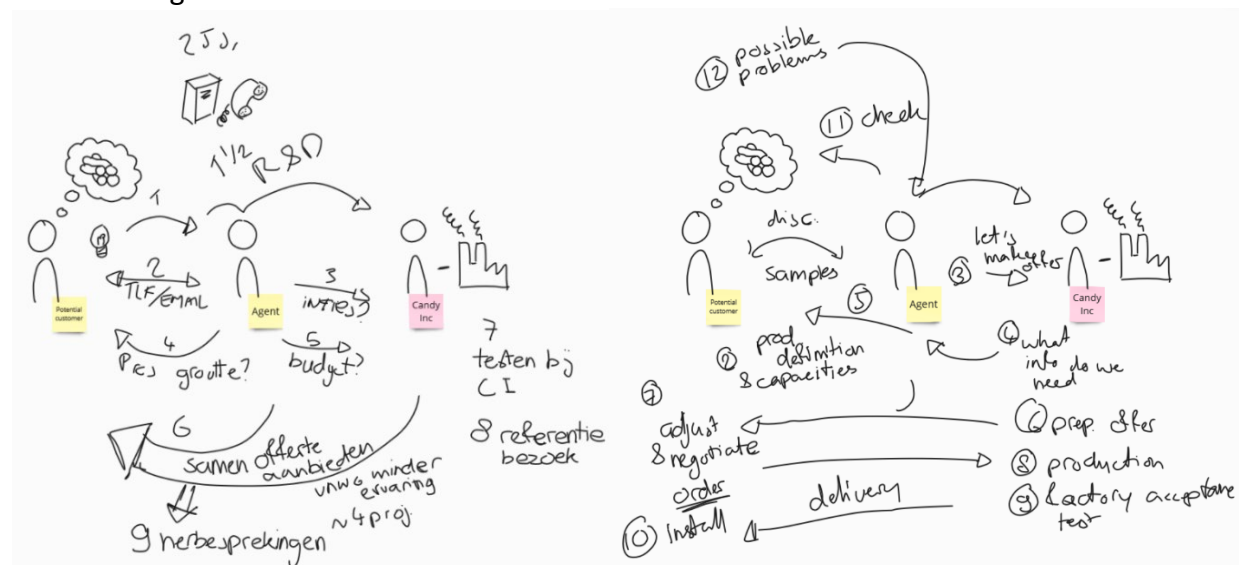
Using the early insights gained from the three interviews held internally and the desk research, 3 semi structured interviews were set up with 2 agents and a strategic partner. Because the designer was unfamiliar with the way agents worked, two journey maps were charted together with the agents in these interviews, as seen in figure 6 to the right.

This map shows the role of an agent as a middleman for all communication. It also shows that agents act alone for the first part of a sales process and afterwards the agent and principal will visit or receive the customer together.

Furthermore, the agents and partner were asked about their sales process, thoughts on the market, competitors and predictions for the future to gain more insight or confirm statements from earlier interviews.

To further specify details or corroborate emerging theories the designer interviewed two more internal sales managers. The interviewees were also asked to reflect on changes to Candy Inc or the market in the past and their expectations for the future.

Finally, to confirm theories and test the waters with early insights, two external interviews with an agent and a strategic partner were held.



19 **FIGURE 6: TWO JOURNEY MAPS OF THE PROCESS FROM IDEA TO ORDER, AS DESCRIBED BY THE FIRST SET OF AGENTS INTERVIEWED.**

3.2 Coding & categorizing

After having done 10 interviews the designer coded six. This led to a total of 308 codes being extracted. These codes were imported to Excel for easy overview and anonymization. From there the codes were copied to Miro and colour coded based on source. Agents are in green hues; internal sales managers are in pink and the strategic partner is in blue. Categorizing started with identifying general topics, and splitting larger topics into subtopics if they got too large.

To ensure that the statement is not just one interviewee's tangent the designer only kept categories that had codes corroborated by a variety of sources.

In the process of coding a total of 39 codes fell outside of the scope and were put to the side.

After categorizing all codes, a total of 27 categories were made. These categories were placed in 6 bigger clusters. The entire final board can be seen in figure 7. Full pictures of these clusters can be found in appendix B.



FIGURE 7: A SCREENSHOT OF THE FINAL STEP OF THE CLUSTERING PROCESS, WITH THE NAMES OF THE SIX FINAL CLUSTERS READABLE.

3.3 Agents are asked to be superhuman but are under supported
 These clusters fit into two superclusters, the
 two main findings from coding the
 interviews. The first supercluster is shown
 below in figure 8.



FIGURE 8: THE FIRST SUPERCLUSTER, ENCAPSULATING TWO CLUSTERS AND TWELVE CATEGORIES.

This supercluster encapsulates 'A good agent should' and 'Agents are invaluable yet underutilized'. This supercluster has been named 'Agents are asked to be superhuman but are under supported'. This supercluster captures the surprising finding that agents are seen as extremely valuable to business, estimated to bring in 90 percent of orders

for companies in this business (Candy Inc and strategic partners corroborate). But are not given the support to reflect this. Interviewed agents spoke about having training very infrequently and having to learn the most about their principal companies through years of experience. The agents also felt underequipped, and one interviewee aptly called this a lack of 'ammunition' for agents. This ammunition could be anything from talking points, pitches, innovations, physical or digital marketing material and more.

**Agents are asked to be superhuman
but are under supported**



3.4 Selling is complex and needs a human touch but tech could support them more

Supercluster 2

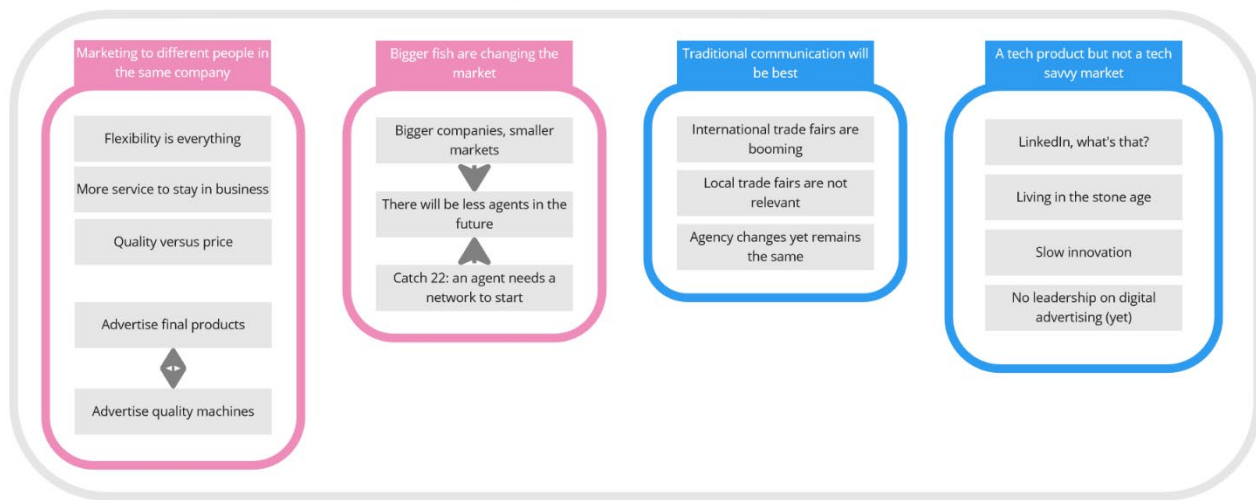


FIGURE 9: THE SECOND SUPERCLUSTER, ENCAPSULATING FOUR CLUSTERS AND FIFTEEN CATEGORIES.

The second supercluster (shown above in figure 9) encapsulates four clusters: 'Marketing to different people in the same company', 'Bigger fish are changing the market', 'Traditional communication will be best' and 'A tech product but not a tech savvy market'. This supercluster has been named 'Selling is complex and needs a human touch but tech could support them more'.

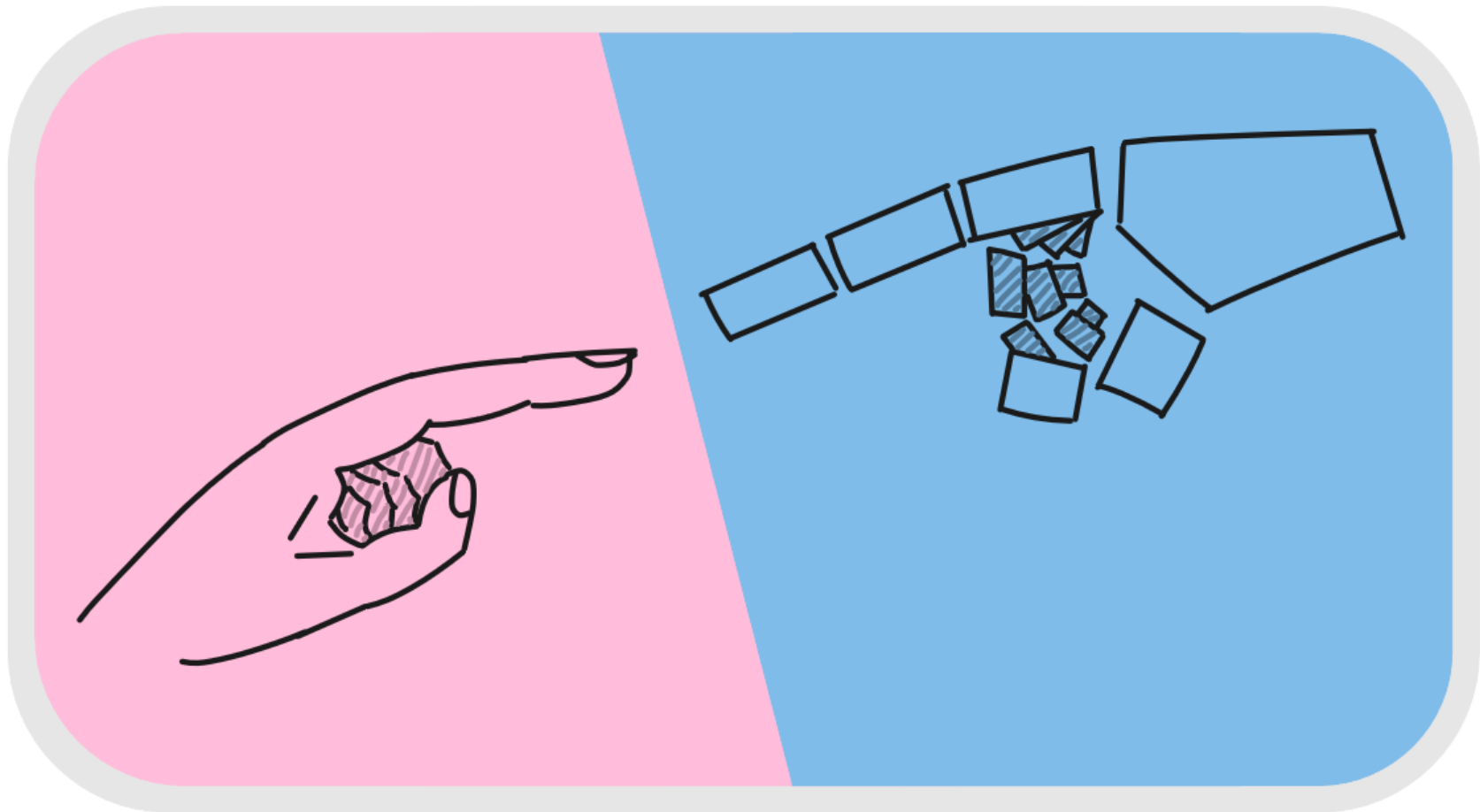
The first part is based on several emerging concepts. One part is that even though there are less agents due to the pool of companies vying for market share becoming smaller, agents remain an important part of business. They allow companies like Candy Inc with a single location to still sell globally, agents bridge simple things like time zones and travel costs but also complex cultural norms and values. Selling in this business is also different than for a business-to-consumer company. Because even though the person you're selling to may come from

the same customer company they can have entirely different interests based on what their expertise is. Procurement will look closely at price, technical departments will focus on quality and repairability, while managers could focus on the end product and happy end customers. Agents and sales managers have experience gauging the interests of the people they speak with and can tailor the pitch to fit that.

On the other hand, this entirely ignores technology that has been revolutionizing other businesses like digital advertising. This business is a laggard in digital adoption, both in terms of in-house ERP systems and use of social media or other digital advertising.

Both superclusters combine to form the grounded theory from the qualitative interviews. They show the emphasis interviewees put on certain subjects and surprising connections or frictions between statements.

Selling is complex and needs a human touch
but tech could support them more



3.5 Design goals

To spur the designer to think about the target audience, application and benefits of the intended design, design goals were formulated. These design goals were formulated using who? Where and when? What? And why? Questions. The answers to these questions were used to make statements. The form of these statements is based on the 'positioning statement' as taught in the course Brand and Product Commercialization (Berghuis, G.H. & Bakker-Wu, S., 2021), as shown in figure 10.

The format of the positioning statement gives a single sentence goal to strive for during ideation. It does this by asking to specify functional, emotional and self-expressive benefits which urges the designer to think from the customer's perspective. Before trying to converge all the research on to a single statement, separate statements were prepared for each supercluster. These statements can be seen in figure 11 on this page and figure 12 on the next page.

For (target audience), (brand) offers (product category) that is (product attributes), (functional benefits) and gives people the (emotional benefits) to (self-expressive benefits)

FIGURE 10: THE POSITIONING STATEMENT AS TAUGHT IN THE COURSE BRAND AND PRODUCT COMMERCIALIZATION (BERGHUIS, G.H. & BAKKER-WU, S., 2021).

Agents are asked to be superhuman but are undersupported

Who?

For agents
To new and current customers

What?

Supply promotional material
Tighten relationships

Where and when?

At trade fairs
In (video) calls

Why?

To allow agents to perform their best
To set customers at ease by a good decision

For **their agents**, **Candy Inc** offers a promotional toolkit that is exciting, deepens customer relationships and gives **their agents** the confidence to perform their job knowing that they are heard and supported.

FIGURE 11: THE DESIGN GOAL QUESTIONS ANSWERED FOR THE FIRST SUPERCLUSTER, WITH THE RESULTING STATEMENT BELOW.

Selling is complex and needs a human touch but tech could support them more

Who?

For sales managers
To bosses and engineers

Where and when?

At trade fairs
On digital services anytime

What?

Reach both target customers with
corresponding material

Why?

Marketing customised to the receiver
makes it more effective

For **their sales managers, Candy Inc** offers a digital marketing aid that is easy to use, adapts to candy or machine focused customers and gives **their sales managers** the knowledge to allow them to use the right sales tactics on the right customer.

FIGURE 12: THE DESIGN GOAL QUESTIONS ANSWERED FOR THE SECOND SUPERCLUSTER, WITH THE RESULTING STATEMENT BELOW.

The statements are intended to form a central thought to lead the ideation phase. These first two draft statements were shown to Candy Inc to receive feedback. Preference went out for the first statement because of the focus on agents, but aspects of the second statement should be fit into the first.

Most strikingly, the feedback was given that the first statement should evoke that agents should feel like part of the family, unquestionably supported. This was important because an agent that feels well prepared will likely also talk about Candy Inc more easily and more often. By increasing the agent's motivation you increase their effectiveness in turn.

This chapter is the end of a thorough qualitative analysis of the interviews. This led to two superclusters which capture the most important aspects of the design space. To create a handhold for the ideation process these superclusters were converged into one statement each. In the next chapter these two statements will be merged as the final convergent step of the first of the double diamonds.

4 STATEMENT

For **their agents and sales managers**, Candy Inc offers a (digital) promotional toolkit that is exciting, deepens customer relationships and gives **their agents** the confidence that they are a core part of the Candy Inc family and have the support to excel.

FIGURE 13: THE FINAL STATEMENT, SERVING AS THE LAST MOMENT OF CONVERGENCE FOR THE FIRST DIAMOND AND STARTING POINT FOR THE SECOND DIAMOND IN THE DOUBLE DIAMOND METHOD.

A final positioning statement is formulated to give the designer a concise handhold to start designing from. This statement captures the most important concepts from the grounded theory and describes a goal that the final design should achieve for Candy Inc. The final combined statement is shown above in figure 13.

Agents and sales managers are chosen as the target audience instead of the customer because they are the key to reaching customers, the final design should not aim to replace their work but help them.

A (digital) marketing toolkit leaves room for the design to be anything that helps the agent or sales manager. This toolkit should be exciting for both agents and sales managers to work with but also for the customers. It should evoke a sense of the Candy Inc brand and be memorable. It also should not interfere with the building of personal relationships because that is commonly an agent's biggest value they can bring to their principal.

The final benefits of the design should be that the agent feels more included in the process and the Candy Inc family. Like anyone in a family will support each other they should. The toolkit should manifest in the confidence in agents and sales managers that they can represent or be represented without fear of being undertrained or having a lack of promotional 'ammunition'.

5 IDEATION

This chapter is the first phase of the second diamond, so another phase of divergence, this time with ideation and testing. First is an overview of this phase using a timeline. Then each of the five ideas is detailed in its own section. The sections are in rough order of most to least developed ideas.

5.1 Overview

Through good luck in timing, one of the largest international trade fairs on processing and packaging fell right in the middle of this thesis. Interpack Dusseldorf is renowned in the confectionary industry and was brought up by every interviewee when asked about their best sales channels. During exploration of Interpack many photos were taken, which were categorized and can be seen in appendix C. Candy Inc was also hosting an agent training on the day before the 10-day trade fair opened to prepare their agents with information on the newest innovations.

To make this fuzzy, divergent phase clearer figure 14 below shows the timeline of this phase and the growth of the ideas during this.

The longer the bar the more developed and tested the idea is, details on the ideas and their process follow in the next sections. The ‘agent communication tool’ is explored most because it is the idea that is most foreign to their current way of working. The other ideas are closer to Candy Inc’s current capabilities, so they are offered as recommendations for Candy Inc to further explore.

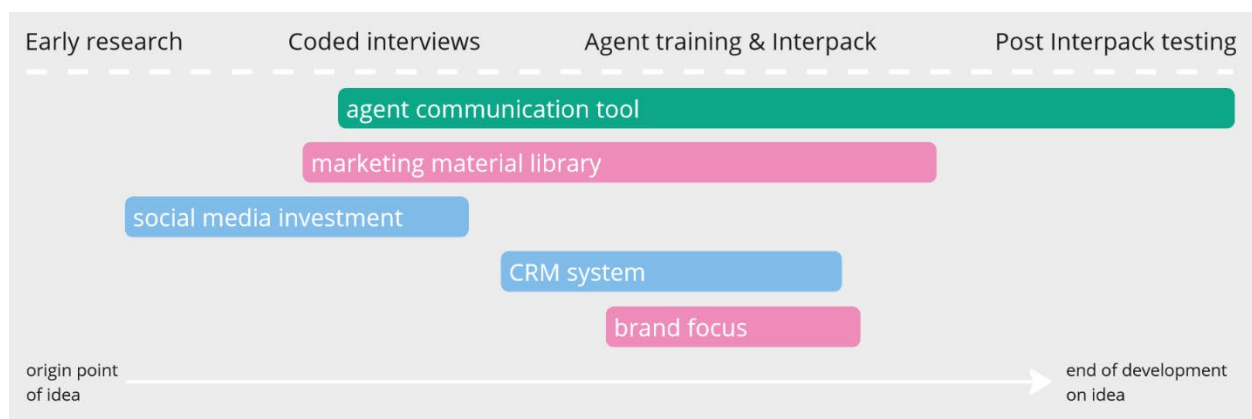


FIGURE 14: AN OVERVIEW OF THE IDEATION PHASE IN A TIMELINE FORM, BARS START AT THE ORIGIN POINT OF THE IDEA AND END WHEN DEVELOPMENT ON THEM ENDED.

5.2 Agent communication tool

Before Interpack started, early ideation was pointing at two design directions that needed testing. The first direction was a system for communication between Candy Inc and their agents. An early version of this idea is shown in figure 15 below. All other early ideation can be found in appendix D.

This would be a mobile application for agents to see what was going on inside the minds of Candy Inc. What topics were being talked and thought about, what things are sales managers at Candy Inc curious about. In this form it was a one-way street of updates from Candy Inc to their agents.

At the agent training before Interpack, through observation and conversation, it became clear that this idea lacked on several fronts. First, communication between agents was key. At the agent training, time was made for questions for Candy Inc's sales managers but also for

conversation between agents. A moment to get to know each other but also an opportunity to exchange tips and tricks. The agents working for Candy Inc do not compete, they each have their own region they work in.

Secondly, the communication in the idea was too one-sided. The agents are an extended part of the marketing team, even though they are employed separately and work on a commission base. They still replace the need for a sales office in a region. Keeping in contact with this team of agents that is so spread out can be a challenge, and quite time-consuming.

This is also why Candy Inc was ready to invest time and resources into the agent training day before Interpack, paying for lodgings and travel, and preparing presentations on innovations. This moment when everybody is in the same place at the

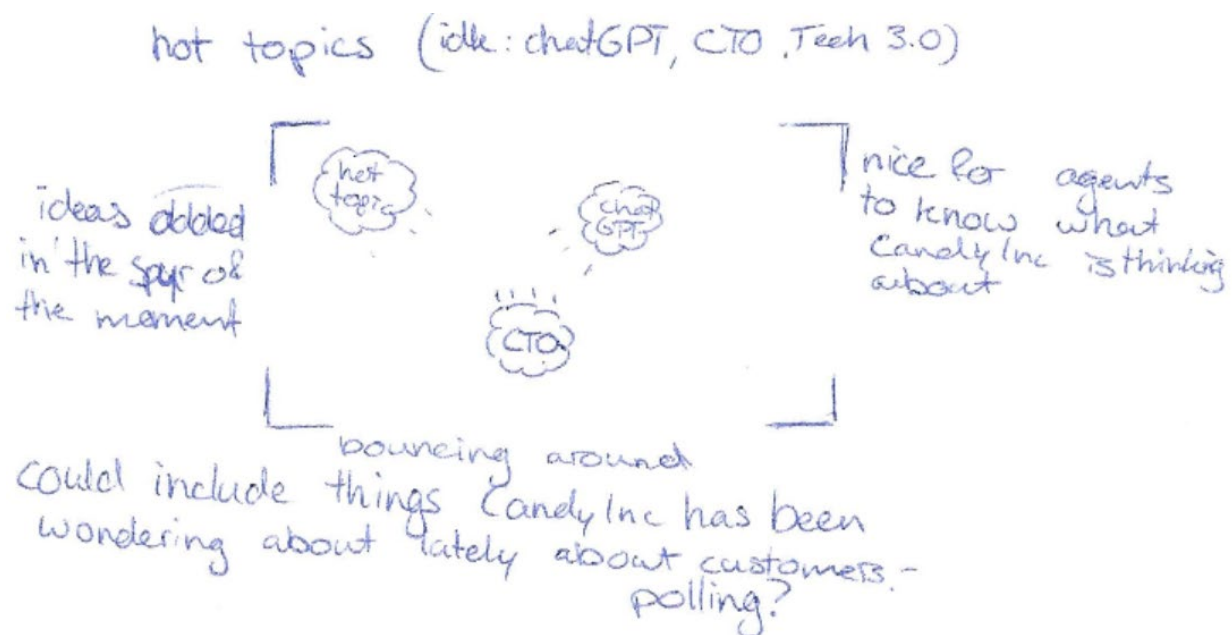


FIGURE 15: EARLY STAGE OF THE AGENT COMMUNICATION TOOL IDEA.

same time does not come often and should be used to convey as much information as possible. But other principals of these agents must be thinking about the same thing. Leading to an agent being faced with the choice between attending multiple of their principal's training days. Therefore it is risky to rely on this day before Interpack for information to be spread to all Candy Inc's agents.

The current workflow of emails only replaces the bare relaying of information through newsletters or presentation slides but does not facilitate more lighthearted Q&A or mingling between agents.

An easy-to-use communication system that provides a space for important announcements but also more casual sparring between Candy Inc and agents. Successful implementation will lead to agents feeling closer to Candy Inc and feeling better prepared. It is always easier to talk about something or someone you know intimately.

Instead of one big messy chat room the system would be split based on topics as shown to the right in figure 16. If Candy Inc introduces a new line manufactured with CTO, they could announce that in the system and create a new set of 'channels' to talk in. A general channel for discussion on the innovation and then sub-channels on (e.g.): pricing, promotion and technical details. Each of these sub-channels could be hosted by one of Candy Inc's experts on that topic. So, agents can easily get specific questions answered in those sub-channels and know who the resident expert is.

5.2.1 Testing in Slack

This idea was put to the test by setting up a server for Candy Inc in Slack (2023) with channels that are populated with example images and announcements. A screenshot of the slack server can be found in confidential appendix A. Then the agents from earlier interviews were invited to join to look around and provide feedback based on their experience.

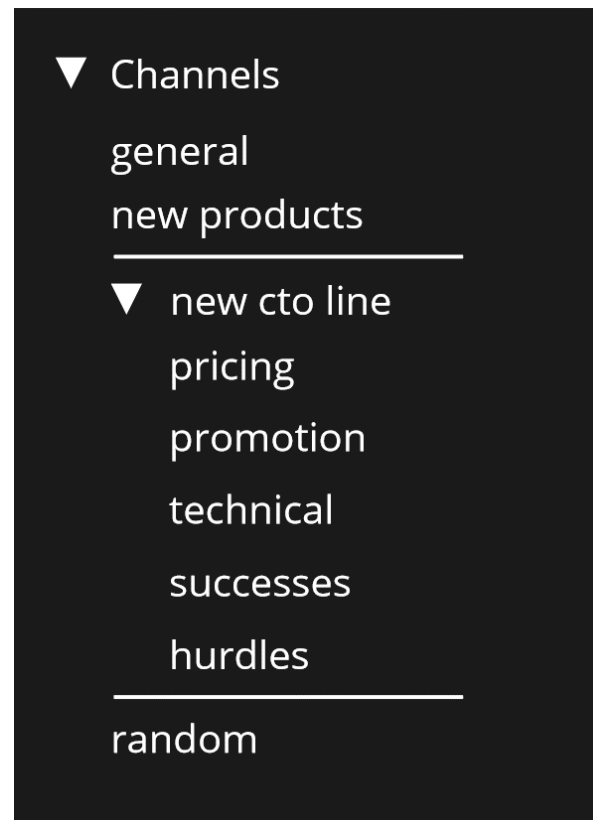


FIGURE 16: AN EXAMPLE OF A CHANNEL CATEGORIZATION.

Slack was chosen as the platform for this test and recommendation for Candy Inc because it is among the most popular collaboration apps available. Slack's core features are free to use with payment only necessary for more in-depth channel customization like categories. When compared to Discord, Slack's main competitor, Slack is more professional and aimed at workplace collaboration. Where Discord leans more towards video games. This distinction is subtle though and both platforms are fully capable of fulfilling the communication tool role for Candy Inc. Discord does have the edge in features like voice-chat channels and video calls and cheaper pricing.

Slack was met with hesitation due to unfamiliarity with communication tools like these. An argument was made that there are already too many communication tools to keep track of like emails, WhatsApp and calls. On the other hand, there was a suggestion to add channels for agents to share their success stories but also hurdles they faced (as are also added in figure 16).

Adding a new communication tool on top of what agents use currently would be the biggest hurdle to its adoption. If Candy Inc is to adopt this tool, they should aim for it to replace one or more current tools. Because Slack can replace emails, WhatsApp and can also incorporate a library of images and videos as the next section will explain. Thus, concentrating communication in one place and making it more organized.

5.3 Marketing material library

The second hypothesis that needed testing stems from insights from the earlier interviews. Which is that different people at a customer company focus on different things in the marketing material from Candy Inc. An example of this is shown in figure 17 below.

This would be based on their role or area of expertise, for example someone from the service department of a customer would be most interested in the quality of Candy Inc's machines or their maintenance-friendliness. While a manager might be more interested in the end-product, the candy, and the people they will be selling that candy to. Pretty products and happy faces could speak most to this type of person.

5.3.1 Testing at Interpack

To test this hypothesis at Interpack three collages were prepared, each representing a different type of marketing material. The full collages can be found in confidential appendix B. One collage was comprised of happy people and delicious-looking candy. Another was of process diagrams, machines in operation and productivity software. The third collage was of the machines themselves, the quality of the material and assembly, and the skill of the craftsman that makes it. These collages would be shown to visitors at Interpack after which they would be asked which appealed to them most and what background they have.

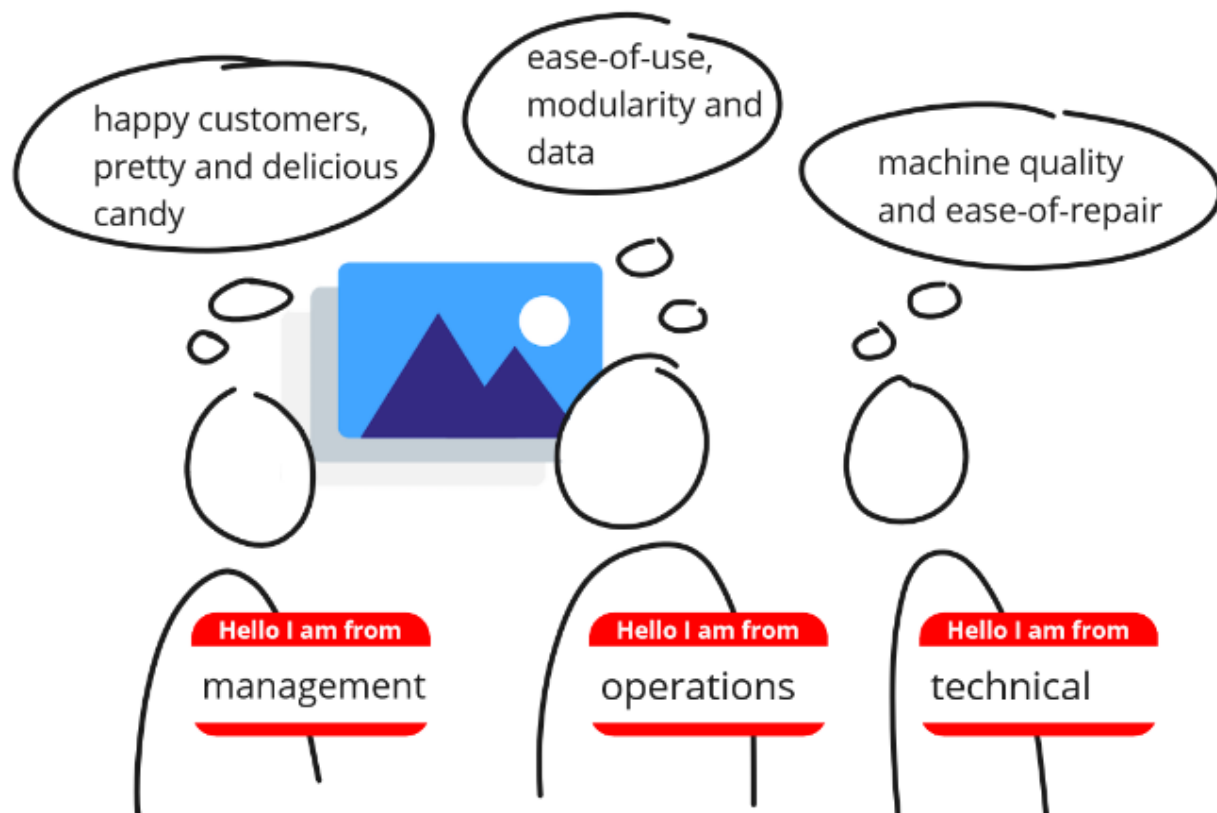


FIGURE 17: EXAMPLE OF DIFFERENT PROFESSIONS FOCUSING ON DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF MARKETING MATERIAL, BLUE VECTOR FROM STANLEY, P. (2023).

This plan for testing was more difficult than expected for a few reasons. First, everyone is extremely busy at Interpack. Both customers and salespeople at the booths were constantly in conversation or rushing to meet or receive someone. When a conversation could be started it could often not last long because it would mean shirking work or losing time. Besides this conversation often ended abruptly upon mention that this is a student project into marketing strategy. Presumably either due to the interviewee feeling out of their depth on this topic or if they were an expert, they felt they could not share their opinions with someone working for a possible competitor.

Even with those difficulties it quickly became apparent that the hypothesis was flawed. Putting people in boxes as clearly defined as 'only candy and happy faces' does not work well. There is a need for at least a little bit of all parts. A booth at Interpack showing just candies comes off as suspicious. A customer will ask themselves: 'Can they actually produce quality machines? Why aren't they showing those?'. The other way around as well, if only machines are shown customers will wonder what the candies look like. The 'split' of marketing material perfect for a customer is different per individual and cannot be prepared as a few different flyers. This is where the experience of the sales manager or agent comes in, who will learn what the customer wants while in conversation and engage them on that topic.

5.3.2 The library joined with the communication tool

As one of the interviewees called it so aptly, an agent needs to be supplied with ammunition for them to be effective. By ammunition they mean any kind of marketing material: samples, flyers, videos, websites, models or pitches. An innovation to talk about gives an agent a new opening for a conversation with an (existing) customer. Creating the marketing material and finding the right mix of machine and candy to promote is hard, especially when the customers that will see it differ wildly in background and interest.

An organized library of marketing material, that agents can easily access and make their own blend with, could ease this. Because agents are the experts at what the customer opposite the table to them wants to see. Candy Inc would provide the ingredients and agents could make the recipe. A cost-effective way to do this is shown below in figure 18. This shows a library of marketing material sorted by subject like 'machines', 'candy' and 'process'. This library is also hosted on the same platform as the earlier communication system, for ease of access and preventing a bloat of systems.

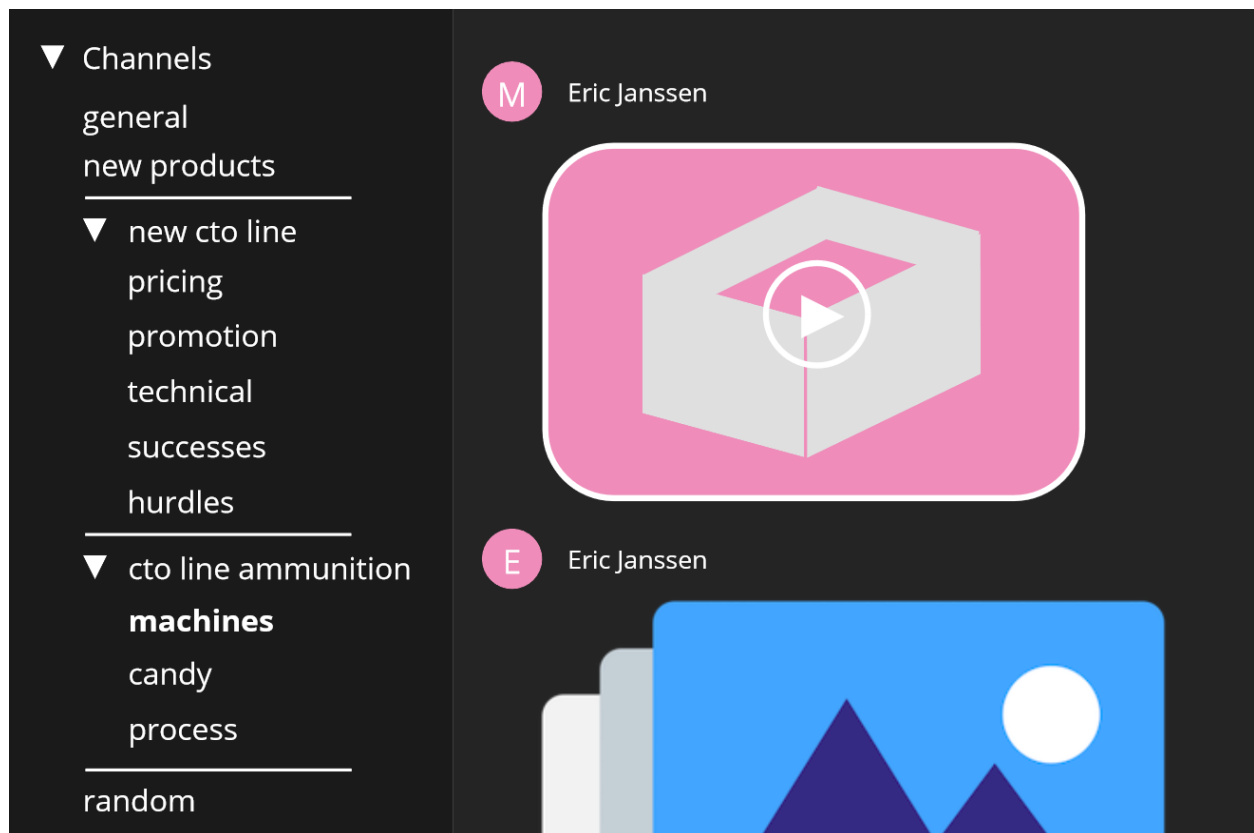


FIGURE 18: AN EXAMPLE OF AN ORGANIZED LIBRARY OF MARKETING MATERIAL IMPLEMENTED DIRECTLY IN THE COMMUNICATION TOOL, BLUE VECTOR FROM STANLEY, P. (2023).

5.4 Social media investment and targeting

Social media is not a new trend but within the confectionary industry its usage is lagging far behind the business-to-consumer (B2C) markets. The number of people reached with a post will be lower than that of a B2C company's post, but the same principles apply. People are constantly online and just a little bit of brand awareness goes a long way.

LinkedIn will be the obvious choice for an expansion of marketing. This platform is already specified to a business-oriented userbase. Besides this, LinkedIn also has extensive features allowing advertisements to reach specific audiences. Candy Inc could make an advert tailored to a certain job description and then use LinkedIn's targeted advertising to specify that it will be shown only to people who work those jobs.

Youtube could also be an option for Candy Inc. Primarily used to host videos for agents and sales managers to have easy access to on-the-go.

5.5 A Customer Relationship Management system

As mentioned by an internal interviewee, Configure-to-order will make the biggest impact when it is implemented throughout Candy Inc's entire process. Sales managers could build up a machine on the spot while in a meeting with a customer. The parts selected during this meeting could be immediately checked for stock and prepared for testing. The parts that are not in stock can be put on the list for production.

An enterprise resource planning (ERP) system can give Candy Inc a clear overview of anything from finance, human resources, manufacturing, supply chain, procurements, customer relationship management (CRM) and more. Implementing an ERP system from front to back of the chain takes time, money and flexibility from the employees. But for maximum usage of CTO, it is necessary to make accurate predictions on orders and stock.

In modern ERP systems a tool for CRM is often included, this customer relationship management tool can help Candy Inc organize all their marketing, sales and customer service interactions. A tool like this would provide great clarity when doing businesses across different continents, through a host of sales managers and agents and to various companies and representatives.

5.6 Brand focus

This recommendation is not based on the interviews or coding but is an observation from working on this thesis and from seeing other companies at Interpack. The current way Candy Inc is promoting two separate brands can be confusing. At Interpack it looked like two different companies were sharing a stand. Even as a student working

on a project for Candy Inc it is sometimes difficult to draw a line for what brand name something would fall under.

It is the designer's opinion that choosing a single name and logo to brand everything under could clear up a lot of confusion and lead to a stronger position in the market.

This chapter details the divergence phase of the second diamond. Five ideas are detailed and recommended to Candy Inc. The first of the two most important ideas being a communication tool for the agents and sales managers. This tool will help the agents connect to the Candy Inc family and other agents and share experiences. The second idea is for Candy Inc to organize its breadth of marketing material into a library sorted by topic for easy access by agents. The next chapter will explain the recommended plan for implementation by using a roadmap.

6 IMPLEMENTATION

To summarize the ideas from the previous chapter but also make them presentable to an audience not familiar with this report a roadmap was made. This roadmap places the recommended ideas on a timeline for implementation in the style of an infographic.

6.1 The roadmap

The implementation strategy for the ideas from the previous chapter has been visualized in an infographic. This infographic is based on the roadmaps in Design Roadmapping (Simonse, L., 2018). The roadmap sets the innovation strategy to a timeline with three horizons. Each horizon spans a year and is meant to give Candy Inc measurable goals within that time. The roadmap can be seen in full on the next page in figure 20.

The roadmap shows a suggested order of implementation of the ideas from the previous chapter. This order is based on the necessary time and resources needed to prepare implementation and on trends in the industry.

The future vision (figure 19 on the right) on the roadmap is intended as an aspiration to work towards by implementing the ideas detailed in the earlier horizons. This future vision is based on the statement as it was formulated after the first diamond in chapter 4.

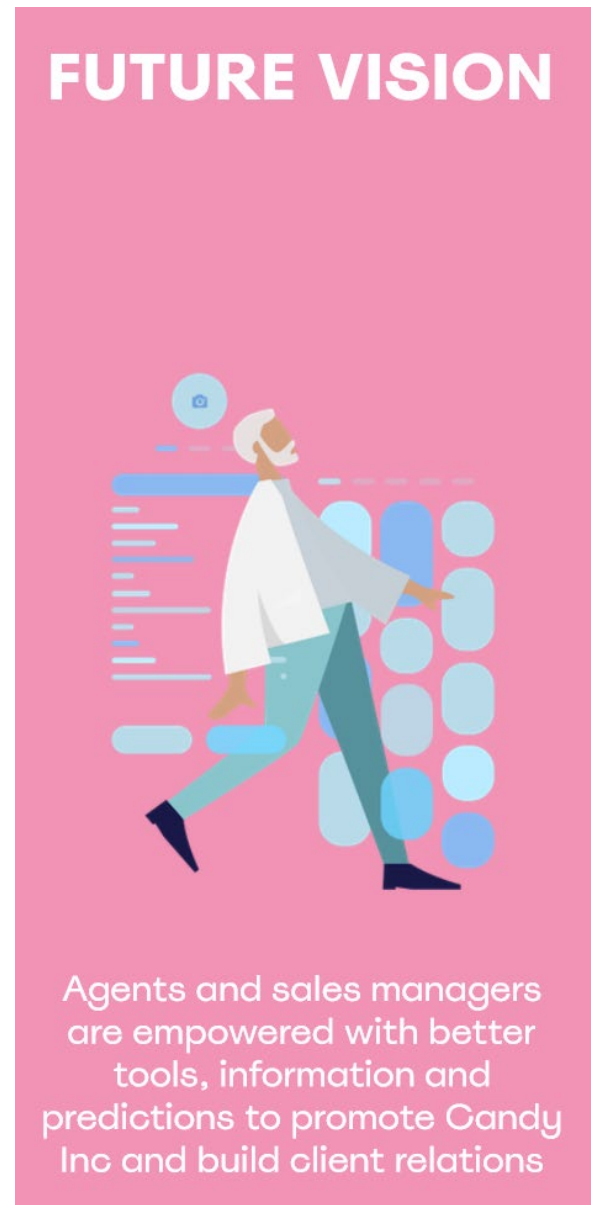
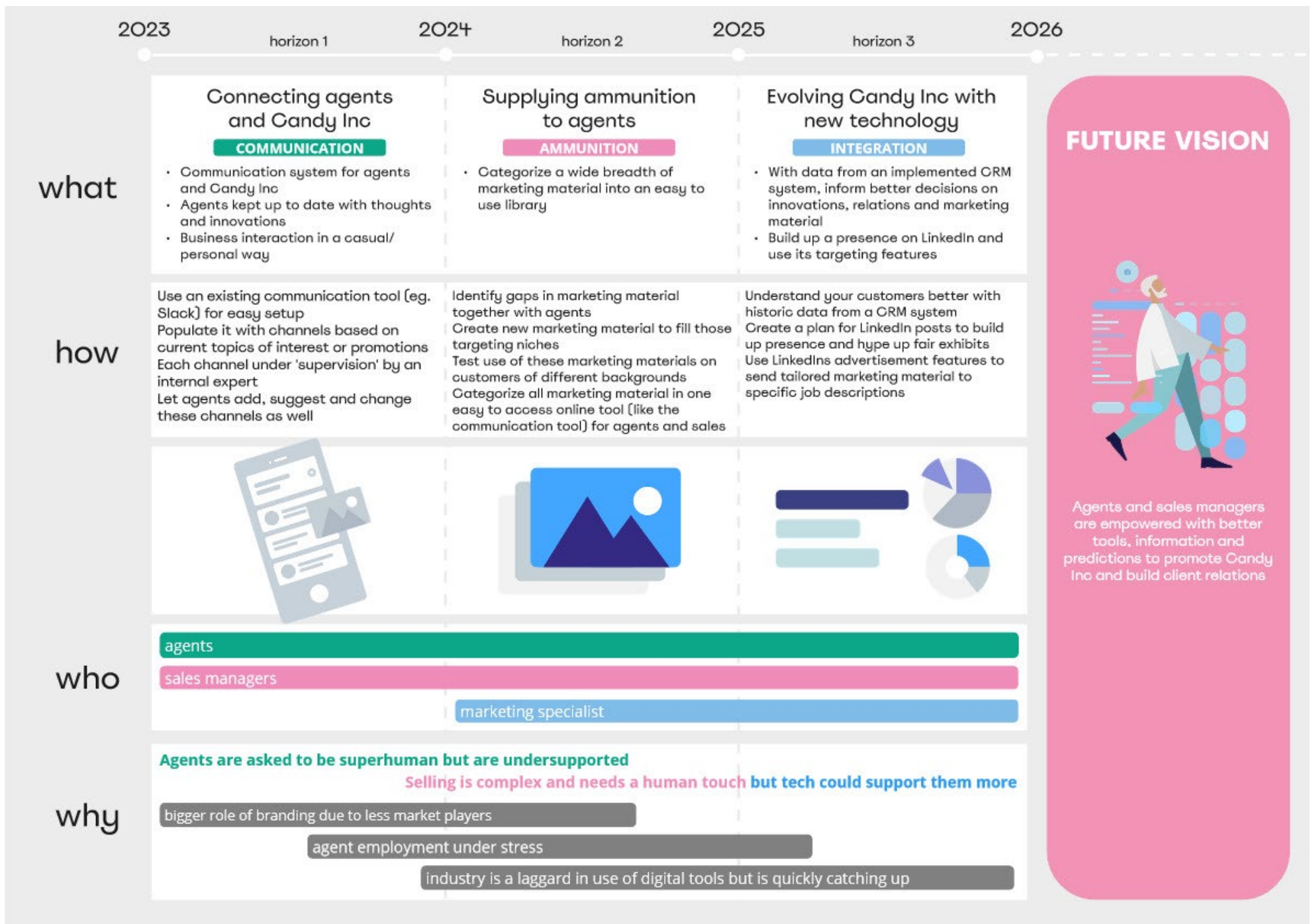


FIGURE 19: THE FUTURE VISION FOR CANDY INC AS PRESENT ON THE ROADMAP, VECTORS FROM STANLEY, P. (2023).



6.2 Horizon 1: Connecting agents and Candy Inc

The first horizon focuses entirely on the implementation of the communication system for Candy Inc and its agents. This is the first step because it's the most important one to come from the research in this thesis but also because it can be the cheapest and quickest to achieve. Using already established communication services like Slack or Discord saves Candy Inc from having to outsource the costly creation of an app.

This does require adoption and participation from agents and sales managers, but this will be to their own benefit and can even be fun.

6.3 Horizon 2: Supplying ammunition to agents

In the second horizon Candy Inc is recommended to categorize a wide breadth of marketing material. Ranging from physical samples and models to digital ones like videos and pictures. The digital marketing material created can be distributed on social media like LinkedIn

and YouTube. All the marketing material created should also be easily accessible to Candy Inc's agents as their ammunition. Candy Inc can facilitate their agents by sorting the marketing material by topic. When an agent has sensed what topic interests their target the most, they can easily find the corresponding marketing material. The most efficient way of hosting this library would be to incorporate it into the communication tool implemented in the previous horizon.

6.4 Horizon 3: Evolving Candy Inc with new technology

The third horizon is about using data from an implemented CRM system to inform decisions on creation of marketing material, innovations and relations. With this data and the categorized marketing material from the previous horizon Candy Inc can now efficiently use LinkedIn's advertisement targeting feature. This lets Candy Inc specify which job description they want to send an advertisement to and tailor the advertisement to that.

In this chapter a roadmap was created to visually summarize the ideas and their recommended implementation strategy. The ideas are spread over three horizons spanning a total of three years. This gives Candy Inc measurable goals and a lofty future vision to strive for. The next chapter will conclude this report and discuss limitations and recommendations for further efforts.

7 CONCLUSION

This final chapter will start with a conclusion, summarizing and wrapping up the project. Then recommendations will be made to Candy Inc for implementation or further development. Finally limitations will be discussed that held the project back in any way.

7.1 Conclusion

The goal of this project is to give Candy Inc a strategic marketing plan that allows them to reach new customers effectively. To reach this goal a qualitative interview-based research was set up and executed. To draw grounded conclusions a selection of interviews was fully transcribed and coded according to the grounded theory method. Then a guiding statement was formulated for the ideation process.

For **their agents and sales managers, Candy Inc** offers a (digital) promotional toolkit that is exciting, deepens customer relationships and gives **their agents** the confidence that they are a core part of the Candy Inc family and have the support to excel.

Ideation brought five ideas, some of which were tested at Interpack or with agents. To converge from these five ideas a roadmap was created to give Candy Inc a concise guide to follow for implementation. The implementation of this combination of ideas integrates agents with Candy Inc and helps agents and sales managers market to customers without interfering with the personal relationship-building that is essential to their sales process. This builds upon what makes agents and sales managers good at their jobs.

Implementing the ideas can also be done at virtually no cost to Candy Inc. A communication platform like Slack or Discord provides the tools Candy Inc needs for both communication and organization of marketing material for no (or negligible) cost.

7.2 Recommendations

The first recommendation is for adoption of the communication tool. A hurdle is that agents and sales managers are taking on another communication tool on top of their current tools. Candy Inc should aim to consolidate as much of their communication onto this one platform for the adoption to be successful. By moving communication that would currently be done through email or WhatsApp to the tool this can even lighten the load on agents and sales managers. Incorporating the library of marketing material on this communication tool would make it an even stronger central hub.

Secondly, Candy Inc is recommended to test the effectiveness of this communication platform and the engagement on it. Do agents feel more of a part of the Candy Inc family by using it? Are the agents performing better with easier access to marketing material and resources?

Finally, with the testing done on the implemented ideas it is recommended to iterate on these solutions. These existing communication platforms like Slack and Discord can be heavily customized. But if more features are needed a built-to-purpose app or switch to a newer platform could be better. Also, the categorization of marketing material should be refined by repeated use and feedback.

7.3 Limitations

There are several limitations that should be considered for this project, these will be described here.

First, due to the different countries the agents and strategic partners hailed from these interviews were done through video calls. This is fantastic for the opportunity it gave to have the interviews at all. But video calls come with connection problems, loss of audio quality and a greater barrier to emotional connection during conversation.

Another limitation to the research is due to the qualitative nature of it. There are no numerically measurable supporting arguments to claims made in this report. The grounded theory method is intended to analyze qualitative interviews in a scientific way, but it still leaves more room for the designer's bias and storytelling than quantitative methods.

The research is also limited because of the small sample size. Six in-depth interviews, totaling 7 hours and 15 minutes, were transcribed and coded for this research. Together with the in-depth interviews that were not transcribed, and many conversations held, this still does not aptly represent the breadth of experiences in this field. The findings from the research cannot serve to make scientific claims in this field but are meant to provide provoking starting points for ideation and design.

A limitation was also caused by the designer's unfamiliarity with the market analyzed in this project. To get to the information stored in the experienced people in this market the choice fell on

qualitative interviews. But this means that most information used in this report comes from naturally opinionated individuals.

Finally, the scope of the project was limited by the set deadline of twenty weeks. This decreased the number of possible interviews and time spent on ideation. Also because of the timing of Interpack it was deemed wise to round off the research phase well before then and start ideation so there would be testable ideas by the time Interpack started.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

In this final chapter of my master thesis, I will reflect on my process and learning throughout this project.

Process

My project began when the project brief was signed and handed in. This brief contained a loose Gantt chart that I continued to use as my global planning for the rest of the project. The first 10 weeks of work were planned for the research phase: doing interviews, transcribing and coding.

At the midterm my supervisors and I were looking forward to Interpack which would be 4 weeks from the midterm. Together we agreed that having an idea to show there would be of great benefit to my project. However, my research was 1 to 2 weeks behind schedule, so this had to be cut shorter.

There were a couple reasons I was behind my planning during this phase that I would like to reflect on. Firstly, I underestimated the lead time necessary to plan these interviews. It took quite a long time to get into contact with the right people and then it took longer to plan a date when they were available for an interview.

This combined with my lack of initiative at the time to push for the next round of interviews while the previous round was in the works. That layering of efforts could have saved weeks in this process. But at the time I preferred to finish the previous round to think of the best targets for the next one and discuss it with my supervisors.

Learning goals

In the design brief, I wrote down 5 learning goals to strive for. The first is becoming more comfortable with the methodology from the course Brand and Product Commercialization by Berghuis, G.H, Bakker-Wu, S. (2021). I used less of this the methods taught in this course than I had hoped but that is also because the focus of my deliverable shifted away from brand strategy. I am happy with the familiarity I have gained with other methodologies like double diamond, grounded theory method and roadmapping.

Second was getting experience working for or at a larger company. While Candy Inc is not a huge multinational it was a great experience talking with them, their agents and their partners. Both in interviews and more casual conversation I have learned a lot about the culture in companies like these.

My third goal was for this to be a proving ground for what I learned at Strategic Value of Design. Because Candy Inc is not familiar with the methodologies Strategic designers use it can be a hurdle to overcome. I was relieved at how open everyone was to my questions. However, there were moments where I could feel the other person having trouble understanding what I was aiming to do and that sometimes felt like they could not take it seriously. This was especially hard at the start when I still had little to show for my work. Next time I need to spend time on memorizing a clear and concise pitch for what I studied and what I am working on as an introduction for those yet unfamiliar.

I also had a goal to devise a method of planning that works for me and stick to it. But with a loose planning and coaching about every two weeks I had moments of intense crunch. Caused by procrastinating on work and then finishing it briefly before deadlines. This is a recurring problem in my solo projects. Team expectations put healthy pressure on me to finish work earlier. But I still need to work on being a better solo time manager and smoothing my work hours over more days.

As my final goal I wrote that I wanted to hone my reporting and that I tend to overthink and write too little. Throughout the project I used Miro (Miro.com, 2023) to have all my work in one place. Everything from pictures to sources to coach meeting notes. In Miro I was also able to put down all my thoughts in post-its. This really helped make something tangible from what would otherwise be stuck in my head. But the downside of Miro is that it is still hard to make the translation to a full report in a text editor. Having pictures and post-its does not make a logical or concise story in text. Next project I could think of my intended document structure earlier and start organizing my work in Miro according to that. Then writing parts next to these Miro chapters as I go.

All in all, I am happy with what I delivered and all the experiences I have had throughout the project. The topic I had for the project was fun and proved to be more interesting at every new phase.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview guides

Interview guide for agents



Interview guide for sales managers (internal or external strategic partners)

4C's

Customer: What are your most important sales channels?
Why are these sales channels most important?
Can you measure the efficiency of these channels?
(In what way do you?)
Has that changed over the years? Do you predict a change happening?
How would you describe your position in the market?
Do you target specific areas of the market? How do you put focus on those?
Do you have a method for explaining and representing your products to customers?

Competitor: How do you coordinate complete production lines with strategic partners?

Company: Does your company focus more on marketing or R&D? Why is the focus on that one?

Context: Do you feel there's room to grow within your market? Which direction would you try to grow in?
Are you anticipating any opportunities within the company or market?
Are you anticipating any threats?

Trade Shows
Exhibitions
(Interpak,
Gulffoods)

expert
magazines

flexible
lines

have I
forgotten
to ask
something?

if I may return for
an interview/test,
how far ahead
would you want
to plan it?

contact with
agents:
trainings,
toolkits

confidence
to send for
first pitch
alone

How do you
support
your agents?

What could
best help
agents
perform
better?

10 min
pauze

are you
looking at
different
markets?
which ones?

Linkedin
powerful
tool

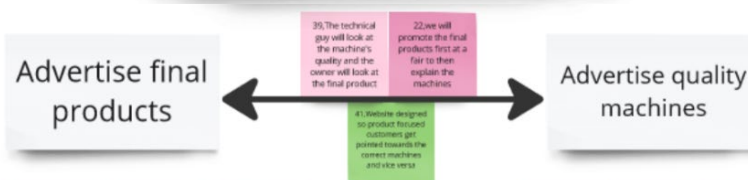
vimeo/youtube

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Quality vs Price



Marketing to different people in the same company



More service to stay in business



Flexibility is everything



Bigger companies, smaller markets

- 7. Decision power at large companies lies with procurement so price is more important than ever
- 4. Decisions are taking longer because companies are bigger
- 34. With bigger companies the amount of projects shrink but the size of projects grows
- 32. Smaller companies are easier to work with because you can speak directly to the decision makers
- 2. Of customer relations 40% are new customers to us
- 5. The bigger companies are focusing more on price than quality now
- 6. We will try to compete in price as long as strategically viable
- 8. Smaller companies will look at longer term return on investments
- 24. There are only so many customers per country, 6 in NL for example
- 25. Of the customers in a country we'll already know 80% and 20% are upcoming
- 52. Even America probably only has 30 to 40 companies that we could mean something for

There will be less agents in the future

- 49. Agents are important to have but are not a growing market with a difficult entry
- 40. An agent doesn't have to represent manufacturers and asks to represent them, it is normally the other way around (and thus will need an established network from earlier careers)
- 50. For a market to be viable for agents orders need to be of sufficient size to be able to pay fees for a middleman on commission
- 27. Amount of agents in a market correlates directly to the amount of manufacturers in that market
- 31. A risk for an agent is a principal getting bought over but that parent company already having representation
- 33. When a principal gets eaten up and you no longer represent them it's very hard to replace that niche in your portfolio
- 35. In 20 years agents could be gone, the middleman has been replaced by peer-to-peer services in lots of other industries
- 28. Companies get merged and bought into bigger companies with own sales offices which don't use agents

Catch 22: An agent needs a network to start

- 8. Became agent with a pre-existing network by coming from the manufacturer side
- 45. Starting fresh as an agent is very difficult, it needs years of building up contacts, trust and understanding. The margins have also become thinner over the last decades. The catch is also that they need to find a manufacturer that isn't represented yet
- 3. Customers can also add to an agent's principals by introducing certain manufacturers

Bigger fish are changing the market

Local trade fairs
are not relevant

5, Local trade fairs can be useful to know about the competition but it's really outside our price range

4, Interpak gets people from all over the world sometimes in teams of 100

3, At less important trade fairs agents can have a stand representing multiple principals, each principal paying for their part

9, we don't try to compete with the local budget manufacturers

23, we are not at more local trade fairs because we're not aiming at those small businesses

Traditional
communication
will be best?

Agency changes,
yet remains the
same

Trade fairs are
booming (post
covid)

8, Trade fairs are very important for creating interest and contacting customers

9, Post covid trade fairs have been extra packed

11, Trade fairs are really efficient moments to speak to lots of people without travel

27, At the trade fair there might be customers that were happy with competitors products that could pay us a visit because of our new products

36, At a trade fair everyone can see your new development, competitors too

37, To prevent copying you should ask how much of the machine you want to show at a trade fair

46, An agent will always be at the big exhibitions in their region, it's essential for representation and networking

39, Will
always visit
the major
trade fairs

38, 25 years ago an agent would have to just open the big yellow book and call up people, check in

33, Since email the agent business has not been impacted much by the internet

34, Websites make it easy to browse but for actual offers agents are still necessary

35, Agents being skipped by website contact is infrequent, 4 times a year maybe

38, Teams meetings are for clarifying details, but new projects are gotten through visits and more casual conversation

36, Websites don't circumvent agents because the industry does not have impulse buyers

28, Videoconferencing is perfect for finishing up details

13, The internet can't replace personal contact for real detail

33, Technology like social media shall always support the agent, not circumvent them

10, Teams is best for prep and details but personal contact remains important

14, Even if a customer finds us by website we will call in an agent to help the process further

LinkedIn, what's that?

13, To our generation it's a no brainer to use digital tools but our company is currently doing nothing there

32, we barely has a LinkedIn presence but has invested a bit

22, In 2 and a half years only a single inquiry came over LinkedIn

40, Social media is not necessary, I already know my customers and otherwise they'll be caught by customer or principal relations

30, Digital posts to make customers realize there's a new manufacturer in the market and consider that as an option

31, Most promotion is done through newsletter emails to existing customers

28, Underdog in snack industry, digital posts could give a huge boost there

12, LinkedIn posts will be about a development or a finished production line

No leadership on digital advertising (yet)

14, Only digital posts will be an article announcing an exhibition visit

15, We don't have a real marketing manager for digital ads

16, There is no guideline for how we present ourselves in the market digital or otherwise

25, Once the sales team started thinking about digital posts there were suddenly 40 ideas for topics

16, we wants to pick up pace again with more news and information for customers, to every 2 months

26, Digital posts about trade fairs, what you are showing and new products are a good place to start

23, Even (older) people at decision making levels all carry a phone and are always using it

24, We have made a plan for the next year to post every two weeks (on LinkedIn)

A tech product but not a tech (savvy) market

In the stone age

20, We (manufacturers) are living in the stone age

53, Starting at a company like this feels like going back to the 1950s-70s

69, We should come out of the stone age, skip medieval and jump directly into modern times

12, We have cut down on advertising in expert magazines a lot

3, Not satisfied with current set up of sales channels

15, A tech product but not a tech market, the end product doesn't change just the capacities/speed of production

62, We were happy with our success but now we want more growth, that means we should change something

2, Minority sales channel is advertising in expert magazines

Slow innovation

46, There's no grip on marketing and R&D split

47, For our new market we have dedicated R&D but internally motivated, try something new that may be promotable to customers

48, For 90% of our business we do not have dedicated R&D, more like spontaneous based on customer wishes

49, Spontaneous R&D is good for direct applicability but not very useful for marketing purposes

50, New developments in machines come mostly through orders where it was developed on request

68, This market is not open to change, current methods are good enough

52, Should adopt a more American mentality to make decisions quickly and maybe fail or serve instead of getting ideas out perfect

46, There's always room to grown through innovation, new end products

29, R&D, marketing and the supplier need to work closely together for best results

30, R&D often gets started on something because a competitor is doing it

51, Threat is that due to wanting perfection on products we're too slow to come out with innovations

17, Need to be careful with sharing developments on social media or it will be copied

35, In B2B marketing and R&D is harder to compare, we can't enter a market for a couple months to try it out

34, New developments are tested in the lab at a smaller scale to then translate to a full line

Agents could add value as project managers

[illegible]

Agents should become an expert on their principal

13. Expertise of the principal's products is essential for an agent	14. Better informed agents ask better questions, make better offers	20. Agent's knowledge of the manufacturer is most important for the first agents from the customer	16. The agent never sells the stock, but he counts the customer's order and will go about selling it
15. An informant must know agents have enough knowledge to do the first job as agent	22. Most agents will do first meetings without any preparation	14. Best agents know their preparation and/or strengths and weaknesses	17. An agent will gauge how much the customer wants to produce and sell and induces the manufacturer's interest
6. Get the second meeting by immediately know how to offer sales, by researching what the customer would need beforehand	27. Transparency as an agent means fully committing to representing your principal, not yourself	28. An agent should strive to 'become' the principal they represent in vision, language and values	

Strategic partnerships
and agent's principals
strengthen each other

1. Agents represent companies within a same or field that could be needed in the same order	2. Agents will float around and find customers to whom they might want to sell	3. Agents will lead potential customers to their principal's booth at trade shows to spark connections	4. Sales representatives will inform each other about projects they could hook in on	5. If a manufacturer gets a project that has specificity in another niche or another region, they will help their strategic partner to help
21. A good agent will use every meeting to get into their mailing or e-mailing (if they're able)	31. Buyer agencies meet frequently to keep up on the market, but they have no formal meeting or set agenda	41. g Agencies with more principals can dominate the market, but without clients	51. Keep your strategic clients close so they'll come back to you with orders	61. A good agent will have a portfolio of other manufacturers that complement yours
7. Agents will usually get new projects through referrals by current principals	8. Agents complete orders by either looking for connections to manufacturers for earlier or later parts of the total line	9. Agents have their numbers at all times and so a customer from their region could reach out to them if called in	41. If an agent approaches you for work the first check is what other manufacturers they represent	45. The bigger an agency, the better they are at being the single point of contact for the customer
		42. Agents and manufacturer websites don't compete, they strengthen each other by linking through		

A good agent
can bridge
cultures

39. Agents is difficult because of import taxes and needing a very personal relationship to get goods	42. Some countries have higher customs and have a 3 star level to offer on to accommodate that	5. Agents know markets and customs you don't	18. An agent doesn't make business deal necessarily, only smoother
31. Agents don't translate language but customs	32. Agents prevent miscommunication and hurt feelings	13. Agents are crucial for shipping and importers because offer their knowledge on local laws, rules and bureaucracy	15. Agents relay questions between customer and manufacturer
8. Agents have an easier time to remain in contact because they speak the language	40. The agent will know how much of a barrier price the customer wants so we can adjust	5. Agents help bridge timezones and prevent too frequent travel	

A good agent
should....

A good agent
should be personal
with the customer

1. 70% of sales is having the customers trust	3. Agents endures because we get the process and the customer grows it on their own	11. Know customer, do not get mentioned while the agent is working for casual coffee	12. Universal agent - customer relationship is the key to success, you must build up 10 to 20 personal customer contacts to make begin the process	23. If an agent provides to the customer, he will not be in the market for a long time. About 90% of agents are not working to personal relationships to succeed
6. Contact with the customer for 1 person can lead to the next by asking the right questions.	3. Agents remain involved, also after delivery	14. Agent agent is always with the client, don't forget you go with questions within their principles and customers	14. Good agent will not be in trouble and participate with the day long, make regular calls, and be available, have a real direct connection	14. An agent will keep a contact and get orders from the same client by just finding the right attorneys p.
24. The better agent will be the one with the closer personal relationship, playing in fact to parties and	5. Agents remain in contact after delivery, and then come the 2nd, and 4th order from that customer too	7. After delivery we will leave but the agent will remain in contact	13. Good agents have the right contacts and will be near a major level of contact with them	17. Agents check up on customers after delivery asking if they service or if other help
37. After delivery an agent will pay the customer to make some the customer stays happy	24. Good agent will not close with a customer, but because one order did not go well, the customer likes it well	20. Paying for an agent is paying for relationships with customers	4. Not looking for quick sales but for long, customer and by building slowly, making a customer and helping them to reach their goals	24. Agents will always have a reason for their words to answer they want to work to last

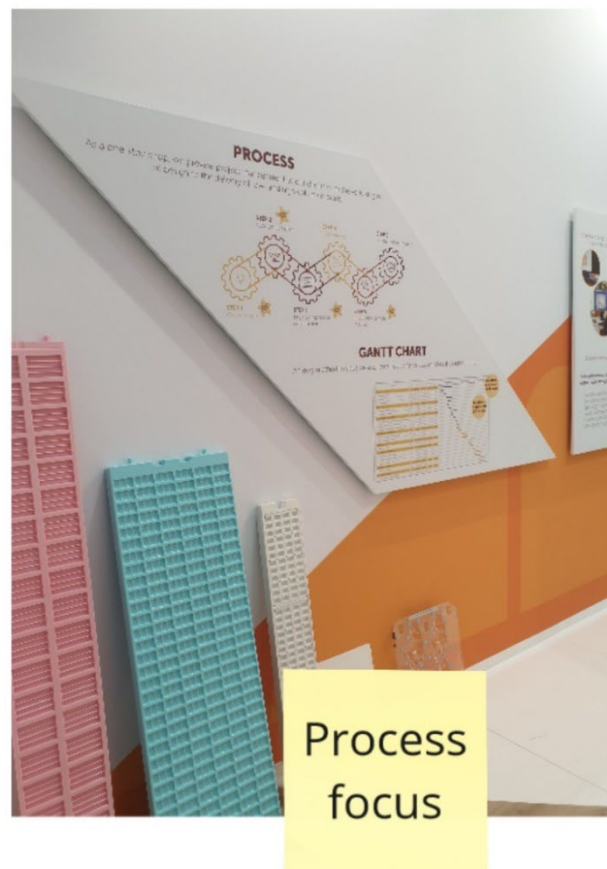
Agents should
feel every tingle
in their web

4. Agents look to search the market for opportunity	5. Forecast search for clients, which agents already being bombard with offers.	6. Make agents will keep track of customers and respond to them. Agents will get offers on order in 20-30 days. In 3-5 days they respond.	7. Finally come to an established agent to make a purchase. Offer customers to make a purchase. They know this agent can help them.
1. Agents reach out and know what's going on	2. Agents predict budgets & plans	3. Agents reach from the agent's customer base regarding on state and developing their all market.	4. A good agent should be good at sales in their region areas. If they don't go your way.

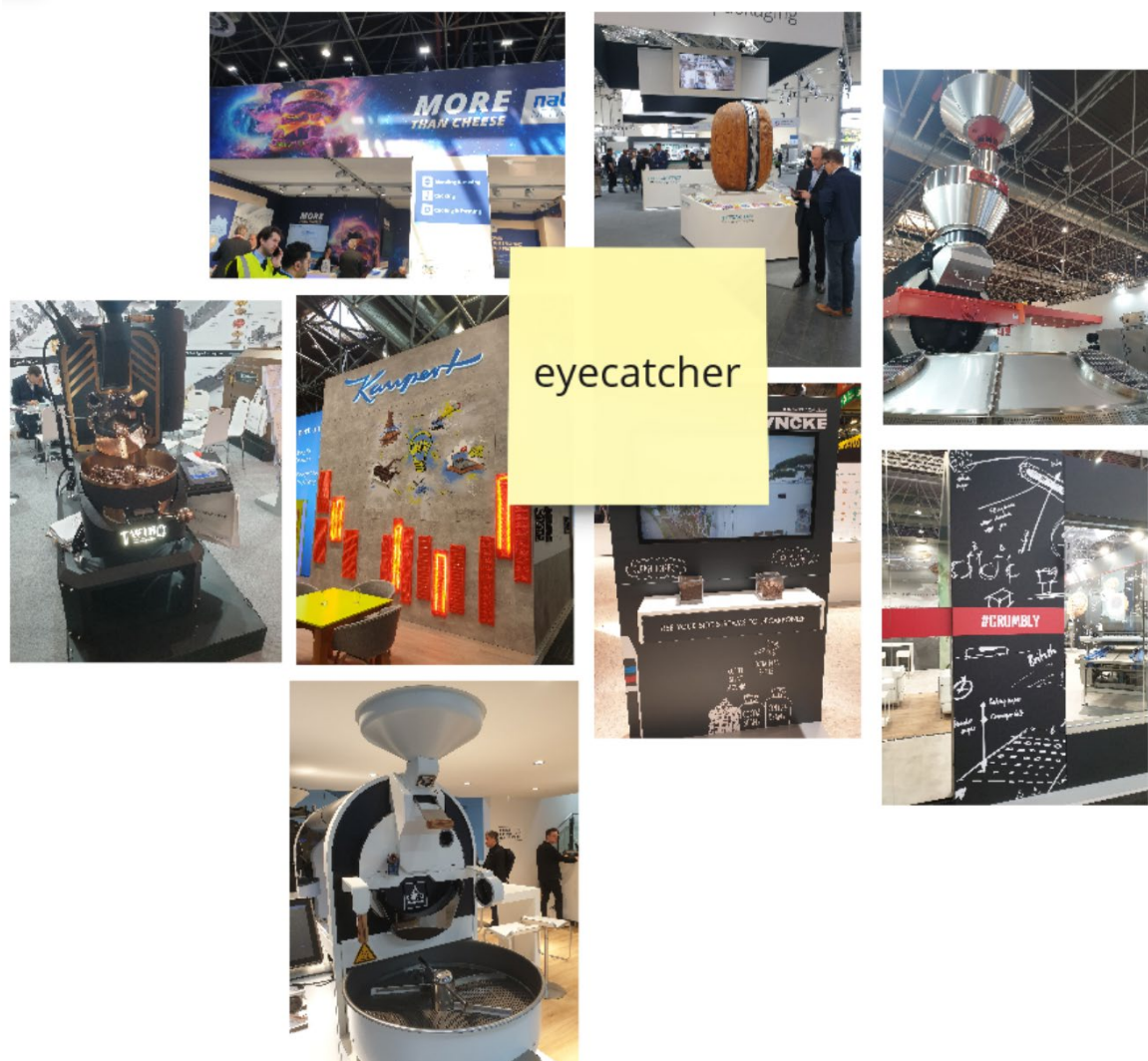
Agents learn
by experience

19. The agent will share product expertise by being part of initial projects	In making matchsticks is the assumption it also has to market an agent. Agents have to know the style and practices of that matchstick.	22. Most agent knowledge comes from earlier project experience	25. No instructions on how an agent should present a product
5. An agent can earn the most out of their clients' requests in the years of operation of the service	23. A negotiator with a weaker agent needs more extra support sometimes to work by over there	15. There is training on agents' knowledge from the old agents of customer visits	4. Use of demand an agent in the region but he needed an extra push to start going to customers together
10. An agent with a knowledge base in a service area provides a training of the agents in the region. They practice the knowledge and then they own the service area with only training from the agent	8. Over the years for being a negotiator is knowledgeable enough to be able to present my principal well	21. In a field experience and the agents to share knowledge from their projects is most important	33. If you lose the order and the agent is not involved in the work, it will not work

Appendix C: photos at Interpack Dusseldorf







measurable agents?

do they have all view getting with customers?
of the market?

how can they relay their performance better to Candy Inc?

a planner / cheat?
some way the agent can trick off clients and show they've made the rounds?

How could an agent achieve mind-reading to competently understand what interests the customer and what they want?

data training?
Question list to determine it

How could agents be better included in company culture?
online boards, chat, hang out (monthly)

For their agents and salesmanagers, Candy Inc offers a (digital) promotional toolkit that is exciting, deepens customer relationships and gives their agents and salesmanagers the confidence that they are a core part of the Candy Inc team and have the support to excel.

- o topics (updated regularly)
- o the pipeline (Candy to-machine or vice-versa interface)
- o promotional material ideas, images by interest
- o interest topic (less sales focused more casual things Candyline would love to discuss about customers maybe)

on-the-go phone app?
spieltheorie? - stelt de agent op gemak? - waar als je app niet wilt gebruiken? (want het is een versnelling)

able to open the app in 'candy interested' or 'machine interested' mode?



het is altijd makkelijker en leuker om over iets te praten waar je veel van af weet

meer sales?

als de agenten zich 'this weekend' zullen ze makkelijker vragen om support

family

2 superclusters
superhuman agents

2 fases, 1 vision?

fase 1

superhuman agents

Nu

2025

2027

2030

human touch tech support

what do agents need, do you know how you support it, replace?



human touch enhanced by tech

lot of can tech added without losing interest to relationship data & CRM incorporation

Now 2025 2027 2030

who?

Agents

Sales managers

how?

Physical first: →

- trainings
- samples
- toolkit

mobile digital second

→

- app left to support
- gallery
- interaction between agent & carry line

cloud third

→

- CRM
- Data, historic to inform relations

SUPERHUMAN AGENTS

personal experience communication

HUMAN TOUCH TECH SUPPORTED

Machines vs carries LinkedIn

Better first impressions

→

Better market entry in medium-term

what?

more time and resources invested in agents focus on physical 'icebreaking' objects

app development (outsourced) marketing specialist social media & digital promotion

evolve with tech 3.0 CRM system with functions to support sales with historic data

TREND #1

TREND #2

TREND #3

Sales theory

Budget? estimates

[€]

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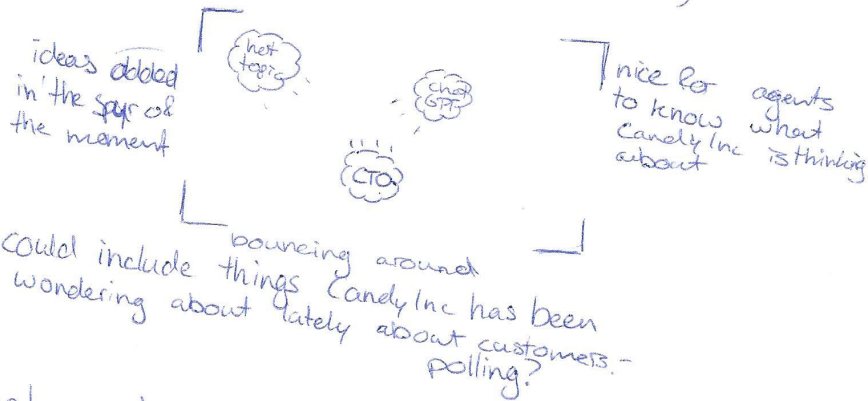
vision
agents integrated into data collection and streamlining to inform relations and market
+
Sales theory

spiekbriefje

functions

⊗ easy topics : new innovations

hot topics (ide: chatGPT, CTO, Tech 3.0)



⊗ promotional material

easy online gallery,

assortment

samples

on phone so you always have it with you.

physical stuff like 3D printed samples of candies or machines?



videos

images

3D prints to order?

⊗ the pipeline

candies

colours

tastes

textures

machines

model 123

model 234

model 543

link throughs

start from the topic the target is interested in and click from there.



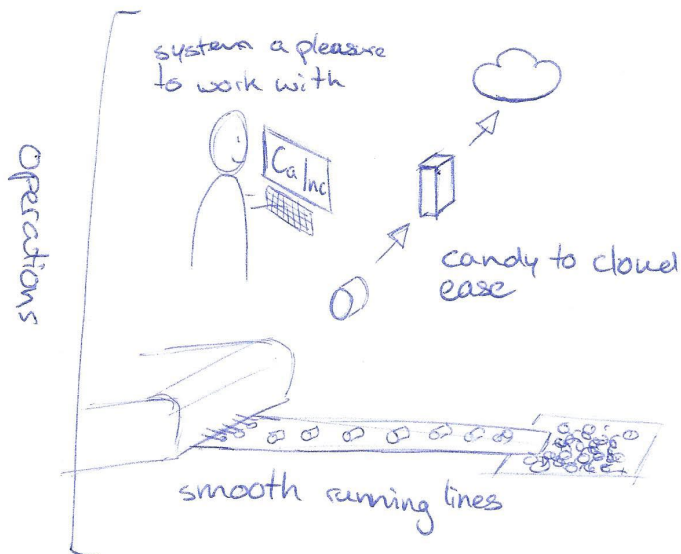
website configurator
Ignes

TWO - FACED Branding

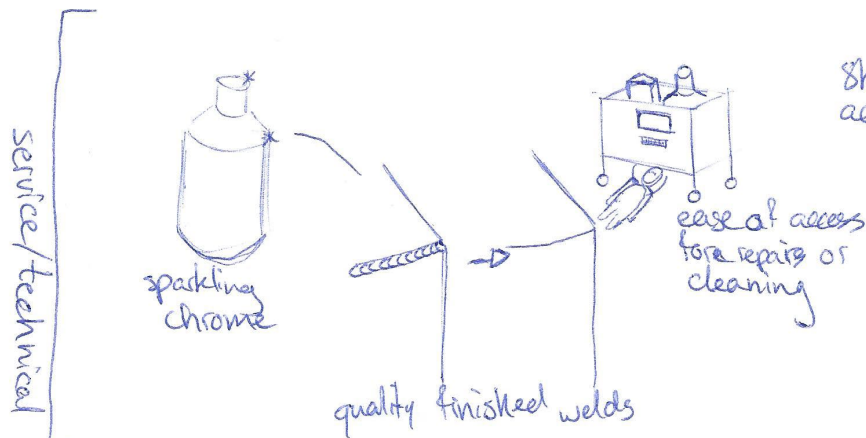
LinkedIn allows companies to target 'layers' of a company by role. So design different marketing material for different people.



happy faces & end products for managers. Their focus is people and the market. Could brand more heavily with company logo.



Show how nice the system is to work with for operations.



Show the quality and ease of access to technical dept.