Organizational Buying Process in the 21st Century

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ORGANIZATIONAL BUYING PROCESS
- IN THE 21ST CENTURY -

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Preface

First, we want to thank our university supervisor Sambit Lenka for continuously given us the support we needed to accomplish a study with high quality. You have given us the guidance to keep up the hard work with contingency, which we hope is reflected throughout the report.

We would also like to thank Luleå University of Technology for the five years of studies that we now have accomplished. The time went by quick, maybe even quicker than we first expected. When we first started at the university, the Master’s Thesis was something that scared us. Nowadays, that is no longer the case. With that said, this report is the result of our Industrial Engineering and Management education with Industrial Marketing as our master.

Lastly, the greatest of thanks goes to our case study company Climeon. They have given us professional support with in-depth industry knowledge. With many supportive employees, we have got a great introduction to what working with marketing when doing business means, and how processes just like the sales process affect the whole company. We want to give a special thanks to Christopher Engman, who we kept early discussions regarding this Master's Thesis; that later became real. The collaboration with Climeon is thereby something that lies close to us, and we will take the knowledge from this work into or future careers. Thank you for giving us this opportunity!

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Abstract

There are several models that can be found describing the organizational buying process. The organizational buying process (OBP) within B2B is also more complex and more time consuming than within B2C (Dwyer & Tanner Jr., 2002). The OBP is also continuously becoming more complex as new touchpoints are created through the rise of new communication channels (Mora Cortez & Johnston, 2017). Touchpoints are essentially places where the customer encounters the supplier (Moncrief & Marshall, 2005). These new communication channels and touchpoints have made the customer experience more important, although the customer experience is not yet well integrated into the OBP (Mora Cortez & Johnston, 2017).

Social media is one of the new communication channels that has grown the last decade and has become important also for the OBP (Oyza & M. Edwin, 2015) With social media, companies have less control over the information online and social media is affecting companies in all industries (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Despite some initial studies regarding social media, the effect they have on the OBP is still not well understood. The aim of this master thesis has therefore been to better understand how social media is affecting the OBP in terms of lead-time and win-rate. Win-rate can be used to measure sales success and is the percentage of the opportunities that the supplier won (Schultz, 2016).

Through this case study, several semi-structured interviews were performed with both employees of the case study company and their customers. The data collected was thereafter analyzed through a thematic analysis resulting in various codes aligned under three main themes. The findings showed that LinkedIn was one of the main social media used. LinkedIn makes it easier to map out stakeholders and thereby also find new business opportunities through more quality leads. Within social media, targeted marketing was used toward selected organizations. With this said, social media has in different ways helped the company find more quality leads, influence the customer and also helped strengthen the brand of the company.
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1 Introduction

In this chapter, the background of the research area will be introduced. More specific information that has led the researchers to the research opportunities of the project will also be presented as well as the research questions themselves. These research questions contribute to the Master thesis's research topic, that is presented towards the end of this chapter.

1.1 Background

Unlike consumer marketing (B2C), business to marketing (B2B) involves the marketing of products and services toward companies, institutions, governments as well as other organizations. Communication within B2B is more direct than B2C and there is more focus on negotiation and personal selling. B2B marketing is aimed towards purposes that are not related to personal consumption with a focus on individuals as well as organizations. The intended use is the main factor that distinguishes a B2B-purchase from a B2C-purchase (Lamb, Hair & McDaniel, 2011). The relationship between buyer and seller in B2B is thereby different than B2C and the Organizational Buying Process (OBP) within B2B is more complex and more time-consuming (Dwyer & Tanner Jr., 2002). In this project, a holistic view of the OBP with two perspectives has been chosen, the customer view and the supplier view. This means that OBP will be used to describe the term from a supplier’s selling process perspective and a customer’s buying perspective.

B2B buyers do extensive research, cautiously examine specifications and in general care mostly about functionality, that often results in a time-consuming OBP (Lingqvist, Lun & Plotkin, 2015). Buyers also have access to extensive information and various options to choose from in the OBP. However, with more information comes more questions resulting in customers taking a longer time to reach a decision (Toman, Adamson & Gomez, 2017). Bhandari, Rama and Seth (2017) state that the OBP can differ from a few days to over a year for one process itself. Doyle, Woodside & Michell (1979) add that the OBP can vary from seven months up to five years for companies engaging in the purchase of a new task.

Not only one buyer is usually responsible for a B2B purchase, but instead, a team or a buying center is used, where the members purchase on behalf of the organization (Hutt & Speh, 2016).
The people involved in the purchase have different roles in the OBP (Hutt & Speh, 2016). Hutt and Speh (2016) also explain that the OBP for businesses involves numerous small decisions being made during the process that influence the final decision.

There are various models to be found that describe the OBP. Traditional OBP’s follow a linear structure and focus on hierarchical stages that customers go through before reaching a decision (Wolny & Charoensuksai, 2014). Present literature illustrates models that have involved between four and twelve stages (see Chapter Two), which indicates that the OBP varies. No matter how the OBP is studied, the general visualization of the OBP is through stage models. However, criticism has been directed toward the model’s dynamics since not much effort has been given to explain why customers progress between stages (Viio, 2011).

One of the most cited and recognized models is the model by Robinson, Faris and Wind (1967) consisting of eight stages. The model is not applicable to all buying circumstances since not all go through all the eight stages. In addition, the model is somewhat simplified and does not fully describe an OBP. The model was later reviewed and Webster and Wind (1972) created a five-step model, that still would capture the essential parts of the OBP. However, the model by Webster and Wind (1972) is seen to have stood the test of time and is used yet today (Viio, 2011). The model by Webster and Wind (1972) is illustrated in Figure 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE</th>
<th>Webster &amp; Wind (1972)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Identify Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Establish Specifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Identify Alternatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Evaluate Alternatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Select Supplier</td>
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**Figure 1:** The Organizational Buying Process  
**Source:** Adapted from Webster and Wind (1972)

Nowadays, more interactive communication channels stretching from face-to-face meetings to discussions on social media, influencing people involved in the OBP may affect customers’ perception of different suppliers (Hutt & Speh, 2016; Lingqvist et al., 2015).
The OBP is changing and customers now emphasize collecting information online before contacting a potential supplier and make a decision (Hutt & Speh, 2016). Therefore, the buyer today has more control over the OBP than the seller (Wizdo, 2015).

Furthermore, the complexity of the OBP is continuously increasing, much due to many different touchpoints through several communication channels, e.g. social media (Mora Cortez & Johnston, 2017). Touchpoints are essentially places where the customer encounters the supplier (Moncrief & Marshall, 2005). These interactions between customer and firm can occur through various channels and during different time periods (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010). Additionally, customers build their experience from these various touchpoints through different phases (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). The many touchpoints have created a greater focus on the customer experience and therefore also the OBP (Mora Cortez & Johnston, 2017). Due to higher digital engagement, people internally and externally share their experiences to a bigger degree resulting in a less linear OBP that takes more time (Lingqvist, Lun & Plotkin, 2015).

Numerous touchpoints in combination with different social media platforms are not only increasing the lead-time; it also contributes to an increase of difficulties when it comes to closed deals. Numerous stakeholders are involved in the OBP making it harder to reach a decision and therefore, close a deal. The average number of people involved in the purchase of B2B solutions has also increased, making it harder to reach an agreement (Toman, Adamson & Gomez (2017). With this in mind, companies can benefit from evaluating the OBP and its effectiveness. A good way of doing this is by using a metric called win-rate, which is the percentage of opportunities proposed that the supplier won. Win-rate can be used to measure the success of a supplier’s sales team (Schultz, 2016).

With a more complex OBP scenario with multiple touchpoints available for customers, more emphasis on analyzing data is needed to ensure an effective OBP. This generates a need for change in seller behavior and gives an opportunity for companies to win more deals if willing to interact with customers during different stages of the OBP (Rotenberg, 2014). Information and content to provide the customer with is also an essential part of the OBP because firms want to answer the customers' questions at ease; optimally knowing the answers of the customers question before they ask them from previous research (Wizdo, 2015).
To enable this, Lingqvist, Lun and Plotkin (2015) suggest that companies should integrate their sales and marketing teams to better meet the needs of their customers. Ultimately, beyond meeting the needs of the customers, with a new OBP approach companies can decrease the lead-time and win significantly more deals by increasing its win-rate.

1.2 Problem Discussion

The OBP needs to have customer experience in mind for the next coming years since the complexity of social media together with the new various touchpoints are continuously increasing. However, Mora Cortez and Johnston (2017) state that customer experience hardly is integrated into the OBP and this limits the OBP development. Furthermore, social media require companies to stay updated and use many different functions and external partners to ensure that the customers are satisfied with their OBP; in a continuous era of changing customer behavior (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Since touchpoints are becoming increasingly important for B2B companies, it will be essential for those companies to adequately manage their customers to proceed smoothly with the OBP. Touchpoints will be an essential part of closing more deals and to increase the win-rate for B2B companies. The B2B marketing efforts must be adapted to integrate the customer more in the OBP; to be able to give leads to revenues and close more deals (Anderson, 2017).

Anderson (2017) means that the marketing processes and tools need to be further improved due to the complexity and customer demand for personalized solutions. Across various B2B industries, companies are now moving from a reactive approach to a proactive, designing their OBP to fulfill the goal of attracting customers (Edelman & Singer, 2015). More investments will be spent on technology, processes and people in 2020 and companies in the next coming years will be increasing their resources for collecting customer data, insights, real-time personalization on the web and more (Anderson, 2017).
Going into the future, firms that can design and refine the OBP will have an advantage over their competitors. The OBP has become as important as the product or service itself. The reason for this is that with a more compelling OBP making it easier for customers to proceed in the OBP, resulting in reduced lead-time and increased sales (Edelman & Singer, 2015). Wizdo (2015) states that the winning platforms are the ones that will support customization of the OBP.

The increasing number of touchpoints together with social media is making the OBP more complex and problematic for companies to manage. These complexities within the OBP also increase the lead-time of the OBP. Improvements regarding the OBP can, therefore, generate reduced lead-times for a supplier's OBP (Rosenbaum et al., 2017; Wizdo, 2015).

In conclusion, there are some initial studies that have contributed to the view of how different touchpoints through social media contributes to the OBP. However, the effect of the increasing amount of social media platforms and touchpoints between the buyer and the supplier is still not well understood. By understanding the OBP in the context of social media and how to ensure that the information in those is being processed, it could contribute to providing B2B firms in structuring their OBP to maximize the efficiency through reducing the lead-time of the OBP; and its effectiveness through an increased win-rate. With that said, more research about the OBP needs to be done, since the effects of social media on the OBP is not well known, it constitutes a gap in the literature.
Therefore, the aim of this Master's Thesis research is:

“To understand how communication between the customer and supplier through social media is affecting the OBP. “

To better understand these effects on the OBP the research topic has been broken down into two research questions. The first question revolves around the effectiveness of the OBP and thereby the win-rate. The first research question has been formulated as:

Research Question One:
“*How does social media affect the win-rate of the OBP?*”

Win-rate is an important metric to work with for any sales team (Rotenberg, 2014; Schultz, 2016). Despite Rotenberg (2014) and Schultz (2016) highlighting the importance of win-rate, not much literature can be found when it comes to measuring win-rate. Literature regarding sales can be found and what effect different factors have on sales; but a limited effort has been directed toward the actual percentage of sales opportunities proposed that are won by a supplier. To increase win-rate, a supplier needs to analyze the different stages of the OBP to see where the sales force is falling short (Rotenberg, 2014).

In addition to research question one regarding the effectiveness of the OBP, research question two seeks to better understand the efficiency of the OBP. The efficiency of the OBP is connected to the lead-time and thereby the second research question is formulated as followed:

Research Question Two:
“*How does social media affect the lead-time of the OBP?*”
1.3 Case study company

Heat power involves electricity that is recovered from the heat that is otherwise wasted. This involves industries as well as geothermal sources found through drilling deep below the surface. With this said, 50% of the global energy is wasted and the environmental resources are continuously being consumed. In comparison to solar and wind power, heat power is weather independent which enables electricity to be produced all year round (Edling, 2017).

For a start-up company within the heat power industry, there are many parts that need to fall into place. For a company in a competitive industry where the time for change is now, nothing comes easily. The climate is currently changing at a considerably high pace; therefore, action needs to be taken to reduce the environmental instability. The company featured in this Master’s Thesis project goes with the slogan “Business for a better world” with the name Climeon. Climeon turns heat into clean electricity through patented products that operate in vacuum. These patented products are market-leading when it comes to performance, and have many environmental benefits, such as transforming waste heat from industries and low-temperature geothermal heat into electricity. Therefore, Climeon’s customers can save money, reduce their carbon dioxide emissions and do a good deed for the environment at the same time (Edling, 2017).

Even though these products are game-changing when it comes to the environment, the process of selling Climeon’s products is not as simple as it may seem. The OBP can hold on for months, even years; leaving Climeon with a tremendous amount of time spent for closing, or not closing a deal. Therefore, the research topic has been designed to approach how a company like Climeon can understand how social media is affecting the buyer and supplier to be able to answer the research questions regarding the effectiveness (win-rate) and efficiency (lead-time reduction) in the OBP. With this said, the researchers will now introduce the reader to the literature chapter, reviewing the OBP and its signification.
2 Literature Review

In the second chapter, the theoretical review of the literature regarding the Organizational Buying Process and its important aspects are overviewed. First of all, the overall Organizational Buying Process and the last decades of theoretical aspects are reviewed in detail to provide a fundamental understanding and in-depth view of the area of research problem area. Other relevant areas that affect the OBP are also approached in Chapter Two to support the conduct of this Master’s Thesis project. In addition, Chapter Two will also provide a foundation for the frame of reference, to ensure that the research problem that this study entails is being illustrated.

2.1 Overall Organizational Buying Process

Over the last decades, different models have been created to illustrate the OBP and its different stages. One of the first models was created by Webster (1965) with a relatively short model, consisting of four stages, namely the problem recognition, buying reasonability, the search process, and at last; the choice process stage.

Two years later, the OBP was followed up by Robinson, Faris and Wind (1967) that initiated an eight-stage model. The first stage of the model by Robinson et al. (1967) is the problem recognition, also called need recognition stage which the model by Webster (1965) alike. The first thing that distinguishes these two models is that Robinson et al. (1967) has a second and third stage that consists of a characteristics determination and description. The buying reasonability that Webster (1965) approached as a second step is now divided into the second and third stage of the model by Robinson et al. (1967) when putting the two models side by side. Furthermore, the stage of searching for sources and acquiring proposals that Robinson et al. (1967) corresponds to Webster's (1965) third step, which is called the search process stage. However, Webster (1965) finalized the model with the choice process stage, which Robinson et al. (1967) described differently in terms of evaluating the offered proposals stage, in combination with two more stages; namely the selection of order routine and the feedback of performance stage. These two models are visualized in Table 2.1.
Furthermore, another model that was designed was a five-stage model to illustrate the OBP (Ozanne & Churchill, 1971). The authors of this model found out that the OBP is a complex process that varies between industries. Therefore, the authors stated that it is difficult to define how the OBP is modeled in each different case; due to its complexity (Ozanne & Churchill, 1971). The model is introduced through a similar stage as the recognition stage by Webster (1965) and Robinson et al. (1967); namely the stage of awareness. Followed by this, Ozanne and Churchill (1971) have a stage of interest which can be compared to buying reasonability, determination, and description of characteristics. In addition, there is also a stage of evaluation, just like Robinson et al. (1967), but towards the end of the model, a trial period stage has been developed before the adoption of the current situation; which is a differentiation from the two previous mentioned models (Ozanne & Churchill, 1971).

Webster’s (1965) initial OBP model needed an update, and in combination with another author, Webster and Wind (1972) together created a five-staged OBP; that did not differentiate much to the original model by Webster (1965). However, Kelly (1974) created an OBP model with a slightly different approach, that had the same amount of stages, but with different approaches to the OBP in terms of choice of words and a few minor adjustments to how the OBP can be designed, see Table 2.1. Comparatively to all the five-staged models over the last decades, the model by Bradley (1977) brought up another short illustration of how the OBP can be visualized and of all OBP models over the last decades; this was the shortest model with four stages. It illustrates how a buyer progresses from a purchase intention to an awarded contract. One year later, Wind (1978) created the OBP that is considered to be the OBP with the highest number of stages, adding multiple stages to what previously been documented in theory, and can also be visualized in Table 2.1.

Last, but not least, an additional model that Burger and Cann (1995) add to the theory is the model by Ghingold and Wilson (1998), describing the OBP through six stages. All these mentioned OBP’s are more easily visualized in Table 2.1. Therefore, there are many different models explaining the OBP.
However, Juha and Pentti (2008) summarize the different models of the OBP over the last couple of decades, once again, see Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Different Models of the OBP.
Source: Adapted from Wind and Thomas (1980); Juha and Pentti (2008).

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<tr>
<td>1. Problem Recognition</td>
<td>Problem (need) Recognition</td>
<td>Determine Characteristics</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Identify Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Buying Receptivity</td>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>Evaluate</td>
<td>Establish Specifications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Search Process</td>
<td>Describe Characteristics</td>
<td>Trial</td>
<td>Identify Alternatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The Choice Process</td>
<td>Search for Sources</td>
<td>Adoption</td>
<td>Evaluate Alternatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Acquire Proposals</td>
<td>Acquire Proposals</td>
<td></td>
<td>Select Supplier</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Evaluate Proposals</td>
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<td>7. Select Order Routine</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Performance Feedback</td>
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These authors describe the OBP and that it might vary between different situations and industries. Likewise, if the supplier provides products or services impact the OBP as well. However, the stages of these models vary between four (Robinson et al., 1967) and twelve (Wind, 1978) and therefore the complexities of the overall OBP’s are differentiated from each other.

Furthermore, Wind and Thomas (1980) state that a factor affecting the OBP is the type of buying situation. It can be a straight rebuy, modified rebuy or a new buying situation (Wind & Thomas, 1980; Sheth, 1973). The classification is based on three factors: the novelty of the task, the degree of information needed and how many alternatives being considered (Juha & Pentti, 2008). Depending on the buying situation, the decision-making process will look different due to the different amount of information needed and the risk that varies between the three situations (Wind & Thomas, 1980; Sheth, 1973). Other studies also strengthen that the levels of risk affect the buying situation and thereby the win-rate (Cardozo & Cagley (1971); Juha & Pentti, 2008). Mitchell (1998) explains that decreasing the risk for customers gives an advantage to competitors.
Managing risk is a central part of supplier's way of managing the OBP, especially in a new buying situation. Perceived risk has a substantial impact on the lead-time of the OBP and is due to its important part of most OBP models (Juha & Pentti, 2008).

Another factor that according to Wind and Thomas (1980) have historically affected the OBP is personal, interpersonal, organizational and inter-organizational factors. Therefore, different people and backgrounds, as well as changes in mindsets, influence the interaction between customers and supplier in the OBP (Mora Cortez & Johnston, 2017). Lack of expertise and insufficient skills are personal factors seen as perceived risks affecting the OBP. B2B marketers need to adapt their marketing activities so that it creates value for the customer (Juha & Pentti, 2008). Tax, McCutcheon and Wilkinson (2013) state that the OBP often becomes complex due to the many actors involved, leading to difficulties with coordination of activities included. However, if a marketer wants to be involved in an important business decision in the OBP, they need to provide value, meaning that those who are involved in the OBP are needed to be involved; not only participate for the occasion of a potential B2B purchase. A background in engineering, B2B buying, sales or production will enable a top of the line OBP (Tax et al., 2013). With that said, the average of 3.95 people involved in the OBP is needed individuals that together create the OBP's involved participants from a customer, and supplier point of view (Mora Cortez & Johnston, 2017).

Sheth (1973) states that understanding joint decision-making and solving the unavoidable conflicts are key in OBP. In addition, March and Simon (1958) state that conflict occurs when a joint decision is being made by people with perceptions and goals that are different. Bhandari et al. (2017) mention that the entire company needs to be integrated for an organizational buying decision, and according to Sheth (1973) decisions at an organization level are a result of individual interactions. Sheth (1973) concludes that not all conflicts that occur are bad and that some conflicts are needed to reach rational decision-points. Mora Cortez and Johnston (2017) states that conflicts can lead to more costs and increased lead-time, which is negative for the OBP.
Historically, models like the one by Webster and Wind (1972) have been a standardized way of describing the OBP. However, with social media there is a change towards a more proactive OBP that integrates more than the formal channels e.g. the face-to-face interaction or by telephone that lacks touchpoints and customer experience integrated into the OBP (Lamb et al., 2011).

2.2 Social Media in the Organizational Buying Process

Even though the OBP has been well documented in the past, not many studies have been made regarding the different communication channels. However, the OBP in combination with social media has become increasingly important within the area of management due to the effect on success and thereby the win-rate of today's companies (Oyza & M. Edwin, 2015). Today social media is creating touchpoints for companies and its customers, and therefore the increasing importance of those are becoming an essential part in today's OBP when it comes to winning more deals (Oyza & M. Edwin, 2015).

Social media has become essential in the OBP (Oyza & M. Edwin, 2015). It represents a revolutionary trend that is affecting companies in all industries. Through social media, companies can engage directly to their customers with a relatively low cost (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media enables companies to open discussions and share information with their customers. Many companies have less control over the information available online and are uncomfortable with customers being able to share their experiences and thoughts through social media channels. Previously, organization have been able to manage what is said about them through a strategic press and good public relations but can now not control all comments being posted about them (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).
2.3 Customer Experience in the Organizational Buying Process

Lingqvist et al. (2015) state that attention toward the customer experience within the OBP has increased. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) express that managing the customer experience within the OBP has become one of the main objectives for many companies today. Since firms do not control all factors and communication channels influencing the customer experience, it is an ongoing challenge for firms to manage the customer experience within the OBP to establish a high win-rate and short OBP’s (Mora Cortez & Johnston, 2017).

Customer experience is related to the OBP and its touchpoints resulting in the OBP receiving new designs (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). According to Zomerdijk and Voss (2010), the customer experience is closely connected to touchpoints within the OBP. Companies are today adapting customer experience as a marketing strategy within their OBP, to deliver value to specific customers on an individual basis, rather than to a larger target market. To optimize long-term financials and winning more deals to a higher extent, and thereby increasing the companies win-rate, some companies have started putting more effort on how their most important customers experience the OBP (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

The customer experience is affected by different communication channels, whether it is through face-to-face interaction or through social media. Moreover, the effectiveness and efficiency of the OBP is reliant on how well the different touchpoints are managed, and as a result of that, the customer experience also plays an essential role for the OBP. However, limited empirical work has been done within the area of customer experience and the OBP. This is strengthened by Mora Cortez and Johnston (2017) who state the customer experience in B2B has not yet been defined and its development with social media (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016, Rosenbaum et al., 2017; Lingqvist et al., 2015)

2.3.1 Touchpoints

A common assumption that the touchpoints in the OBP are all equally important do not mirror today's OBP; where the complexity continuously grows through different touchpoints and social media platforms. In other words, the ignorance of the touchpoints in the OBP creates a view on the OBP as a linear model, which today is not the case (Rosenbaum et al., 2017).
The customer touchpoints are an essential aspect for teams working with service (Rosenbaum, Otalora & Ramirez, 2017). Companies have started to emphasize the analysis of the different touchpoints involved in the OBP. This helps to improve the communication with the customer and optimally the customer experience; which in turn can contribute to help companies winning more deals. On top of that, giving attention to the different touchpoints in the long-term helps reduce the lead-time of the OBP (Zomerdijk & Voss (2010). Lemon and Verhoef (2016) have identified four categories of touchpoints that customer can interact with; which from case to case differs depending on the product, service or the OBP itself. These different touchpoint types are illustrated in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: The four different types of touchpoints.
Source: Adapted from Lemon and Verhoef (2016).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOUCHPOINT</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Brand-owned touchpoints</td>
<td>Are touchpoints which are under control of the company, and designed to interact with the customer, such as media, advertising, website and loyalty programs etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Partner-owned touchpoints</td>
<td>Are touchpoints that are created through interactions and experiences that are initially created by the company or its partner(s), and exemplified as marketing agencies, multichannel distribution partners or communication channel partners etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Customer-owned touchpoints</td>
<td>Are touchpoints that companies do not have an effect on, or cannot influence. Therefore, these touchpoints are customer actions that also contribute to the customer experience. An example of a customer-owned touchpoints is the customer’s needs in the pre-purchase stage of the customer’s journey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Social/External/Independent touchpoints</td>
<td>Are touchpoints that surround the customers through different sources. For example, other customers or other external sources of information can be classified as social, external or independent touchpoints.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Different customers relate differently to each touchpoint; therefore the strength and relevance differ for each customer (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). These touchpoints occur in various parts of a company and many times also externally, e.g. between customers. The different touchpoints that the customers of an organization experience are therefore different from case to case (Tax et al., 2013; Mora Cortez & Johnston, 2017).
2.4 Organizational Buying Process modeling with Social Media

Since firms do not control all factors affecting the customer experience, it is an ongoing challenge for firms to manage the customer experience as well as the OBP (Mora Cortez & Johnston, 2017). Companies create a map of the OBP to identify the touchpoints involved to improve the customer experience within each touchpoint (Tax et al., 2013; Mora Cortez & Johnston, 2017). Wolny and Charoensuksai (2004) explain that mapping the OBP is a way of describing the customer experience characterized by interactions with a product, service or brand through touchpoints. The OBP can be seen as a sequence of touchpoints and involves all events and activities included in the delivery of a service (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010). The OBP map is basically a visualization of the order of events that a customer interacts with when buying from a company. The OBP map is used to uncover barriers and to better track and guide the customer through the OBP. Common barriers revolve around the interpretation of different information, misaligned objectives and not being able to settle on an agreement (Toman et al., 2017).

There is no formal framework for how this mapping of the OBP should look like since it differs between organizations (Toman et al., 2017; Wind and Thomas, 1980; Juha and Pentti, 2008). However, Tax et al. (2013) highlight the importance for companies to understand the customer's perspective when creating the map of the OBP to identify which touchpoints they encounter. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) state that the mapping of the OBP is used to identify touchpoints, elements and contexts that affects the customer experience, which as mentioned earlier affects the efficiency and effectiveness of the OBP (Rosenbaum et al., 2017; Lingqvist et al., 2015; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

2.5 Frame of reference

The goal of this study is to investigate how social media is affecting the OBP. The frame of reference in Figure 2 illustrates the relation between the key aspects presented in Chapter Two, and how these aspects contribute to the 21st-century version of the OBP. In Figure 2, the TP stands for touchpoint and the different stages represent the stages from Figure 1. Although new models may have been established since the five-staged model by Webster and Wind (1972), it is still commonly used in literature and best represents the researchers' interpretation of the OBP.
Figure 2: The Frame of Reference
3 Research Methodology

In this chapter, the methodology behind the Master's Thesis study is presented to give the reader a view on what different approaches that have been used to answer the research questions, based on the literature from Chapter Two. Chapter Three is also presenting the approach that has been anticipated in this study, to strengthen the strategy and answers the research questions this project anticipates.

3.1 Research Approach

When using a deductive research approach theory is initially collected and later tested through a data collection. The theory used in a deductive approach is compiled in a framework which is later tested (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). With an inductive approach, theory is developed from the data collected which is later related to previous literature. Unlike a deductive approach, the inductive approach does not start in theory or a from a framework; instead, the aim is to build theory rather than to test it (Saunders et al., 2009). The research approach of this Master's Thesis is built on existing theory and tries to explore how social media can affect the OBP in terms of improving efficiency and effectiveness. Therefore, an abductive study, which is a mix, has been used to correlate the deductive and inductive approach (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012).

The OBP is a well-researched topic and theory regarding the OBP can be found in the literature. However, this revolves around the traditional OBP and not much theory is found regarding how social media is affecting the OBP. Therefore, there are new insights into how social media affects the OBP, which creates a gap of understanding. To provide new insights into how this communication channel affects the OBP, the authors of this study are trying to build theory based on the existing theory regarding the OBP; rather than testing theory.

Case studies can be characterized as descriptive, explanatory or exploratory. The descriptive approach is used to describe an occurrence from a real-life setting, whereas explanatory is used to explain links between an occurrence from real-life and the effects resulting from it. The exploratory approach is used to explore interventions where there is more than one possible outcome and the outcome is unclear (Yin, 2003).
For this Master Thesis project, an exploratory approach will be used. This approach is used since the focus for this case study seeks to explore the communication through social media between the buyer and supplier; to understand how social media and touchpoints are affecting the effectiveness and efficiency of the OBP. Although the OBP is a well-researched phenomenon, the effects that social media has on the OBP is not well-researched which makes an exploratory approach suitable. Exploratory studies have the aim of achieving new insights of a problem and one way of doing this is by interviewing experts in the area (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007). The exploratory approach can benefit from having a broad problem, just like the OBP, and when understanding the phenomenon better the focus on what needs to be done of the exploratory research to make the problem clearer (Saunders et al., 2007).

3.2 Research Strategy

When performing research, five different strategies are found: survey, experiment, case study, archival analysis and history (Yin, 2009). For this research, a case study approach has been chosen. According to David and Sutton (2011), a case study is a detailed study of specific organizations, individuals, communities, programmes or events. Järvensivu and Törnroos (2010) state that a case study is good for capturing a phenomenon different dynamic and therefore fits well when exploring business networks and specifically relationships and networks within a B2B setting.

A case study is different from an experiment since it is not made specifically to be compared since the conditions are not controlled as during an experiment (David & Sutton, 2011). According to Yin (1984) studies can be done using a single as well as multiple cases. For this research, a single-case study has been chosen. For case studies, there are different data collection methods which may vary and can involve interviews, questionnaires, observations and archives. Furthermore, the data used for a case study may be qualitative, quantitative or a mix with aims of generating a description, test theory or even building theory (Eisenhardt, 1989).
3.3 Qualitative Research Approach

A qualitative data collection was chosen for this research to achieve an in-depth understanding of the OBP within the B2B context. Since Climeon does not have a wide customer base, the researchers of this study have chosen the qualitative approach over the quantitative. David and Sutton (2016) state that the qualitative method of collecting data is through forms that have not yet been identified and translated to a numeric scale; rather than the quantitative approach with standardized data collection with statistics and diagrams (Saunders et al., 2007). Therefore, due to the client base and the information that the researchers want to obtain; the qualitative research approach suits this Master's Thesis research more.

Bryman (2008) adds that qualitative research usually values words to a higher extent than the quantification in the collection and analysis of data. When choosing the qualitative research approach, data is mainly going to be collected through words, feelings, values or attitudes (Lawson & Garrod, 1994).

Qualitative data extracted for questionnaires can generate explanations that can lead to goals being achieved. Translating qualitative data to make sense is something that requires great work, especially if there is a large amount of data (Miles, 1979). Guba (1979) also adds that a research of a qualitative approach should be seen as a support to the research rather than what Guba (1979) expresses as a "reliable" source of information. All data that is collected from different sources are therefore a part that contributes to the phenomenon understanding, and Baxter and Jack (2008) add their qualitative approach to a case study with the following quotation:

“Qualitative case study methodology provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their contexts”.

"Qualitative case study methodology provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their contexts".
3.4 Data Collection

The data is mainly collected through interviews with seven Climeon employees and two of their customers. Burgess (1984) states that an interview is a dialogue involving a purpose. David and Sutton (2011) state that qualitative interviewing not only requires the interviewer to pay attention to the questions that are to be asked, the place and time also need to be considered for a successful result. The data collected from the interviews of the employees of Climeon will also be combined with data collected through interviews with customers as well; to get the different views on how buyer and seller anticipated the OBP.

Primary data is the data that is collected by the researcher him or herself. For this specific study, the authors have collected primary data through interviews with both the employees of Climeon, but also the customers of Climeon. Furthermore, depending on the research area and topic, the design of the data collection methodologies can vary (David & Sutton, 2011).

For some studies it is important to collect data that already does exist; this data is called secondary data. The collection of primary data is called primary research, and the collection of already existing data is called secondary analysis (David & Sutton, 2011). The secondary data analysis can also be seen with a broader perspective, thereby the authors state that there is an opportunity of analyzing someone else's collected data. In addition, the availability and accessibility of surveys, in general, have increased and broadened since the 1960s, and that the secondary analysis that is posted on databases are easier to find, see Chapter 3.4.1. What kind of data collection method that should be used depends on the research design, and therefore the research question (Dale, Arber & Procter, 1988).

From the case study at Climeon, qualitative data has been collected through interviews, where the questions had the foundation from the literature review in Chapter Two. According to David and Sutton (2011), interviews can be divided into structured and unstructured; which refers to the repeatability and how identical the questions are between each interview. For this study, two structured interview guides were conducted for the employees and for the customers, where each of them was asked questions based on this specific document, see Appendix 2 and Appendix 3. However, the interview guide was used as a guideline and due to the semi-structured approach, that was used when interviewing; questions varied between each interview.
This was done to ensure that the most relevant information was obtained from each and every interviewee. A semi-structured interview involves questions and themes that the researcher wants to cover but questions may vary between interviews. The order of the questions also may differ depending on how the conversation progresses (Saunders et al., 2009).

In semi-structured interviews, the researcher will have a list of themes and questions to be covered, although these may vary from interview to interview. This means that you may omit some questions in particular interviews, given a specific organizational context that is encountered in relation to the research topic. The order of questions may also be varied depending on the flow of the conversation (Saunders et al., 2009).

The same approach was also used for the customers, see Appendix 4. According to David and Sutton (2011) with an unstructured interview more responsibility is put on the interviewer during the interview. With the limited experience that the authors of this Master's Thesis have when it comes to interviewing, this was one reason that questions were prepared beforehand; to be less reliant and put less pressure on the interviewer. However, the interviews also included an unstructured element, varying follow-up questions were asked depending on the answer from the interviewee. The unstructured element was used to put emphasis on letting the person getting interviewed to share their story for greater in-depth validity. Another way of distinguishing interviews is by the degree of standardization. The possible answers to standardized interviews are more closed whereas the answers to an unstandardized interview are more open. Standardized interview emphasis quantification and are therefore easier to compare and unstandardized questions focus on personal detail and depth (David & Sutton, 2011). For this study, an unstandardized approach was used to encourage in-depth knowledge sharing since the people interviewed work in different departments with different expertise.
3.4.1 Databases

For this Master's Thesis, two main databases have been used to identify the scientific literature data relevant to the research area. These two databases are Google Scholar and Scopus. When collecting data, the authors of the study have only collected peer-reviewed articles for the Literature Review Chapter. The following keywords have been used as a guideline throughout the research within the two databases.


3.5 Quality Assurance

David and Sutton (2011) state the importance of the collected data and how to ensure that it fits the reality. Saunders et al. (2009) add that validity and reliability are ensured so satisfy the quality of the study and reduce the uncertainty about information collected throughout the research. Validity and reliability are therefore two important part to ensure the quality of this research and will be explained further below.

3.5.1 Validity

Validity refers to how well the data collected fits the reality. Validity can also be divided into three categories, internal validity, external validity and construct validity (Yin, 2009). However, only external and construct validity is applicable to this study, since internal validity only is relevant for explanatory case studies, when trying to establish casual relationships between different variables or events (Yin, 2008). External validity, also known as generalizability puts focus on how well the data collected expresses the wider population referring to the group from which the studied individuals were selected (David & Sutton, 2011). Yin (2009) states that external validity may in case studies be hard to achieve considering the study being based on a single case. Furthermore, construct validity instead puts emphasis on how accurate the researcher’s operational measures have been for the research (Yin, 2009).
The interview guide has been overviewed by the researcher’s supervisor at Luleå University of Technology (LTU), to ensure that the questions are in line with what this study seeks to answer, see the interview guide in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3. This has helped increase the construct validity. For the case study at Climeon, the researchers have also been ensuring high construct validity through interviews with various employees with experience within the research area. The interviewed employees were selected based on them being key actors and the most knowledgeable persons regarding the OBP and thereby the research area.

As mentioned earlier the external validity can be a weakness when it comes to case studies. The topic and research questions were created and then validated by the supervisor at LTU. The supervisor has extensive experience when it comes to research and thereby an increase in external validity. In addition, the customers of Climeon who were interviewed were contacted with the same approach, where all of those who had the opportunity to participate in the interviews participated. Assessing the generalizability is hard but because Climeon's customers are spread between different countries around the world strengthens the external validity. Also, recurring feedback from opposition groups as well as the use of a thematic analysis has also induced a more generalizable result.

According to David and Sutton (2011), preparation and warm-up are essential in making the interviewee comfortable and thereby maintaining high validity. To achieve this, a questionnaire was created and sent to the interviewee for the person to feel comfortable and to better prepare for the interview. The interviewee was also informed about the purpose of the interview and emphasized the importance the person's participation. To make the interviewee comfortable at the actual interview a warm-up conversation was held before the interview as recommended by David and Sutton (2011). This came more naturally with the employees at Climeon who the researchers had gotten to know after spending months with the company. To ease up the conversation with Climeon's customers a few questions regarding the background of the individual were conducted.
3.5.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to how well the study stands the test of time and how likely the respondent is to respond the same another time (David & Sutton, 2011). Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007) add that reliability within data collection techniques have reliable and consistent findings. Having prepared questions in advance is one action used to ensure high reliability for the study. David and Sutton (2011) explain that structured interviews enable better comparison and thereby higher reliability. Some questions in the interview differed between employees and customers, however, this was mainly regarding grammar and should not have affected the reliability substantially.

The importance of reliability can be categorized into four summarizing threats (Saunders et al., 2007). The first threat is the participant error, which is mood-dependent; since a participant, for e.g. an interview can answer differently from one day to another on the same question. The second threat is participant bias, which can be described as when a participant gives satisfying answers to the interviewer instead on correct answers; which is inaccurate. Furthermore, the third threat regards the researcher error, which is connected to the research itself and how he or she collect their data. Last, but not least, there is a researcher bias on how the recording of the data is collected (Saunders et al., 2007).

Having the questions sent to the interviewee by forehand is a way of minimizing the risk of threat number one. This way the interviewee got the chance to better reflect on the question and thereby being less affected by his or her mood. However, this may also have slightly increased the risk of threat number two. The reason for this is that the person interviewed may reflect too much giving a satisfying answer rather than his or her true opinion or experience. Yin (2009) adds that it is also important to not skew the answers of the interviewees by manipulating the interview questions; since the importance of the researcher's case study is to understand the OBP and its specific context in the chosen industry. To avoid the third and fourth threat of Saunders et al. (2007), the researchers of this study voice recorded all the interview and then transcripted them, to later perform a thematic analysis with the data. To avoid the participant error and bias, the researchers kept an open dialogue about each separate transcribed interview with the interviewee; to ensure that the shared information was correct and not misleading from an employee-point-of-view. The interviews with the customers of Climeon were also recorded and transcribed with the same methodology.
One of the weaknesses of the study when it comes to reliability is the limited number of customers at Climeon. Despite this being a clear population, a greater number of participating customers could have increased the reliability further. David and Sutton (2011) however point out that the number of participants is less important than how the selection is made.

3.6 Analysis

To analyze the qualitative data obtained through interviews a thematic analysis was used. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the thematic analysis is used to identify, analyze and describe themes or patterns found in data. The method involves six phases but is not linear meaning one may need to move between phases rather than through a sequential order.

Phase 1: This phase involves reading through the data collection and familiarizing with it. By reading the through the data the identification of patterns can start. This phase also involves the transcription of verbal data into written language. Beyond just getting the data into a written form, the researcher creates a better understanding of the data by transcribing it.

Phase 2: After having read through and transcribed the data the coding may begin. The coding involves the identification of basic elements among the information collected regarded the topic investigated. Coding can be done manually with pens or highlighter but also using the software.

Phase 3: The third phase involves structuring the coded material into broader themes. This essentially means analyzing the codes to see how they relate to the topic using broader themes.

Phase 4: Next up in the process involves reviewing and refining the themes which may involve themes being merged or broken down. In this phase, a map of the themes is taking form and to see if it reflects the overall data the initial data needs to be re-read.

Phase 5: In this stage, further refinements are done by analyzing the data within each established theme. This involves organizing them within the theme and identifying what each aspect of the themes represents.
Phase 6: When the themes are done the producing of the report starts. This includes writing the findings in the report and highlighting validity of the analysis and connecting the findings to the overall research questions of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
4 Findings

In this chapter, the empirical data that has been collected from the case study is presented. In combination with the data collected, an analysis of the data and their themes from the thematic analysis are presented. The themes are presented with a description of why they were created and which points to data that led to each individual theme.

Social media has been found as a big part of the OBP. During the last couple of years, many new platforms have been created, such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook; but also sales effectiveness tools such as Sales Navigator. Within this research, three themes associated with social media has been created; namely:

1. Strengthen the Brand
2. Influence
3. Leads

The chapter has thus been structured based on these themes that have been created through codes which are illustrated in Figure 3. The codes have in turn been created through key quotations found during the interviews. The thematic analysis does not include any sub-themes since the codes could directly be aligned under three common themes.

The thematic analysis has been mapped to visualize these three themes and is illustrated in Figure 3.
These themes are going to be overviewed with the corresponding data from the qualitative analysis to present the thematic analysis. In addition to the identified themes, followed by the quotations from the interviewee; a paragraph of explanatory description is added to the analysis. This will also describe the association to the aim of the research and the research questions that are aligned and created with consideration to the previous chapters in this Master’s Thesis.

To identify how the employees and the customers of Climeon experience the OBP, this chapter aims to provide the reader with an analysis of how social media affects the win-rate and lead-time. It also aims to analyze how social media aligns with Climeon and their customers. This is done by dividing the analysis with each theme into answers of research question one and two to clearly visualize how each theme affect win-rate and lead-time of the OBP.

4.1 Strengthen the Brand

When performing the interview's, one of the applications for social media was to strengthen the brand. Strengthening brand involves creating a better perception of your company to create an edge over the competitors. With a stronger brand, a company can more easily approach customers. A strong brand essentially creates credibility and may, therefore, help increase the success rate for a company, hence the win-rate, and decrease the lead-time of the OBP.
Social media has become a great tool for companies to strengthen the perception of the brand among the customers. At Climeon, this was done through social media channels including mainly LinkedIn, but also Twitter and Facebook. Creating credibility is significant to strengthening the brand and portray the company as honest and trustworthy to be able to sell their products and services.

“It is useful to market yourself and make the product relatable by personifying your value proposition. It is easier to evaluate value proposition with an individual than it is to associate it with a company. That is one way and LinkedIn is useful in that sense.”

4.1.1 Win-rate
The interviews showed that an important part of social media was the strengthening of the company brand but also creating a brand on an individual level. It was found as important to create a personal brand to the product through the individual representing the company, which is done through personal social media channels by employees. This is seen to create an individual associated with the company and the product through its employees.

“I have a brand on LinkedIn. You have a brand on LinkedIn as well. You can choose how you would like to be perceived as a person, and that is also beneficial.”

This shows that the building of the company brand to a big degree is done through the employees’ social media channels rather than just the company’s. Through a strengthened personal brand, the employee can generate credibility toward the customer and also a personal relationship between them and the customer and thereby also between the company and the customer. This relationship helps improve the customer experience leading to a customer being more likely to pick the supplier over another leading to a higher win-rate.
It was also that the brand presence is in the process of generating an interest from the customer, making them more likely to interact and purchase from the company and thereby increasing the win-rate for the company going into the OBP. The reason for this is that although the customer does not post updates with contingency, they may still go online to stay updated about things happening within their industry and potential business opportunities. It was also found that during the OBP there is a fine line between effective communication and becoming annoying to the customer. If this line is crossed it can hurt the personal brand and thereby also the company brand. This indicates that although social media makes it easier to reach out to customers it needs to be handled with care to not offend the customer which can lead to a lost deal and thereby lower the win-rate for the supplier.

“When it involves a lot of people, on different levels a lot, of different stakeholders; in general, it has a limit on how often you can reach out to the people you are in contact with. If I would have reached out every week to the contact that I am speaking to I would start to annoy them.”

“I would like to highlight the importance of that you are not risking becoming annoying if you try to reach out to them direct too often.”

One of the recurrent data points that were collected regards the honesty that the sales team had towards their customers through all different communication channels; meaning that if Climeon does not think a deal is efficient for the customer, it is essential to let them know early on in the OBP.

“So, there I would say it is good to have a tough discussion because if you enter into something that you cannot deliver on, you are not in a good situation; so we need to be onboard. It is better to have a good discussion early.”

“Bring the tough and nasty stuff up immediately, then you will save a lot of time.”

The exemplification that the seller made was related to honesty through communication channels such as face-to-face interaction, email, and social media. Climeon's way of working reflects how they are doing business by being trustworthy to the customer and to keep the promises that have been made throughout the OBP. With today's social media a wrong decision can easily result in negative word of mouth for the company. Social media makes business more transparent since dishonesty will be revealed and spread between customers making it harder for these companies to do business. This will, in turn, lead to a lowered win-rate since the company will have difficulties regaining the trust and credibility among customers.
4.1.2 Lead-time

As mentioned in the previous section, creating a personal brand is a way of creating credibility and strengthening the company brand. This creates a personal connection between the salesperson and the customer, creating a perception of the customer buying off the individual rather than the company. It was seen that it was easier to create credibility on a personal level than directly on a company level. The personal connections between the customer and the employee makes it easier to provide the right information and easier to progress in the OBP reducing the lead-time of the OBP. The reason of this is that the customer already has a personal connection with an individual within the company and someone to communicate with during the OBP. This credibility of one salesperson affects the credibility of a whole team, making it essential for a salesperson to establish credibility to reduce the total lead-time of the OBP.

Brand building and honesty are connected and with customer's accessibility to social media, they can easily spread their experience which puts increased emphasis on honesty. Bad publicity has always been a risk for companies. But as mentioned in the literature, social media has made it harder for companies to manage bad publicity. This puts much more weight on companies than before, dishonesty will due to social media spread among customers benefiting transparent and honest suppliers. Like previously mentioned, the honesty through different communication channels affects the win-rate of the OBP. However, it will also affect the lead-time of the OBP since a dishonest supplier will need to work harder and put more time into convincing the customer that they are reliable.

“If you are being dishonest with someone it will show. And if you don't have credibility, then it's over. You can't pretend that there is not a problem when there is a problem”

Additionally, it was mentioned that the price is not set until all the details are on the table; which according to Climeon was clearly communicated to the customer. This is also reflected in Climeon's everyday work and how they are communicating openly about the price. They are also open about the price and how it can differ from case to case.

“Looking at the project now, we have a good payback time, but this will change plus minus 20% depending on what we will find out for the total integration work.”
As mentioned earlier, this increased brand presence creates a greater knowing of the company making the customer more likely to interact with the company and more likely to accept incoming requests from the company. This makes it easier for a company to approach the customer since they are more open to what the company has to say. They might even, through social media, have achieved knowledge about the company making it easier for them to proceed in the OBP which ultimately decreases the lead-time of the OBP.

"I don’t post but I definitely go online and see if there is anything going on. LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook etc. I realize that Climeon and the Climeon team are quite active there."

Also, as all customers mention having seen posts by Climeon and actively keep themselves updated on various social media channels it is important when it comes to building the personal brand and thereby the company brand. It shows that social media has helped reach the customers from the employees’ social media channels with information regarding the company. As the customers mention having seen the posts and the fact that they recall them as active on LinkedIn and such shows that they have helped create a brand of the company for the customer while also making them more familiar with the individuals of the company. To conclude, customers are interested in things happening on different social media platforms and not only LinkedIn, and it is also interesting to see how that can that connect to the second identified theme.

4.2 Influence

The second theme that has been identified when it comes to social media and how it affects the OBP revolves around influencing the customer. For this study, influencing involves informing and educating current and potential customers through social media; trying to move the customer from a lead into the OBP as a sales project. With greater knowledge and understanding uncertainty can be decreased for the customer essentially making it easier to reach a decision. Therefore, influencing the customer affects the win-rate and the lead-time of the OBP. Furthermore, this theme involves different ways that social media can be used influence customers and decision-makers in the OBP.
"We can address our customers' challenges through articles and insights that we have and by publishing posts and get comments from the industry and the people that have a lot to say about our area of equipment and area of industry, for renewable energy and such."

4.2.1 Win-rate

LinkedIn is a social media that has been recurring in the interviews and so also when it comes to influencing the customer. The people being interviewed highlighted that LinkedIn is not only a tool used to communicate directly with individuals but is also used to indirectly influence customers by posting relevant content to the customer's current situation, like previously mentioned increases the win-rate of a company's deals. Furthermore, it was found during the interviews that there are ways of influencing the customer in between the direct connections and avoiding, as mentioned earlier, to reach out to often and risk annoying the customer. Through posting relevant information for the customer on LinkedIn it can help them easier make a decision without directly approaching them and thereby increase the win-rate.

"LinkedIn which is an indirect channel there I can have a lot of touchpoints by posting things that are relevant to the customer's situation that I know in-direct could influence them or make them think in a different way. So, that I can do a lot in between when I am not speaking to them."

The interviews also uncovered that posting content not directly connected to the customer's industry also can help improve the customer experience and the trust toward the sales representative, ultimately increasing win-rate because of the reduced insecurity of the customer. The interviews highlighted the importance of publishing posts relevant to the customer as a human being, and not only directly related to the industry they are in. This is in line with the increased focus on customer experience in the OBP and shows how these activities can improve the customer experience. Instead of the customer retrieving specific information for them to make up their mind regarding an issue sharing posts regarding human matters instead helps build trust and credibility and also resulting in a higher win-rate.

"Social media is a good way of doing that. I can post things that are not relevant directly to the industry but may be relevant to us as human beings. That is a part of the mix, not only posting specific things; but also looking at the bigger picture."
Another way to influence the customer was found to be targeted marketing within social media. Targeted marketing is an effective way of influencing customers on different levels, through targeted advertising online. It is a way of creating new touchpoints for companies and their customers affecting the overall customer experience. Targeted marketing is a great example of how companies align their efforts and resources toward the most important customers, to increase win-rate and improve long-term financials, which is a trend highlighted also in the literature.

With that said, one can see that there are leads that are created by social media that can lead to a signed contract. One of Climeon's deals came from a lead generated firstly by targeted marketing; and secondly, through an article that was spread on social media, see quotation below. The article's meaning in this customer story shows that interaction on social media can lead to sales project, which in this case was anticipated by the customer because of the combination of targeted marketing and an article on social media. This shows that both targeted marketing and articles on social media may positively influence the customer; ultimately increasing the win-rate for companies today. The published report mentioned below was related to the heat power subject. Company X, Y and Country Z below are real companies and countries and are confidential.

"The start of this journey was a report that was published by the Company X, commissioned by Company X and then completed by the Company Y. This was published in 2016 to basically displaying a wealth of opportunities for low-to-mid enthalpy opportunity in Country Z. So, I guess this kicked off our thinking."

4.2.2 Lead-time
As mentioned earlier, the use of targeted marketing influenced one of the customers to reach out to Climeon early in the process. Through the interviews, it was also found that although not all customers are actively posting information on LinkedIn, a majority are on LinkedIn and continuously look for information and thereby are also open and interested in posts from company representatives. It was also brought up by a customer that LinkedIn had not been part of the OBP with Climeon. However, the customer stating that LinkedIn had not been part of the OBP had still seen posts from Climeon.
This shows that the information somehow still reached and maybe subconsciously influenced the customer and their decisions on moving on with the OBP to reduce the lead-time of the process. It can also be that the person involved did not use LinkedIn during the process but took part of the posts through colleagues which indicates that other people in the OBP have taken part in communication through social media.

“I have seen some of the posts to promote your company and your product, but it is not a communication channel that I have used in this project.”

Providing content may help customers obtain the information needed to proceed in the OBP, ultimately becoming less insecure about a potential deal and knowing the essential information leading to a reduced lead-time of the OBP. It was also found, as mentioned earlier, that general posts regarding human matters may affect the customers’ view of the supplier. This may have been the case although it was not directly expressed during the interviews. Trust toward Climeon as a supplier may have been strengthened through these posts although this may occur unconsciously. In that case, it can have reduced the lead-time due to higher trust, making the decision to progress in the OBP easier.

As mentioned earlier, targeted marketing is not only used to increase the win-rate of the OBP. Targeted marketing also helps companies reach out with the same message to various decision-makers of an organization. By doing this, a company can in a more effective way influence numerous stakeholders simultaneously. Therefore, companies can better manage the customer experience on different organizational levels, but also influence different stakeholders in the decision-making process potentially making it easier for them to reach an agreement; ultimately leading to reduced lead-time of the OBP.

“I think it’s important to be able to send the same message across different channels and to different levels of the organization.”

The effectiveness of targeted marketing was also exemplified through one of the deals that were made by Climeon, initiated through targeted marketing.

“I think that just Climeon’s website sort of popped up. I think that it was some sort of sponsored item addon on LinkedIn to begin with, that part sort of led us to contact with Climeon.”
This shows that targeted marketing can influence the customer and, in this case, also lead the customer to a connection with the company. Climeon’s employees themselves did not spend their time on prospecting in this case; since the marketing department communicated through targeted marketing for them. The marketing department has, therefore, a role that helps the sales department to reduce the total lead-time of the OBP.

4.3 Leads
The third and last theme that has been identified when it comes to the effect social media has on the OBP revolves around generating leads. Generating leads involves finding new business opportunities, and when doing this the leads may come with different quality. The quality of the leads involves the feasibility of the business opportunity and also the value of the business opportunity. The quality of the leads is strongly connected to the lead-time and win-rate of the OBP. With more quality leads the win-rate of the OBP may increase and lead-time may be decreased since high-quality leads are more likely to commit and proceed in the OBP. With this said, this theme revolves around how the generation of these qualitative leads through social media affects the win-rate and lead-time of the OBP.

Leads can be generated with touchpoints through different social media platforms. The most important and commonly used social media platform was found to be LinkedIn. The assumption from the literature that each touchpoint is equally important can, therefore, be analyzed as a difference from theory in this specific case since touchpoints within LinkedIn seem to be of major importance. These touchpoints can be articles written by the salespeople, status updates, conversations or interactions through different posts.

It was found that Sales Navigator, a tool within LinkedIn, is a commonly used tool among the Climeon sales team. This tool is used to map out new contacts and was also described by an employee as a “simple CRM-system”. Salespeople used Sales Navigator to map out new contacts and identify key decision-makers. This was used to get in touch with people within different areas but also on different levels of an organization. On top of that, it was found through the interviews that the sales representatives used LinkedIn to get background information on the people they were connecting with, giving them insight into their competencies, their current role, responsibilities, and previous experiences.
“You can map out leads and contacts, so it is like a very simple CRM-system where you can collect peoples’ profiles from LinkedIn to Sales Navigator and map them as contacts or new leads and save contacts and so on.”

4.3.1 Win-rate

As mentioned in the literature, the OBP is complex and involves many different stakeholders. The interviews with the employees show that Sales Navigator is a tool part of Linkedin that helps the company map the key decision-makers and stakeholders relevant for the OBP. Sales Navigator helps the company discover the best potential leads and the important stakeholders revolving around the lead. This enables the company to interact with the right people increasing the likeliness of a successful deal which in a long-term perspective may generate a higher win-rate for a company.

Sales Navigator works like a CRM-system where employees map their leads. However, the theory means that the idea of mapping the OBP is essential to create a visualization for all the different sequences of the OBP to increase the win-rate; not only mapping the contacts and leads. The mapping of the new contacts often resulted in new leads for the sales team; optimally leading to a sales project.

It was found that LinkedIn is not only helpful for salespeople actively looking for new leads; people also reach out through LinkedIn resulting in incoming business requests. This creates a bigger number of leads to choose from and thereby also gives options to choose more qualitative deals that may generate a better starting point resulting in a potentially higher success ratio and thereby also a higher win-rate.

It was also mentioned that In-mail, another feature of LinkedIn, enabled sales representatives to get in touch with people that they previously had not met or even had connected with on LinkedIn.

"Together with this tool we can also search for the right people to be able to bee-swarm them to contact us or we can contact them through In-mail. This enables us to contact people that we are not in contact with on LinkedIn."
These tools allow suppliers to directly get in touch with a customer that without social media would be hard. It was found that LinkedIn, to some degree, can replace cold calling as it allows an employee to approach a new customer in a smoother way. With this opportunity, it further widens the possibilities when it comes to finding new leads and with these tools, it simplifies the approach to new customers that the company has not previously been in contact with. This results in more potential lead to choose from and simplifies the approach which may lead to a higher chance of reaching an agreement and thereby a higher win-rate.

One can see that from the interviews, it was mentioned that a T-shaped funnel is used by Climeon when qualifying deals. Climeon have decided not to use a traditional V-shaped funnel. Instead, a T-shaped funnel is focusing on the most qualitative leads at an early stage, which is represented by the top of the T. This is due to social media enabling a faster qualification to establish the highest quality deals at an earlier stage.

“A T-shaped funnel rather than a V-shaped. You maybe have many leads or opportunities that you pursue, then only the ones with a high probability of closing are something that you move further down the funnel.”

This T-funnel leads-approach has the foundation of achieving many leads at the beginning (which is the top of the "T" and have a wider funnel); where only the best of deals is chosen as a sales project since those are the ones with the highest win-rate.

“So, we try to put the focus on the most feasible deals and also the ones with the largest potential.”

“We do qualify early, we don't spend too much time on cases that consume too much time and wrong leads.”

4.3.2 Lead-time
The interviews show that Sales Navigator helps employees get an insight into the role a person has within an organization and also their background. This gives them a valuable prerequisite for the various stakeholders involved in the OBP and thereby makes it easier to approach them with the right information. By staying ahead of the customer and by providing them with the necessary information needed, it helps the stakeholder make decisions faster resulting in a decreased lead-time for the OBP.
"I would say that LinkedIn is the place where we get in contact with the newest leads."

"LinkedIn is a very important channel for us, a great tool for more or less everyone is there, and you have a lot of information about their history and background within geothermal or energy. It is the bee swarming tool that we use, and people can easily contact us there, so a lot of incoming requests has come from LinkedIn."

“The biggest order we have signed is through a lead on LinkedIn”

As mentioned in the previous section, Climeon uses a T-shaped funnel instead of a V-shaped to qualify leads early in the OBP. With a more efficient qualification process, where the leads are found through social media such as LinkedIn, one can see that this approach of qualification may lead to reduced lead-time of the OBP; by spending the resources on the right prospects. The prospecting of new leads may therefore be reduced through the use of Linkedin, Sales Navigator, and may reduce the total lead-time of the OBP.

“We need to find the fastest way to profit our business, both for our customers and ourselves. That is key. In order to do that, we need to filter out bad cases. Really, really tough and quick; which means that we should have a broad funnel regarding leads, but a very tight funnel regarding sales projects.”

In addition to increasing the win-rate, LinkedIn, which is identified as the main social media platform for Climeon, is used to exchange information to speed up the OBP and thereby reduce the total lead-time. The parameters that are needed for the sales team to estimate a sales project total costs are an important parameter to be able to calculate their return on investment (ROI). Through social media platforms like LinkedIn, the information that is needed to create the initial calculations can be acquired quick so that Climeon can identify if the customer is qualified for a sales project. This process through LinkedIn is an efficient way of qualifying the customer and is identified as a process within the OBP that can help reduce the total lead-time.

“We are trying to send out requests for information to our customers to get all the information we need so that we can qualify the case. This is also an Excel sheet with all the specifications that we need to create this first business case.”

Due to the number of salespeople in combination with the company sales goals, the Climeon sales team needs to work with LinkedIn efficiently. Spending their time where it is needed is essential to increase the number of signed contracts. It was found that the sales representatives time should be viewed as equally important as the customers and that the salespeople need to take control and not only adapt.
This is connected to Climeon's way of reducing the total lead-time of the OBP; by taking control and leading the customer forward in the OBP.

“You should also look at your own time as equally important as your customer's. Because if the customer rules everything and demand you to do things, and you always adapt to that; then they feel that they are in control of you.”

To conclude, in the first theme it was found that sharing posts of relevance to strengthen the personal and company brand is proven to be important. However, the sum of effective social media communication can also generate leads that have higher win-rate. The salespeople might not always get their leads from themselves, because of the help from the marketing department, the targeted marketing, and the professionally written articles, the prospecting-time can be reduced, and therefore, also the total lead-time of the OBP.
5 Conclusion

This chapter will present conclusions based on the findings in the previous chapter. It will also include the theoretical and managerial contributions of the study.

From the analysis, it was found that LinkedIn was the main social media channel used by sales representatives. LinkedIn with services such as Sales Navigator enables sales representatives to map out contacts and find new leads. With these tools, sales representatives can create a better understanding of the different stakeholders involved internally and externally. This gives the sales representatives a head-start when it comes to understanding the bigger picture and knowing which stakeholders withhold the greatest decision-making power. This, in turn, gives the sales representatives a better fundamental understanding of the case at hand and the potential of the case before engaging. It also helps them better prepare for how to approach each case to create the best conditions for success. These findings can better explain how social media affects the OBP in terms of increased win-rate and reduced lead-time.

To recap, the aim of this study has been:

“To understand how communication between the customer and supplier through social media is affecting the OBP.”

To be able to create a better understanding of the research topic it was broken down into two research questions:

**Research Question One:**

“How does social media affect the win-rate of the OBP?”

**Research Question Two:**

“How does social media affect the lead-time of the OBP?”
5.1 Research Question One

The first research question revolves around the win-rate of the OBP. Win-rate is a metric used to measure the percentage of opportunities proposed that the supplier won. For this study, win-rate has been used to represent the effectiveness of the OBP. Looking at the first research question, social media may be used to strengthen the company brand. By creating a personal brand, the employees can create a personal connection to the company. The employees of a company may then strengthen the company brand through their personal brand. With a stronger brand, trust and credibility can be built when an individual is associated with the company and thereby may increase the chances of customers choosing them over someone else, hence increasing the win-rate.

By using social media, employees can share information regarding a chosen industry to educate customer and create credibility. With this said, employees, can influence customers without having to directly reach out to them. This may create an awareness, increasing the likeliness of positive attitude towards the company so when approached, the win-rate may be higher. A good social media presence allows customers to engage with the company representatives generating opportunities that might not have been presented to them otherwise. This may also help increase the win-rate of the OBP since it increases the different options when it comes to which leads to proceed with.

Talking about leads, Sales Navigator can help salespersons generate more leads. It also enables them to categorize the leads to more easily identify the high-quality leads which may generate a higher win-rate entering the OBP. With LinkedIn, salespersons can more easily map the different stakeholders within an organization and get background information about their current role and previous experience. With a better overview of the different stakeholders, the sales team are better prepared when approaching them resulting in a bigger chance of them wanting to proceed with the company which may result in a higher win-rate.
Targeted marketing was also found to be used on social media platforms. With targeted marketing, a company can target specific organizations with advertising and influence stakeholders on different levels of the organization with the same message. As the OBP, in general, is complex and involves numerous stakeholders, targeted marketing allows a company to better align these different stakeholders increasing the chances of them reaching a joint-decision. Beyond this, it places the company in the heads of the targeted organization without much effort from the company creating an awareness of the company. This may result in a potential customer reaching out to the company. Not all companies will choose to reach out and despite the targeted marketing, they may however be aware of the company increasing the chances of a successful approach from the company, and thereby increase win-rate. With this said, targeted marketing is way for companies to target various stakeholders at once; potentially resulting in a higher win-rate.

5.2 Research Question Two

Concerning the OBP in terms of lead-time reduction, more studies can be done to highlight the affect social media has. Lead-time in this report, has been used as a metric to represent the efficiency of the OBP. It was found that one of the factors potentially affecting the lead-time of the OBP is the personal and company brand. What individuals share on social media may be of importance to stay interesting for leads, but also to attract new potential customers. Within social media, it was found that LinkedIn is the platform and communication channel that may have the greatest value in terms of reducing the total lead-time of the OBP. Through LinkedIn, trust can be built through writing articles and being interactive on posts of industry relevance; and posts regarding human matters.

It was found that the trust can be the foundation of making the OBP smoother for both the supplier and the customer; where information on social media platforms such as LinkedIn can be shared to maintain trust and educate the network of current and potential customers to speed up the OBP. Customers can today find information on social media platforms that a couple years ago did not exist. They can interact with potential suppliers, retrieve necessary information and share information; potentially leading to a shorter and more efficient OBP.
Social media allows suppliers with strong personal and company brands to receive more incoming leads. With the many leads, it was found that qualifying those are essential for suppliers to spend their time on the most valuable ones; to be efficient and reduce their total lead-time of each OBP by focusing their time where it is needed and on the customer with the greatest potential.

Targeted marketing is another tool possibly affecting the lead-time and win-rate of the OBP. Leads generated through targeted marketing are targeted leads, chosen by the company since they may have great potential to become a customer and undergo the OBP smoothly, making them informed about the company before an OBP is initiated; which thereby can reduce the total lead-time. Targeted marketing is, therefore, a way for suppliers to stay ahead of the customer and be efficient with the choice of leads to putting effort on only the best of prospects. All things considered, not only one factor affects the efficiency of the OBP.

5.3 Theoretical Contribution

One can see that there are many similarities and few differences between factors that affect win-rate and lead-time in the OBP. A conclusion may be that things that affect the win-rate may also affects the total lead-time of the OBP. The correlation between the two research questions can therefore be positive. This implies that when the lead-time efficiency increases, the win-rate will increase. This gives that when lead-time is increased, which means that it takes a longer time to undergo an OBP, the win-rate of the deal may also decrease. Therefore, the recommendations are given based on both the increase in win-rate and decrease in lead-time.

Going back to the literature, it shows that companies that are following a structured OBP can increase the win-rate. However, the different steps of the OBP was not found in the case study and thereby may imply a difference from what the literature suggests. According to Wind and Thomas (1980); Juha and Pentti (2008) there are different models explaining the OBP but as mentioned, through the case study it was found that the company is less formal when it comes to following a structured sales process. Instead, the company puts more emphasis on mapping the different stakeholders involved in the OBP, instead of following any of the models suggested by Wind and Thomas (1980); Juha and Pentti (2008). This is a difference that was found and may be seen as theoretical contribution.
McGoldrick and Douglas (1983) also pointed out the importance of touchpoints in the OBP, which today is shown in more than one communication channel. Oyza and Edwin (2015) added that social media is a revolutionary and cost-efficient trend where the engagement is growing fast. This was confirmed by the case study. However, tools such as Sales Navigator is a service within LinkedIn which is not highlighted in the literature. With that said, there are tools, just like Sales Navigator that are used frequently in social media that can be described more in today's literature.

5.4 Managerial Contribution

LinkedIn was found to be the main social media used within B2B and therefore requires great focus. However, it was also found that customers spend time also on other social media channels such as Twitter and Facebook. This highlights the importance of analyzing which social media channels customer spend the most time to optimize a company’s social media presence. In addition, the activity on social media between employees at Climeon differed. Since social media can be an effective tool to build a brand, find leads, inform and influence the customer it may also be important that all employees know how to use social media effectively. The reason it differs may be due to lack of knowledge or even confidence with social media. With this said, it can, therefore, be helpful to educate employees on the impact that social media can have and how to use social media effectively.

Although social media is used to a big extent within B2B, interviews show that some customers still visit the company website to search for information. Therefore, it can also be important to keep communication channels, such as the website, updated for customers who are looking for information there. As the website can be the initial touchpoint for some customers it can be beneficial to use the website to generate the technical information necessary for the customer. It may help the customer to get a better understanding of how the technical requirement applies to their specific case. This may help to positively influence the customer and with a greater technical understanding from the customer at an early stage it can be seen as a complement to social media and can help reduce the lead-time of the OBP. Social media may be a key communication channel today, but companies should not forget to analyze the customer and where they look for their information to be able to simplify their decision-making potentially resulting in reduced lead-time and improved win-rate of the OBP.
What was found during the interview was that Sales Navigator was used as a simple CRM-system to map contacts. Implementing a CRM-system to map the OBP for complex B2B-sales can however still help companies to improve their results. It can also help to map a company's activities and touchpoints and thereby know what to do and when to do it, optimally reducing the total lead-time of the OBP. Mapping company's OBP can, therefore, help companies manage social media to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the OBP.

5.5 Implications for Theory and Further Research

Understanding the OBP as a subject and knowing that there are two sides of a purchase has been an essential part of this study. However, the validity of this study from a customer point of view may be limited since only two interviews with customers were performed. On the other hand, the validity of a company and employee point of view is greater. The number of interviews with employees from Climeon was eight. However, the results may be skewed towards how Climeon perceive and work with the OBP and the study does not reflect the whole industry, due to the time restriction.

Furthermore, this study may have contributed to a better understanding of the new dimensions of the OBP revolving around social media. Previous literature gives a good overview of the OBP but how social media affects the OBP may be further explored. Previous studies also show how the buying and selling process today are adapting more to the customer experience and that the OBP is becoming less linear. This is reflected in the case study, but also that the number of touchpoints has increased with social media.

The customer experience of the OBP is also one of the aspects that can be investigated more. Today people buy with relationships, which may reduce the lead-time as well as increase the win-rate. Customers are not buying from suppliers, they are buying from people; meaning that relationship marketing and customer experience may be growing in the 21st-century buying. For the future it will be more important to see how social media affects OBP in similar industries, but also other industries; as well as how the lead-time and win-rate of the OBP may be reflected in monetary terms. New studies should focus on how companies can increase their revenues using social media, but also studies that strengthen the results of this study's findings.
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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Climeon’s Product Design
Appendix 2 - Guideline and Interview Guide with Climeon’s employees
Appendix 3 - Guideline and Interview Guide with Climeon’s customers
Appendix 1 - Climeon’s Product Design
Appendix 2 - Guideline and Interview Guide with Climeon’s employees

1. Can you describe your role and duties at Climeon?

2. Can you tell us about your background and previous job experiences?

3. What previous experience do you have of working with B2B sales?

4. How would you describe the sales process at Climeon? How do you establish a timeline for each case?

5. Can you describe what is to be done throughout the sales process? What different ways do you interact with the customer?

6. Do you follow a specific strategy or guidelines for a typical sales process?
   a. What specific ways do you have of searching for new customers?
   b. Why are they important?
   c. How are they important?
   d. How has working with different communication channels changed?
   e. How do you know what to do in a sales process, and when to do it?
   f. Are there any checkpoints or milestones in the sales process?
   g. What major decision-making points are there in the sales process
   h. How does Climeon work to move the customers forward in the sales process and when do you move on?
   i. Who decides when to move on?

7. What are common obstacles that occur during the sales process? When and why do they arise?

8. How do you and Climeon work to simplify the sales process?

9. How long does the average sales process take? Does it vary?

10. Can you rank the most time-consuming part of the sales process?

11. Why did the lead-time of those differ?

12. How could the lead-time of the sales process have been reduced?

13. Was there someone that was not involved that you wished had been involved in the sales process?

14. Which employees would you say are key from your company in the sales process? Why are they key?
10. How are the different communication channels used to influence the customer?

11. How do you and Climeon use social media?
   a. What different platforms of social media do you use?
   b. Why are they used?
   c. Why do you use social media?
   d. How has social media affected the discussion and information sharing with potential customers?
   e. What other new communication channels do you use?

12. In your most recent deal, what big decisions had to be made to close the deal? Who took the decision? Why was the decision made?

13. What key criteria does a potential customer need to fulfill?
   a. How do you determine what information to share with a potential customer?
   b. How do you retrieve this information?

14. Describe how an offer at Climeon is formed?

15. Can you describe the follow-up process that Climeon goes through with your customers?

16. How do Climeon work proactively to identify risks with your customers?
   a. What is the most common perceived risk among customers?

15. How do you work proactively with improving the sales process over time?
   a. How is this communicated within Climeon?
   b. Regarding the most time-consuming sales process you have had, what additional information could have reduced the total lead-time?

17. Can you describe factors that have led to cancelled deals?

18. When in the sales process was the deal(s) cancelled? Why was in cancelled?

19. How do you and Climeon work to learn from cancelled deals?

20. Do you have any other thoughts or aspects that you find interesting that you want to share with us?
Appendix 3 - Guideline and Interview Guide with Climeon’s customers

1. Can you describe your role within the company?

2. Can you tell us about your background and previous job experiences?

3. Can you describe the duties involved with your role?

4. Can you describe your background, your current role and your duties at your company?

5. What role did you have during the buying process with Climeon?

6. What previous experience do you have within B2B sales and purchases?

7. How was your contact with Climeon first initiated?
   a. How did you find out about Climeon?

8. How would you describe the buying process with Climeon?
   a. Can you describe what activities/stages was involved in the buying process?
   b. What major decision-making points did you encounter during the buying process with Climeon?
   c. What were the necessary things for you during the buying process?
   d. What key criteria did you have from your company?

9. Can you describe the most time-consuming part of the buying process?
   a. How could this have been reduced?

10. What information were you presented with in the buying process?
    a. What information was the most important for your company?
    b. What information would you have wanted to obtain to reach a quicker decision?
    c. What other things could have reduced the time of the buying process with Climeon?
    d. What could have been added/excluded in terms of information?

11. What were the main communication channels used between you and Climeon and how did they simplify communication (e.g. through social media, telephone, e-mail)?

12. How was social media used during your buying process with Climeon?
    a. What different platforms of social media were used?
    b. Why are they used?
    c. What other new communication channels do you use?

13. Was there someone that was not involved that you wished had been involved in the buying process?

14. Overall, what made you choose Climeon over other suppliers?
a. What were the deciding factor(s) that made you realize you wanted Climeon’s products?
b. Was the offer changed during the buying process? If yes, why?

15. Which employees would you say were key from your company in the buying process?

16. What obstacles did you face during the buying process?

17. When in the process was this obstacle anticipated?

18. How did Climeon help you identify and overcome these obstacles?

19. What were the perceived risks during your buying process at Climeon?

20. In what way did your perceived risk affect the buying process?

21. How did Climeon help mitigate these risks?

22. Can you describe the post-purchase activities?

23. What recommendations would you give Climeon to further improve their buying process?

24. How can the buying process become more “smooth”?

25. Do you have any additional thoughts or questions that you want to add?