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Reconfiguring Go-To-Market models in B2B SaaS

A qualitative multiple-case study of dynamic capabilities and SLG and PLG tensions

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ABSTRACT:

As B2B software-as-a-service companies develop, their go-to-market models often become more complex. Sales-led growth depends on direct customer interaction and relationship building, while product-led growth emphasizes self-service, product usage and scalability. In practice, companies may face tensions between these two growth logics when customer needs, product complexity, market conditions, or internal capabilities change. This creates both an opportunity and a challenge: companies must adapt their GTM direction without weakening the routines that already support revenue.

The aim of this study is to investigate how B2B SaaS companies internally reconfigure their capabilities when responding to tensions between sales-led and product-led growth. Earlier GTM literature mainly explains the differences between sales-led, product-led, and hybrid models, while the internal processes behind GTM change have received less attention. To complement this discussion, the thesis examines how companies recognize GTM limitations, make strategic choices, allocate resources and change organizational roles and routines. Dynamic capabilities provide the main analytical lens through sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring. Meanwhile organizational ambidexterity supports the analysis of tensions between the existing and new growth arrangements.

The findings show that GTM reconfiguration is not a simple or linear move from one model to another. The chosen case companies recognized limitations and opportunities through product usage data, sales conversations, customer behavior, market changes and failed assumptions. They then selected a context-specific GTM direction and changed internal roles, routines, resource allocations, sales involvement and customer success practices.

The main contribution of the study is a more practical understanding of B2B SaaS GTM reconfiguration as an internal capability process. The findings suggest that hybrid GTM is one possible outcome, but not a natural endpoint for every SaaS company. The suitable direction depends on customer needs, product complexity, buying behavior, target market and available organizational capabilities.

KEYWORDS: B2B SaaS, Go-To-Market reconfiguration, Dynamic capabilities, Organizational Ambidexterity, Sales-led Growth, Product-led Growth, microfoundations

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TIIVISTELMÄ:

B2B SaaS -yritysten kehittyessä niiden markkinoilletulostrategiat, eli go-to-market-mallit muuttuvat usein monimutkaisemmiksi. Myyntivetoinen kasvu (sales-led growth) perustuu suoraan asiakasvuorovaikutukseen ja asiakassuhteiden rakentamiseen, kun taas tuotevetoinen kasvu (product-led growth) korostaa itsepalvelua, tuotteen käyttöä, käyttöönotettavuutta, sekä skaalautuvuutta. Käytännössä yritykset voivat kohdata erilaisia jännitteitä näiden kahden kasvulogiikan välillä, kun asiakkaiden tarpeet, tuotteen monimutkaisuus, markkinaolosuhteet tai yrityksen sisäiset kyvykkyudet muuttuvat. Tämä luo sekä mahdollisuuksia että haasteita. Yritysten on mukautettava go-to-market malliaan heikentämättä samalla jo olemassa olevia toimintatapoja, jotka tukevat jatkuvaa liikevaihtoa.

Tämän tutkielman tavoitteena on selvittää, miten B2B SaaS -yritykset muokkaavat ja uudelleenjärjestelivät sisäisiä kyvykkyksiään vastatessaan kahden kasvumallin välisiin jännitteisiin. Aiempi GTM-kirjallisuus tarkastelee pääosin myynti- ja tuotevetoinen, sekä hybridimallien välisiä eroja, kun taas taustalla olevat sisäiset prosessit ovat jääneet vähemmälle huomiolle. Tutkimus pyrkii täydentämään tätä keskustelua tarkastelemalla, miten yritykset tunnistavat nykyisten GTM-malliensa rajoitteita, tekevät strategisia valintoja, kohdentavat resursseja sekä muuttavat sisäisiä rooleja ja toimintatapoja. Dynamic capabilities -teoria muodostaa tutkimuksen keskeisen analyyttisen näkökulman havaitsemisen (sensing), tarttumisen (seizing) ja uudistamisen (reconfiguring) kautta. Organisatorinen kaksikäisyys (ambidexterity) puolestaan tukee nykyisten ja uusien järjestelyiden välisten jännitteiden tarkastelua.

Tulokset osoittavat, ettei GTM-mallin uudelleenjärjestely ole yksinkertainen tai suoraviivainen siirtymä mallista toiseen. Valitut kohdeyritykset tunnistivat rajoitteitaan ja mahdollisuuksia mm. tuotekäyttötietojen, myyntikeskusteluiden, asiakaskäyttäytymisen, markkinamuutosten, sekä virheellisten oletusten avulla. Tämän jälkeen yritykset keskittyivät valitsemaan omaan toimintaympäristöönsä sopivan GTM-suunnan muuttamalla sisäisiä rooleja ja toimintatapojaan, resurssien kohdistamista, sekä myynnin ja asiakkuudenhallinnan käytäntöjä.

Tutkimuksen keskeinen lisäarvo on käytännönläheinen näkemys siitä, miten B2B SaaS -yritykset muuttavat GTM-malleja kehittämällä sisäisiä kyvykkyksiään, toimintatapojaan, sekä resurssien käyttöä. Tulokset viittaavat siihen, että hybridi-GTM-malli on yksi mahdollinen lopputulos, mutta ei kaikkien SaaS-yritysten luonnollinen tai tavoiteltava päämäärä. Sopivan suunnan valintaan vaikuttavat erityisesti asiakkaiden tarpeet, tuotteen monimutkaisuus, ostokäyttäytyminen, kohdemarkkina sekä yrityksen käytettävissä olevat kyvykkyudet.

AVAINSANAT: B2B SaaS, Go-To-Market reconfiguration, Dynamic capabilities, Organizational Ambidexterity, Sales-led Growth, Product-led Growth, microfoundations

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1 Introduction

1.1 Motivation for the study

The rapid transformation from traditional software to software-as-a-service has changed the way digital products are developed and consumed (Tyrväinen & Selin, 2011). Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) refers to software that is delivered through the internet without installation on the user's device (Tyrväinen & Selin, 2011). This thesis focuses on business-to-business (B2B) SaaS, where cloud-based software is sold to other companies as tools (e.g., Zoom, Slack, Dropbox, Salesforce, and HubSpot) for purposes such as customer relationship management, remote meetings, recruitment, analytics and marketing automation (Mero et al., 2022; Tyrväinen & Selin, 2011). A go-to-market (GTM) strategy describes how a company brings a product to market and achieves growth through choices related to customer acquisition, value proposition, and the coordination of sales, marketing, and product activities (Bush, 2019). In this thesis, GTM is treated as a strategic choice, because it shapes how a firm organizes its resources, routines, and roles to acquire and expand customers.

In B2B SaaS, companies have often relied on traditional direct sales channels, where salespeople are responsible for handling lead generation, demos, negotiation and closing deals (Bush, 2023a; Tyrväinen & Selin, 2011). A strategy that depends mainly on direct sales is often referred to as sales-led growth (SLG) (Bush, 2023a). In recent years, many SaaS companies have adopted new GTM models, especially product-led growth (PLG), where the product experience itself becomes the central mechanism for customer acquisition (Bush, 2019). This change is supported by evolving B2B purchasing preferences, as users inside organizations discover and test new software before formal purchasing decisions are made. This makes the product an important entry point to the customer relationship (Raghavan & Nargundkar, 2020).

Sales-led growth and product-led growth represent distinct organizing logics. SLG is based on direct human interaction and is commonly linked to more complex, high-value

contracts, while PLG emphasizes self-service adoption and scalability through the product (Bush, 2019; Bush, 2023a). Recent industry discussions suggest that companies do not always need to choose a single GTM model. Instead, they may combine elements of both approaches into hybrid models (Alaghband et al., 2023; Gonzalez de Villaumbrosia, 2024; Narayen et al., 2023). Many firms seem to adopt a hybrid logic or product-led sales (PLS) -model, which uses a product-first bottom-up logic while adding selective top-down sales involvement for larger or more complex customers (Alaghband et al., 2023; Narayen et al., 2023).

This hybrid logic has become important because both standalone GTM models may face limitations. While product-led growth can be highly scalable, recent practitioner discussions suggest that it often encounters a growth ceiling in enterprise markets (Alaghband et al., 2023; Narayen et al., 2023). At the same time, SLG often involves high customer acquisition costs (CAC) and long sales cycles, which can reduce efficiency and slow scaling (Alaghband et al., 2023; Bush, 2019; Narayen et al., 2023). As a result, many SaaS companies aim to build GTM models that combine efficient product-led logics with targeted sales engagement (Alaghband et al., 2023; Narayen et al., 2023).

Balancing between GTM models is not only a strategic decision, it also requires organizational change. Companies must redesign routines, align incentives and reallocate resources across product, marketing, and sales. This can create friction because companies have often optimized their existing growth logic (Alaghband et al., 2023; Narayen et al., 2023). From a theoretical perspective, this creates an exploration-exploitation (March, 1991) tension: companies must protect existing revenue routines while developing new GTM arrangements.

From a strategic renewal perspective, Danneels (2011) illustrates that renewal can fail when management remains mentally tied into old business models and does not understand how existing resources can be used in new ways, which may lead to an imbalance where technological capabilities evolve while sales capabilities stall (Danneels, 2011). In

the B2B SaaS context this suggests that even when companies develop product-led capabilities, they may struggle to adjust sales roles, incentives, and GTM structures (Alaghband et al., 2023; Narayen et al., 2023). O'Reilly and Tushman (2008) suggest that achieving ambidexterity is primarily a leadership task rather than a structural or planning task. It requires leaders with clear vision and the ability to understand, utilize, and manage existing resources (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008).

Dynamic capabilities are used as the main theoretical lens for analyzing this strategic change process. Dynamic capabilities describe a company's ability to sense opportunities and threats, seize opportunities through decision-making and investments, and reconfigure its resources and routines (Teece, 2007; Teece et al., 1997). In addition to dynamic capabilities, this thesis uses ambidexterity as a supporting concept to explain the exploration-exploitation tension that appears during GTM reconfiguration. Ambidexterity is not treated as the main theoretical lens or as a separate outcome.

Digital transformation provides a broader context for understanding why GTM reconfiguration in SaaS is not only a marketing decision but also an organizational change process. Vial (2019) defines digital transformation as *"a process that aims to improve an entity by triggering significant changes to its properties through combinations of information, computing, communication, and connectivity technologies."* Vial (2019) argues that technology alone is not enough, but companies also need changes in their strategy and organizational elements. Elements such as structure, processes, and culture are needed to create new paths for value creation (Vial, 2019). This aligns with GTM reconfiguration in B2B SaaS, where balancing SLG and PLG, or implementing a hybrid model often requires new routines, roles, and decision rules in addition to new product features or tools. Therefore, instead of a marketing alignment issue, an organizational design issue or a change management issue, GTM reconfiguration can be considered a dynamic capability issue because it is about replacing old routines and developing new ones.

1.2 Research gap

Academic research describes how SaaS companies have traditionally relied on direct sales as driver for growth (Tyrväinen & Selin, 2011). More recent GTM literature and practitioner discussions emphasize emerging strategies such as product-led growth and hybrid models such as product-led sales as best fit for SaaS markets (Alaghband et al., 2023; Bush, 2019; Gonzalez de Villaumbrosia, 2024; Narayen et al., 2023). Furthermore, dynamic capabilities (Teece, 2007; Teece et al., 1997) and organizational ambidexterity (March, 1991; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996) are described as essential for companies adapting to changing environments.

However, the role of dynamic capabilities in GTM strategy reconfiguration has not been sufficiently empirically studied in the SaaS product line context and a significant gap remains in the reconfiguration process. Traditional academic literature suffers from a static bias (Hunt & Madhavaram, 2020), treating GTM-like strategies as independent, one-time choices rather than as continuous reconfiguration process. While we partially understand the strategic importance of choosing between GTM models (Bush, 2019; Gonzalez de Villaumbrosia, 2024), less is known about how the reconfiguration happens in practice and how these models are adapted to meet the changing market environment. Specifically, there is limited evidence which microfoundations (Teece, 2007), or concrete routines enable B2B SaaS companies to realign their resources.

Filling this research gap is important because companies that fail to adjust their operational routines may fall into competence traps (March, 1991). Such traps can develop into a “success trap” (Levinthal & March, 1993), where a company’s expertise in exploiting a traditional model prevents the successful exploration of new ones. While the existence of these traps is well known, less is known about the specific routines, incentives and structures that are used to balance these conflicting logics and achieve ambidexterity at the product-line level. Addressing this gap provides a theoretical bridge between GTM strategy and dynamic capabilities.

1.3 Research problem and theoretical contribution

The objective of this study is to identify and analyze how B2B SaaS companies reconfigure their organizational resources when responding to tensions between sales-led and product-led growth logics. A hybrid GTM model is treated as one possible response to these tensions rather than as an assumed outcome in every case. By focusing on the product-line level, this study aims to uncover specific routines and decision rules that help companies to balance conflicting growth logics. The thesis is limited to the internal organizational capabilities and routines of Finnish B2B SaaS companies at the product-line level. It does not measure financial performance or study customer-side decision-making.

To achieve the research objective, this study aims to answer the following research question: *How do B2B SaaS companies reconfigure their capabilities when responding to tensions between sales-led and product-led growth logics?*

The main question is explored through the following sub-questions:

- How do companies recognize limitations, opportunities, or tensions connected to existing GTM models?
- How do companies make strategic decisions, evaluate alternative GTM directions and allocate resources when responding to these tensions?
- How do companies reconfigure roles, routines, structures, processes and incentives to support the chosen GTM direction?
- How do companies balance existing GTM routines with new GTM arrangements?

The study uses a qualitative multiple-case study approach, and the data is collected through semi-structured interviews with senior leaders responsible for product-line growth strategies. Secondary sources are used as complementary data. This design enables an in-depth examination of how companies deploy dynamic capabilities during GTM reconfiguration.

This study contributes primarily to the B2B SaaS go-to-market literature by examining how companies internally reconfigure GTM models when responding to tensions between sales-led and product-led growth. Dynamic capabilities (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Teece, 2007; Teece et al., 1997) are used as the main analytical lens, while organizational ambidexterity (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; March, 1991; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996) is used as a supporting concept to interpret the balancing tension between existing and new GTM routines. Finally, the study offers practical insights for managers on capability reconfiguration challenges such as routine change and resource allocation in GTM strategy development.

1.4 Thesis structure

The thesis is organized into five main chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the study, presents the motivation, identifies the research gap, and outlines the GTM reconfiguration problem, purpose and structure of the study. Chapter 2 reviews the theoretical background starting with practitioner-oriented SaaS go-to-market strategies (sales-led growth, product-led growth, product-led sales), and builds on established dynamic capabilities, and organizational ambidexterity literature. Chapter 3 describes the methodology, including the qualitative multiple-case approach, data collection through semi-structured interviews, data analysis and research quality. Chapter 4 presents empirical findings on how B2B SaaS companies sense, seize, and reconfigure their resources and balance GTM tensions. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the theoretical and managerial contributions, acknowledges the limitations of the study, and suggests directions for future research.

2 Theoretical background

This chapter develops the theoretical background for understanding organizational change during go-to-market transitions in B2B SaaS companies. The chapter begins by introducing SaaS growth models as the contextual foundation of the study. The theoretical background is supported by dynamic capabilities and organizational ambidexterity literature which are connected to the SaaS context. Dynamic capabilities provide a lens for explaining how companies can sense opportunities, seize them and reconfigure resources in rapidly changing environments. Organizational ambidexterity is introduced to complement dynamic capabilities by addressing how companies can balance exploration with exploitation and strategic transformation. Together these perspectives form the conceptual framework used to understand how organizational resources can be reconfigured when making changes to a SaaS GTM model. Because SaaS GTM models such as product-led growth and product-led sales are mainly discussed in the industry literature, both academic, and practitioner-oriented sources are used to define the concepts and describe current GTM practices.

2.1 SaaS Growth Strategies

The Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) industry has gone through a significant transformation in how products are delivered and sold to customers. Initially, the software industry mainly relied on traditional packaged “on-premises” software, but the shift to cloud-based SaaS models changed the fundamentals of software distribution and value creation (Tyrväinen & Selin, 2011). Traditional software often required heavy planning, high upfront investments and long implementation projects before customers committed to a provider. However, the shift has not only been a technological change. Moving to SaaS has changed the revenue logic of software companies from one-time transactions to recurring revenue through subscription offer, ongoing service delivery and continuous relationship management (Kowalkowski & Ulaga, 2024). Kowalkowski and Ulaga (2024) characterize B2B subscription offers by direct customer access, digital data generation, and converting services into digital content that can be easily updated or scaled.

These characteristics change how firms can create value, interact with customers and manage growth over time. Because of this change, customers may benefit from lower initial transaction costs, easier cloud-based access, free trials, and quick adoption (Kowalkowski & Ulaga, 2024; Mero et al., 2022; Subham, 2025; Tyrväinen & Selin, 2011). At the same time, the subscription model has increased the importance of onboarding, retention and long-term value creation, because growth no longer depends only on acquiring customers with one-time sales, but also on keeping customers and expanding their use over time (Hochstein et al., 2023; Kowalkowski & Ulaga, 2024; Terpoorten et al., 2024). To succeed, firms must continuously interact with customers, create value post-purchase and manage changing customer journeys (Kowalkowski & Ulaga, 2024; Terpoorten et al., 2024).

The evolution from one-time perpetual licenses toward recurring revenue models has forced companies to rethink their go-to-market strategies in a way that prioritizes long-term customer relationships and continuous value delivery instead of a one-time purchase (Bhalla, 2022). In B2B markets, this shift also changes how firms manage customer access and data because subscription models create more direct touchpoints and a stronger need for ongoing engagement (Kowalkowski & Ulaga, 2024).

Because of this, for many years, growth strategies in the software industry followed a clear logic. The industry was dominated by a sales-led growth (SLG) approach, where revenue and customer acquisition were primarily driven by human-led sales efforts and high-touch relationship management (Bharadwaj, 2024; Bush, 2019). This model is well suited to software environments where purchasing is relatively formal and dependent on direct interaction with the supplier. As markets matured and digital transformation accelerated, product-led growth emerged as alternative GTM logic in which the product drives customer acquisition, activation, retention, and expansion (Alaghband et al., 2023; Bush, 2019; Olson, 2020). More specifically, PLG reflects a shift from sales-led persuasion towards user-led value discovery and self-service evaluation.

As the B2B buying process has changed, more software users inside organizations now expect to discover and test products themselves before making company-wide purchasing decisions (Olson, 2020; Raghavan & Nargundkar, 2020). Mero et al. (2022) explain that marketing automation combined with agile implementation logics has allowed SaaS companies to scale their product to new markets more efficiently and support faster growth (Mero et al., 2022). When users can try software independently, the product becomes an important driver for growth (Raghavan & Nargundkar, 2020). Terpoorten et al. (2024) further emphasize that even if some customers prefer self-service and independent evaluation, others still require more guided interaction and support with more complex digital services (Terpoorten et al., 2024).

This suggests that SaaS growth strategies differ in multiple ways, not only by acquisition logic, but also by how they structure touchpoints, support, and customer interaction across the customer lifetime. In this thesis, SaaS growth strategies are therefore understood as different organizing logics for managing the whole customer journey rather than only as ways to generate leads or close deals.

The evolution toward a product first approach does not mean that sales has become unimportant. Instead, Mero et al. (2022) suggest that sales can change its role. According to practitioner-oriented McKinsey article by Alaghband et al. (2023), sales-led growth has traditionally been seen as especially relevant for enterprise clients, while pure product-led growth has been associated with smaller customers or more tech-savvy purchasers (Alaghband et al., 2023). This practitioner view is supported by Terpoorten et al. (2024), who show that customers' technological capabilities shape how providers must manage the customer journey. More capable, tech-savvy companies may prefer evaluating these services independently and using self-service, while less capable customers need more support and explanation from the sales department or guided implementation from external third parties (e.g. IT agencies) (Terpoorten et al., 2024).

This moves the discussion towards the development of hybrid models, such as product-led sales (PLS), which combines elements of both SLG and PLG. While PLG is effective in supporting rapid user adoption, a traditional SLG sales channel may be required for securing important high-value enterprise-level contracts and navigating complex organizational decision-making processes (Alaghband et al., 2023; Narayen et al., 2023).

Taken together, the literature suggests that SaaS growth strategies should not be understood only as alternative ways to acquire customers, but rather as different organizing logics for how firms create value, manage their customer relationships, and coordinate sales, marketing, product and customer success teams. While practitioner literature is useful for describing SLG, PLG and hybrid GTM approaches, academic literature on subscription-based value creation and customer journey management further shows why these models also require organizational change and capability development. Reconfiguring SLG, PLG and hybrid logics should not therefore be treated only as a market response. It can also be understood as an organizational response to the subscription logic of SaaS, where customer value is created across a longer journey and through ongoing relationship management (Kowalkowski & Ulaga, 2024; Terpoorten et al., 2024).

2.1.1 Sales-led growth (SLG)

Sales-led growth (SLG) is a traditional go-to-market strategy in which revenue generation, and growth depend on salespeople driven customer acquisition, direct human interaction and the ability of the sales organization to guide potential customers from lead qualification to contract negotiations and closure (Fracolli, 2023). Historically, the SaaS industry and particularly B2B markets have been dominated by this approach (Tyrväinen & Selin, 2011). Sales-led growth is especially relevant with complex product offering, high contract value and when the buying process involves multiple decision-makers who require explanation, negotiation, significant customization, and ongoing consultation and reassurance during the evaluation and purchasing process (Bush, 2023a; Terho et al., 2023; Terpoorten et al., 2024). The importance of negotiation and reassurance is also

emphasized in less complex cases if customers are less technologically capable (Terpoorten et al., 2024).

In sales-led growth strategies, the sales team, often supported by marketing and customer success teams, forms the primary mechanism for engaging potential customers, communicating value, and closing deals (Bush, 2023a; Narayen et al., 2023; Tyrväinen & Selin, 2011). This means that SLG is not only a growth model but also a model for internal organizing which tends to create specific roles, such as marketing for lead generation, sales for qualification, outreach and closing, and customer success roles for onboarding and ensuring retention.

As a result, SLG depends on effective coordination between different functions and resources, because value creation does not end after the contract has been signed, but continues as the customer journey evolves (Kowalkowski & Ulaga, 2024; Terpoorten et al., 2024). From an organizational perspective, product, marketing, sales, and customer success must be aligned. They need to understand which customers are targeted, how value is communicated, what salespeople have promised and how the promised value is later delivered. This is especially important in the recurring revenue setting, which relies on cross-functional collaboration, since weak coordination may increase churn even if the initial deal is successfully closed (Hochstein et al., 2023; Kowalkowski & Ulaga, 2024).

The effectiveness of the strategy depends strongly on the skills and performance of individual salespeople (Terho et al., 2015). Lead generation is often a collaborative effort, with marketing teams generating initial interest and marketing qualified leads (MQLs), which are then handed over to sales representatives for qualification into sales qualified leads (SQLs) (Caballero, 2024; Terho et al., 2023). To ensure that sales resources are directed toward the most promising opportunities, sales-led organizations depend on structured routines. These routines include lead qualification, discovery, needs assessment, product demos, negotiation and sales funnel management, as well as formal

qualification criteria such as budget, authority, need, and timeline (Caballero, 2024; Terho et al., 2023; Tyrväinen & Selin, 2011).

Despite its effectiveness in closing high-value enterprise customers, active engagement with customers often translates to higher customer acquisition costs (CAC) (Bharadwaj, 2024; Bush, 2019). Compared with product-led models, the cost structure in SLG is higher due to investments in sales personnel and selling capabilities, longer sales cycles, commissions, sales salaries, and support infrastructure, which can create bottlenecks for companies trying to scale rapidly (Alaghband et al., 2023; Bharadwaj, 2024). At the same time, this higher upfront investment is often justified through the potential for higher average contract value, higher customer lifetime value (CLTV) and stronger customer relationships (Bush, 2023a; Gallo, 2015). While larger deals offer attractive revenue streams, sales-driven companies often become dependent on the recurring revenue gained from high value customers, which may create risk if such customers churn (Bush, 2019). This increases the strategic importance of retention, because losing one major account can have a significant impact on revenue.

To summarize, SLG tends to create an organization built around specialized sales roles, high-touch customer interaction, formal qualification routines, and incentives tied to conversion and contract value. These routines and structures can support enterprise growth, but they may also become difficult to change when a company later introduces, for example product-led or hybrid elements.

2.1.2 Product-led growth (PLG)

Product-led growth (PLG) is an emerging SaaS go-to-market strategy that uses the product itself to drive customer acquisition, retention, and expansion (Alaghband et al., 2023; Bush, 2019). Unlike a traditional sales-led approach, which prioritizes human interaction and sales team efforts, PLG focuses on self-service (Bush, 2019). The self-service model allows users to find, adopt and gain value from the software with minimal or no direct sales involvement (Bush, 2019). Product-led growth characteristics fit well with the

subscription logic described by Kowalkowski and Ulaga (2024). These characteristics make it easier for users to access the service directly and experience the value proposition earlier through product use instead of through a salesperson.

A successful PLG strategy is built to reduce friction in the customer journey, as the product often offers users the possibility to discover value independently through a freemium model or free trial before committing to a purchase (Alaghband et al., 2023; Olson, 2020). A freemium offer allows users at least a part of the product for free to convince them to convert into paying customers (Olson, 2020). This approach has rapidly gained popularity particularly in the B2B SaaS landscape, due to its rapid scalability and efficiency (Bush, 2019). This aligns with Terpoorten et al. (2024), who show that especially tech-savvy customers prefer self-service, where they test, evaluate, and implement new services without connecting with the provider. In such cases, software providers support the buyer's journey through different accessible touchpoints (Terpoorten et al., 2024). These touchpoints include the product interface, service provider websites, training, webinars and other digital support materials. From an organizational perspective, PLG also changes how internal roles are organized. It shifts responsibility towards product development and content marketing, because the product experience becomes the main mechanism for communicating value and converting users to paying customers.

The scalability aspect of PLG is further enhanced by data use and analytics. According to Bharadwaj (2024), modern SaaS companies utilize AI and predictive analytics to monitor user experience and the behavior within the product. This helps companies build detailed customer profiles, track product events, and understand how users interact with the product, which can increase the success rate of new features (Bharadwaj, 2024). This is supported by Kowalkowski and Ulaga (2024), who emphasize that subscription offers allow direct access and digital data that provide deep customer insights and support improvement of operations. As a result, product-led organizations depend strongly on routines such as analyzing product usage, supporting self-service onboarding and coordinating between product and marketing teams. Unlike SLG, where salespeople guide

customers through the customer journey, PLG relies on the product and digital touchpoints to convert users into paying customers through low-friction product adoption and early value realization.

Successful implementation of PLG typically aims to lower customer acquisition costs because companies reduce their reliance on extensive sales teams and lead qualification efforts (Alaghband et al., 2023; Bush, 2019). Thus, marketing activities focus more on highlighting features and user benefits, driving traffic directly to the product by leveraging digital content and inbound strategies (Bush, 2019). In this context, PLG prioritizes customer engagement before monetization, whereas SLG typically focuses on securing revenue before the user has fully adopted the product (Bush, 2023b).

However, PLG also has limits. According to a 2023 technology report by Bain & Company, SaaS companies with a product-led emphasis increased their 2022 revenue almost twice as much as those with less emphasis on product-led characteristics (Narayan et al., 2023). On the other hand, Alaghband et al. (2023) note that PLG companies spend significantly more on operating costs than their SLG rivals but only see very slight performance improvements. As Terpoorten et al. (2024) suggest, self-service is more suitable for more tech-savvy customers. For the thesis, this suggests that PLG does not simply replace sales. Instead, it creates a different set of roles, routines and performance logics that may work well in some customer contexts but become insufficient in others.

The key implication is that pure PLG may later require reconfiguration when self-service routines are insufficient for certain customer segments. This may create pressure towards adopting sales-led characteristics, developing product-led sales routines or otherwise adjusting the GTM model.

2.1.3 Hybrid Go-To-Market model

A recent development in practitioner SaaS GTM literature is the discussion of hybrid go-to-market models, which are often conceptualized as product-led sales (PLS) (Alaghband

et al., 2023; Narayen et al., 2023). This hybrid approach combines product-led and sales-led elements instead of relying purely on one of them. For this thesis, hybrid GTM should not be understood only as a strategic growth choice but also as an organizational reconfiguration problem, because combining sales-led and product-led elements requires changes in internal roles, routines, and resource allocation. Because product-led sales is still more developed in industry discussions, this thesis uses practitioner literature primarily to describe the emerging GTM phenomenon.

In a specific PLS approach, the product remains the primary source of discovery, trial, and initial engagement, while sales teams are brought in to selectively convert promising accounts, support complex cases, and expand larger customers (Alaghband et al., 2023; Narayen et al., 2023). However, hybrid GTM is not only a compromise between SLG and PLG models. Building on the customer differences discussed above, hybrid GTM can be understood as a response to differences in customer readiness for self-service and need for guided support (Terpoorten et al., 2024).

If a company wants to combine self-service product adoption with selective sales involvement, it must decide how different teams, such as product, marketing, sales, and customer success work together across the whole customer journey. Kowalkowski and Ulaga (2024) support this view by showing that subscription-based SaaS growth has implications for organizational structures and processes, especially in offer development, pricing, and customer engagement.

Hybrid GTM can also emerge from different starting points. SLG-based companies may add product-led elements to lower the barrier to entry and meet “try before you buy” expectations, while PLG-based companies may add sales-led elements to access enterprise customers and expand promising accounts (Alaghband et al., 2023; Narayen et al., 2023). For example, a company may first build a user base through product-led adoption and then use sales teams to identify high-potential accounts, support more complex buying processes, and convert larger customers into higher-value contracts (Narayen et

al., 2023). This means that hybrid GTM is not only about combining the “best of both” models, but about deciding how product-led and sales-led routines should be coordinated across the customer journey.

Combining SLG and PLG also creates tensions in the organization. Product, marketing, sales and customer success may not always interpret customer signals in the same way, and customer ownership can become unclear across the customer journey. At the same time, routines such as onboarding, product usage tracking and sales qualification need to work together rather than remaining as separate units. Companies must also decide where limited resources should be allocated. Because applying different GTM approaches together requires organizational changes, the next chapter introduces dynamic capabilities to explain how such reconfiguration processes happen. These tensions also create an exploration-exploitation challenge, because companies must protect existing revenue routines while developing new GTM arrangements.

2.2 Dynamic Capabilities

Dynamic capabilities are defined as a firm’s ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure its internal and external competences to operate in rapidly changing environments (Teece et al., 1997). In other words, dynamic capabilities are the capabilities that enable companies to sustain competitive advantage when the market changes quickly. Unlike “ordinary” capabilities, which help companies perform daily tasks, dynamic capabilities allow a company to change its business model, strategy and ways of working to create new value (Danneels, 2011; Teece, 2007). This contrast is important because GTM models presented earlier are not only market-facing choices. They are also dependent on internal routines, roles, coordination mechanisms, and resource allocation decisions.

Dynamic capabilities are essential for long-term survival and success, especially in environments characterized by rapid technological change and innovation, such as the SaaS industry (Teece, 2007; Tyrväinen & Selin, 2011). Teece (2007) conceptualizes dynamic capabilities as three general activities: sensing, seizing, and transforming (reconfiguring),

which are further supported by microfoundations (see Figure 1) (Teece, 2007). In this thesis, dynamic capabilities form the main theoretical lens for analyzing how B2B SaaS companies select, implement, and reconfigure their GTM models. More specifically, sensing explains how firms recognize that their current GTM logic may need adjustment, seizing explains how they choose and commit to a new or adjusted GTM direction, and transforming explains how they reconfigure their roles, routines, resources, and coordination to support the chosen model.

This theoretical choice is supported by Teece (2018), who argues that business models, strategy, and dynamic capabilities all depend on each other. Business models describe how companies create, deliver, and capture value, but their design and implementation depend on the firm's capabilities and organizational design (Teece, 2018). This is relevant for the thesis because GTM reconfiguration can be seen as part of business model implementation. A company may decide to combine PLG and SLG, but this decision only becomes operational when the organization changes how product, sales, marketing and customer success work together. Teece (2018) further emphasizes that dynamic capabilities help companies sense opportunities, seize them through business model choices, and transform the organization according to their future plans.

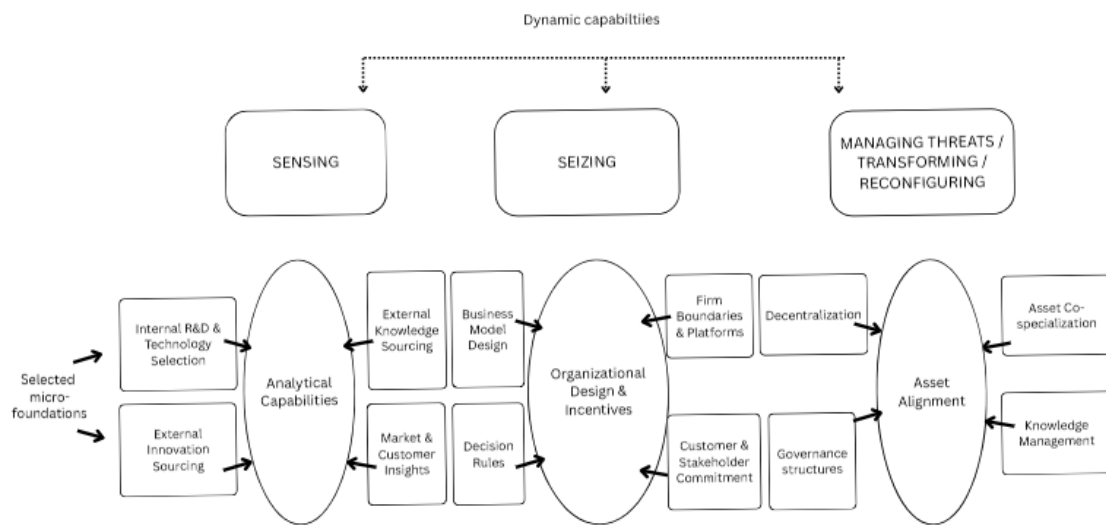


Figure 1 Foundations of dynamic capabilities and selected microfoundations (adapted from Teece, 2007)

Microfoundations refer to concrete organizational elements such as skills, processes, organizational structures, decision rules, and disciplines that enable dynamic capabilities (Teece, 2007). Microfoundations are not a single list of items, but rather a way to explain different macro-outcomes (Felin et al., 2015). Because they are difficult to build and use effectively, companies often differ in their ability to develop and deploy dynamic capabilities over time (Teece, 2007). For this thesis, analyzing microfoundations is the right analytical level because the study does not only examine broad corporate strategy but instead examines product-line level GTM choices, concrete routines, decision rules and resource allocation.

Digital transformation and digital servitization studies by Chirumalla et al. (2023) strengthen the microfoundational view. The authors show a similar point of view on moving from servitization to digital servitization that requires rethinking resources, organizational structures, processes, practices, culture and ecosystems. The study also argues that microfoundations are used to explain how companies actually build and use capabilities in transition contexts (Chirumalla et al., 2023). This claim further supports

the logic of this thesis that GTM reconfiguration can be treated as a capability change process and not only as a strategic decision.

Warner and Wäger (2019) also provide an empirical example of how microfoundations can be studied in practice during large-scale organizational change. Warner and Wäger (2019) argue that transformation is an ongoing process of strategic renewal including changes in an organization's business model, collaborative approach and culture. The authors also note that leaders often use the term "digital transformation" in different ways, ranging from a technology focus to a broader mindset and agility focus (Warner & Wäger, 2019). Based on senior executives' experiences, they present a process model and identify nine microfoundations that support sensing, seizing, and transforming capabilities. This supports the idea that dynamic capabilities research can move from abstract definitions towards detectable routines and decision practices, which is also relevant in this study. Similarly, Witschel et al. (2023) show that many challenges in digital business model innovation, mainly in IoT and SaaS, are linked to individuals, processes and structures. This is particularly important because SLG-PLG tensions may create similar questions such as what skills are needed, which processes must change, and how organizational responsibilities should be arranged.

In addition to Teece's (2007) conceptual view, Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) characterize dynamic capabilities as specific, identifiable processes. According to their view, dynamic capabilities consist of specific managerial resources, and organizational and strategic routines through which companies achieve new resource configurations (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) argue that value and competitive advantage are especially present in resource configuration rather than in capabilities themselves. These configurations include actual routines, specific processes and resources such as product development, strategic decision-making and alliancing (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). In high-velocity markets, dynamic capabilities are not vague company-specific assets, but rather "best practices" for resource configurations.

The difference between Teece's (2007, 2018) and Eisenhardt and Martin's (2000) view is important for this thesis. Teece's framework (2007, 2018) is used as the main process logic because it explains how companies sense opportunities, seize them and reconfigure resources over time. Eisenhardt and Martin's (2000) view is used as an operational lens because it treats dynamic capabilities concretely. This combination is useful because GTM reconfiguration must be understood both as a strategic renewal process and as concrete product-line-level changes. The following subsections examine these phases through which B2B SaaS companies recognize GTM-related signals, commit to a chosen direction, and implement it through changes in routines, roles and resources.

2.2.1 Sensing new opportunities and threats

Sensing is the first stage of the Dynamic Capabilities framework and refers to the organizational ability to scan, interpret, and share information about market changes, technologies, customer needs, and competitive conditions (Teece, 2007). For this thesis sensing is important because GTM reconfiguration starts when a company notices that its current way of acquiring, converting, retaining or expanding customers may no longer be sufficient.

In the SaaS industry, sensing is increasingly a data-driven activity. In their qualitative study, Warner and Wäger (2019) propose that in digital transformation contexts, "digital sensing" involves scanning technological and customer-related shifts, interpreting signals, and building internal awareness of change (Warner & Wäger, 2019). A similar logic appears in Chirumalla et al. (2023), who argue that sensing in digital servitization includes service data exploitation and processing, data interpretation for identifying new opportunities, and integration of digital competence within the network. Although Chirumalla et al. (2023) study digital servitization, the logic is useful for B2B SaaS because GTM decisions are also increasingly based on product usage data, customer signals and digital interaction patterns.

Mero et al. (2022) also suggest that SaaS companies need an agile approach based on “learning by doing.” Companies must continuously adjust their marketing, sales, and product development as they collect data from real customers, rather than following a fixed long-term plan (Mero et al., 2022). Therefore, sensing is not only a strategic observation activity, but also a continuous learning process where customer usage data, sales feedback, onboarding problems and retention signals are understood together.

In the GTM context, scouting refers not only to monitoring competitors but also to sensing how changes in user behavior create a need for GTM adaptation. For example, changing customer preference for self-service options over human interaction can be a clear signal that the company needs to develop product characteristics that support low-friction software adoption (Bush, 2019). Witschel et al. (2023) support this broader view by showing that sensing in digital business model innovation includes recognizing market dynamics and trends but also involving customers and external partners in ideation processes, where new ideas are developed to uncover opportunities and solve problems.

Scenario planning, emphasized by Warner and Wäger (2019), requires companies to consider how industry standards change and how they could affect current structures and growth logics (Warner and Wäger, 2019). Digital mindset crafting involves creating a long-term vision, building awareness of market shifts and ensuring that the organization is prepared to seize an opportunity when it is sensed and identified (Warner and Wäger (2019). Therefore, sensing also includes internal sensemaking in which managers and teams must build a shared understanding of what signals mean before they can decide whether the current GTM model should be changed in some way.

Sensing may also, for example, refer to identifying other indicators that signal that an existing growth model is approaching its limits or reaching a “market ceiling”, (Alaghband et al., 2023). Such signals may suggest that the company’s current approach is no longer sustainable and that the company must reconsider how to create demand and capture value long-term. With data-driven routines, companies can monitor slowing customer

acquisition and expansion or increasing customer acquisition costs (Alaghband et al., 2023; Bush, 2019). In this thesis, these indicators are treated as GTM-related sensing signals. These signals may include rising CAC, weaker conversion from trial to paid use, longer sales cycles, churn risk, or customer feedback showing that the current balance between self-service and sales support is not working optimally. These signals do not automatically start a change, but they create the need for managerial intervention and discussion.

Sensing is closely related to absorptive capacity and strategic learning. Zahra and George (2002) show that companies must not only acquire information but also interpret it and decide how it should be used. They argue that companies may collect and understand new potential information but still fail to turn it into actions and realized value (Zahra & George, 2002). Sirén and Kohtamäki (2014) similarly emphasize knowledge creation, dissemination, interpretation and implementation. Companies with strong sensing capabilities can interpret strategically important information, such as R&D knowledge, customer usage data, or feedback from sales teams, and agree on how it will be directed to benefit the company's future (Sirén & Kohtamäki, 2014). In B2B SaaS, this means that customer, sales, and product data do not automatically create sensing capability. Sensing depends on whether the information is interpreted correctly, shared across functions, and connected to GTM decisions. Momeni et al. (2023) similarly emphasize that digital servitization requires operational capabilities for collecting, analyzing and using data. The authors note that such capabilities may need to be learned, built or acquired. Thus, sensing is not only about having the correct data but also having the capabilities to use it in decision-making situations.

This is particularly relevant in SaaS markets because companies must constantly be able to create and share new knowledge about customers, product use and competition. They must also move that knowledge into strategic adjustments including reconfiguring GTM models. Taking together, identifying and interpreting signals only becomes meaningful when they are shared and interpreted across functions.

2.2.2 Seizing opportunities

Seizing is the stage following sensing and refers to investments and choices made after opportunities have been identified (Teece, 2007). For this thesis, seizing refers to the decision phase where a SaaS company chooses how to respond to sensed GTM-related signals. This may mean strengthening the existing growth logic, adding new elements, or committing to a more hybrid GTM direction. Once a company recognizes a new technological or market opportunity it must make strategic decisions and allocate resources to new products, business model innovations, processes or services to respond to these opportunities (Teece, 2007). In GTM reconfiguration, in addition to deciding what growth model is attractive, managers must decide which customers to prioritize, when sales should become involved in the buying process, and how resources should be distributed across sales, product, marketing, and customer success.

Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) emphasize that managerial decision-making becomes essential in this stage. The authors argue that in high-velocity markets companies cannot rely only on analysis. Instead, managers need to create effective routines to determine how existing resources should be used to capture value from emerging opportunities (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). This process view is important for the GTM context, because seizing can be observed through concrete decision rules and routines such as how alternatives are discussed, which options are rejected or postponed, who participates in the decision-making, and which resources to commit first. As a result, seizing is not treated only as a top-level strategic choice, but also as a product-line-level decision process, where firms translate sensed signals and opportunities into resource commitments and priorities.

Warner and Wäger (2019) add that digital seizing involves microfoundations such as strategic agility, rapid prototyping, and balancing digital portfolios (Warner & Wäger, 2019). In the context of GTM reconfiguration, these capabilities can be seen to manage the transition from exploring new things to committing them. This view is reinforced by

Witschel et al. (2023), who identify seizing-related microfoundations in digital business model innovation, including organizing development competences, working in agile modes, integrating customers into development, and implementing key IT activities. These are useful for this thesis because GTM decisions in SaaS may often require cross-functional development work, customer testing and digital systems that support the chosen growth model. Witschel et al. (2023) also show that digital business model innovation creates challenges that are linked to individuals, processes, and structures. These challenges make seizing more than a simple decision of “choosing” a model.

According to Warner and Wäger (2019), strategic agility is critical for seizing new digital trends, because it enables companies to rapidly reallocate resources (Warner & Wäger, 2019). In a SaaS context, this demonstrates the ability to quickly shift for instance from enterprise sales motions to product-centered expansion motions. Rapid prototyping on the other hand emphasizes the importance of continuous innovation (Warner & Wäger, 2019). Decisions supporting product-led growth mechanics, digital innovation and experimenting with minimum viable products (MVPs) are key to responding to new customer-centric trends to assess whether it is worth the investment (Bush, 2019; Warner & Wäger, 2019). In the GTM context, rapid prototyping can include testing new onboarding flows, pricing models, sales handoffs, or product usage triggers before the company fully commits to a completely new operating model. The microfoundation of balancing digital portfolios is described to manage the tension between exploring new business models and utilizing the existing portfolio (Warner & Wäger, 2019). This is relevant in ongoing GTM reconfiguration, where companies may need to protect existing revenue streams while also investing in new product-led or sales-led mechanisms.

However, the ability to seize opportunities is often difficult since companies can be limited by path dependency, meaning that established business models can become static and lose their effectiveness over time (Teece et al., 1997; Warner & Wäger, 2019). Path dependency suggests that companies’ past decisions and investments, existing routines, and current position limit what they can do in the future (Teece et al., 1997). This could

be an emerging risk in the context of this study, when firms have developed strong GTM routines, such as outbound sales processes or fully self-service onboarding, that are more difficult to modify later when transitioning toward a hybrid model. Witschel et al. (2023) support this view by showing that companies may struggle to seize digital business model opportunities because agile development, customer involvement and new IT activities may conflict with established structures, skills and routines. Additionally, Teece (2007) describes that sensing and seizing require different routines and may often compete for resources. This relates to March's (1991) organizational ambidexterity theory on exploration and exploitation and highlights that different mindsets and organizational routines are often difficult to pursue simultaneously.

Danneels (2011) further adds an important element to the dynamic capability theory to overcome path dependency. To seize a new opportunity, managers must gain "resource cognition" to understand what resources they have and how flexible those resources are. Without resource cognition capabilities, companies may fail to seize opportunities even when they are recognized, because managers cannot use their existing resources optimally or recognize that new resources must be created (Danneels, 2011). Resource cognition is therefore important in seizing because managers must understand whether the company has the necessary sales, product, marketing, data and customer success capabilities, or whether the capabilities must be learned, built or acquired.

2.2.3 Reconfiguring

The final stage of dynamic capabilities for this study is transforming, or reconfiguring. Reconfiguring refers to the processes and routines through which an organization changes its structures and ways of working. (Teece, 2007). In this thesis, reconfiguring is important because GTM choices only become operational when they are translated into concrete changes in roles, routines, resources, and responsibilities. For example, a company may choose a hybrid GTM model, but this choice can only be implemented if the organization changes how its product, sales, marketing and customer success work together to support it. This stage includes reorganizing structures, reallocating resources

and continuously aligning and realigning tangible and intangible assets (Teece, 2007). The goal of transforming capabilities is to align existing resources with new strategies and build new resources to fill gaps in the company's current assets (Yeow et al., 2018).

Teece (2018) and Chirumalla et al. (2023) suggest that reconfiguration is not only about choosing a new business model, but also about aligning the model with current organizational practices and capabilities. Teece (2007) highlights that this dynamic capability is difficult because long-term success often requires "internal creative destruction", meaning that companies must abandon outdated processes and routines even if they were successful in the past (Teece, 2007). In the GTM context, this could mean that earlier sales-led or product-led routines must be changed if they no longer support the chosen growth model.

This reconfiguring stage can also be described more concretely as resource realignment, where firms add, reuse, and remove resources to fit the new direction. Huikkola et al. (2016) support the idea that transformation requires active resource reconfiguration. Their study on resource realignment in servitization shows that successful change typically involves three actions: creating new resources and structures, leveraging existing resources for new purposes, and releasing non-core resources (Huikkola et al., 2016). Releasing resources can also include organizational unlearning, meaning stopping old behaviors that do not support the new model (Huikkola et al., 2016). In the B2B SaaS context, this suggests that firms must not only add new capabilities, such as enterprise selling routines, but also reuse current strengths such as product usage insights, and discontinue outdated routines that reward only one growth logic.

From a process perspective, Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) describe transforming as something that happens through repeated reconfiguration of processes. This view is useful because product-line-level reconfiguration becomes visible through concrete routines and decision rules, such as when sales should enter the customer journey, how product usage data is used and how resources are moved between sales, product,

marketing, and customer success. In high-velocity markets, such routines often need to be simple and adaptable because long-term plans are harder to follow when market conditions change quickly (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000).

Danneels (2011) helps specify these resource actions further. Leveraging refers to using existing resources in new ways and often entering new product categories by applying resources like brand, distribution channels and customer understanding elsewhere (Danneels, 2011). However, for a company to be able to leverage its existing resources effectively, they need to be fungible (Danneels, 2011). When companies cannot effectively leverage their current resources, they may try creating new resources (Danneels, 2011). Creating refers to adding and combining new resources to form a new competence or capability (Danneels, 2011). Danneels (2011) links creating to explorative learning logics (March, 1991) rather than just making small improvements. Danneels (2011) further suggests that companies may access resources externally. Accessing often happens through alliances and acquisitions, especially when the company lacks necessary resources internally (Danneels, 2011). Finally, releasing refers to reducing or dropping resources, such as selling assets, moving operations, or reducing the existing workforce (Danneels, 2011; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). However, releasing can free resources only if they are redirected into new strategic uses supporting renewal (Danneels, 2011).

In the context of this thesis, leveraging, creating, accessing, and releasing are not treated as a separate theory competing with Teece's (2007) sensing, seizing and reconfiguring framework. Instead, they are treated as concrete actions that help explain how the dynamic capability process works in practice. That is why these resource actions are used across the whole process. During the sensing phase, managers may recognize resource gaps or underused existing resources. During seizing, they decide which resources should be leveraged, created, accessed, or released. During reconfiguring, these choices are implemented through changes in resource allocation, roles, routines and structures. Therefore, these actions are most visible in the reconfiguring stage, but they are connected to the whole dynamic capability process.

Momeni et al.'s (2023) view of capability development through learning, building and acquiring connect Danneels' (2011) resource actions to capability development. Momeni et al. (2023) show how companies can develop operational capabilities through learning, building and acquiring mechanisms. In this thesis, these mechanisms help explain how companies move from choosing a GTM model to committing the resources needed to successfully make that model work. Leveraging is close to using and adapting existing capabilities, creating is linked to building new capabilities, and accessing is linked to acquiring capabilities from external partners. This makes reconfiguration more concrete, by showing how companies can develop the capabilities needed for the chosen GTM direction.

Taken together, reconfiguring refers to the implementation of GTM choices through resource realignment and organizational change. These resource actions are connected to the whole dynamic capability process but become most visible when GTM choices are translated into roles, routines structures and resource allocation.

2.3 Organizational ambidexterity

Organizational ambidexterity explains how companies balance exploitation of existing routines with exploration of new opportunities. (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; March, 1991; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008; Raisch et al., 2009) Ambidextrous organizations are characterized as being efficient and well-aligned today, while also being innovative and adaptive for tomorrow (Duncan, 1976; Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). In this thesis, organizational ambidexterity is used as a supporting concept that explains the tensions within the dynamic capability process.

Tushman and O'Reilly (1996) describe organizational ambidexterity as the ability to manage incremental and revolutionary change simultaneously, arguing that it is an essential factor for long-term survival. Companies must be able to exploit mature businesses effectively and explore entirely new business areas with separate structures, strategic

processes and cultures (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). Therefore, companies that “cannot play two games at once” and effectively leverage existing business models while building new ones, often fail (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). Ambidextrous organizations are often seen as better equipped to manage conflicting demands by integrating or differentiating activities across units, teams or individuals (Kor-yak et al., 2018; Raisch et al., 2009). The idea is relevant because B2B SaaS companies may need to maintain existing revenue generating routines, such as sales-led enterprise customer acquisition or established product-led onboarding, while also experimenting with new approaches.

March (1991) argues that companies must balance exploration and exploitation because both are essential for survival. If a company focuses only on exploitation, it may become efficient in the short-term but weak in the long-term because it stops learning new capabilities. If a company focuses only on exploration, it may innovate but never achieve stable performance and efficiency. (March, 1991). This tension may become central in the GTM context, when a SaaS company only focuses on exploiting current sales or product-led routines and may miss new customer preferences, or market changes. At the same time, a company that focuses too heavily on experimenting with new approaches may weaken its current revenue generation and create confusion in team roles, metrics and customer ownership.

For these reasons, ambidexterity is used in this thesis to explain how B2B SaaS companies balance efficiency in current GTM logics while adapting toward new or adjusted models. The following subsections first explain exploration and exploitation in the GTM context, then discuss how this balance can be organized structurally and contextually and finally position ambidexterity within the dynamic capability process rather than as a separate outcome.

2.3.1 Exploration and Exploitation

March (1991) describes ambidexterity through the concepts of exploration and exploitation. Exploitation refers to activities that focus on improving and extending existing technologies, processes and business models (March, 1991). For this thesis exploitation refers specifically to improving and using existing GTM routines that already create revenue. These include, for example, refining sales processes, improving lead qualification, expanding customer accounts, and using existing routines more effectively. March (1991) further emphasizes that companies that specialize in exploitation often benefit from predictable and proximate returns

However, Tushman and O'Reilly (1996) suggest that a one-way focus on exploitation can lead to a "success trap" where a company becomes so efficient at its current routines that it loses the ability to innovate when the environment changes. This phenomenon occurs when past successes make it difficult for managers to implement anything but incremental change (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). In the SaaS GTM context, this may occur when a company becomes too good at high touch sales and becomes blind to low-touch self-service opportunities. A similar tension can appear in add-on selling, or cross-selling, as Steinhoff et al. (2025) demonstrate. Sales teams may try to sell more add-on services during the initial customer acquisition process, because wider product bundles might appear more profitable because they increase the customers' switching costs. (Steinhoff et al., 2025). However, this logic can create problems during onboarding if the service becomes too complex for the customer (Steinhoff et al., 2025). This could mean that exploitation is necessary for short-term performance, but it can also steer the company towards routines that may not support long-term customer adoption or retention.

In contrast, exploration involves experimentation, searching for new possibilities, innovation and risk-taking (March, 1991). While exploration is essential for survival in dynamic markets, its returns are often uncertain, distant and often negative in the short term (March, 1991). In this thesis, exploration refers to testing and developing new GTM approaches, that are not yet proven to work. In B2B SaaS, this can include for example

experimenting with new conversion path with self-service, usage-based sales triggers, data driven customer health metrics, or new customer success roles with a focus on onboarding support and retention. Hochstein et al. (2023) reinforce this view by showing that customer success management often complements sales by using customer health data to actively manage customer relationships and reduce churn.

However, pure exploration also has its risks. Companies that excessively explore new opportunities, may risk falling into a “failure trap” (Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008). This refers to an endless cycle of search and unrewarding change, where companies do not stay long enough to monetize new innovations. This risk may appear if a SaaS company constantly keeps testing new product or sales approaches without stabilizing clear roles, ownership, metrics and revenue processes (Hochstein et al., 2023).

Both exploration and exploitation are essential for organizations, but they compete for the same limited resources (March, 1991; Tushman & O’Reilly, 1996). Consequently, organizations need to make both explicit and implicit decisions about where to allocate their assets between ongoing operations and future opportunities (March, 1991). In customer success management, Hilton et al. (2020) capture this tension by evaluating whether customer success should be treated as a shared responsibility across existing sales teams and service roles (exploitation) or structurally separated into distinct, dedicated team (exploration). This example illustrates how SaaS firms must decide whether new customer-facing routines should be integrated into existing GTM roles or structurally separated into their own dedicated functions.

Ultimately, the strategic challenge is to maintain a balance that ensures enough exploitation to sustain current routines while allowing enough exploration for long-term adaptation (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; March, 1991). Finding this balance is especially important in GTM reconfiguration, because one model may not simply replace another. Instead, it may require companies to exploit their current sales-led or product-led

strengths while exploring new ways to combine product, sales, marketing and customer success across the entire customer journey.

2.3.2 Structural and Contextual ambidexterity

To manage the inherent conflicts between exploration and exploitation, organizations may adopt different organizational designs, commonly discussed as structural and contextual ambidexterity (Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008). For this thesis, these two forms are used to explain how B2B SaaS companies can organize the balance between their current GTM efficiency and new experimentation. Structural ambidexterity may help explain separation between different roles or units, while contextual ambidexterity helps explain how the same teams may handle both existing and new GTM logics.

Structural ambidexterity suggests that the most effective way to manage these competing demands is to create separate organizational units (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). Exploitative units focus on efficiency and execution in mature markets, emphasizing evolutionary change (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). In contrast, exploratory units emphasize flexibility, experimentation, and discovery, focusing on revolutionary innovation for emerging markets (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). The goal for these units is to minimize bureaucracy and increase autonomy to support innovation and development of new products, technologies or business models. In a SaaS GTM context, structural ambidexterity may appear when a company separates PLG activities from enterprise sales activities, or when a dedicated customer success unit is created to focus on customer onboarding, value realization and retention.

Gibson & Birkinshaw (2004) develop the discussion further by introducing contextual ambidexterity which emphasizes the ability to achieve alignment and adaptability within single business unit rather than through structural separation. In this approach, the responsibility for balancing exploitation and exploration shifts partly from the organizational level to individual employees or teams, who must decide how to divide their time between current short-term efficiency and long-term innovation (Gibson & Birkinshaw,

2004; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008). In a GTM context, this may mean that teams within the same product-line could optimize current sales routines while also testing new hybrid or product-led practices. This capacity is sustained by four behavioral attributes: discipline, stretch, support and trust. Discipline and stretch support efficiency and performance, while support and trust create conditions for exploration and innovation (Ghoshal & Bartlett, 1994; Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004).

The choice between structural and contextual ambidexterity often depends on the size and maturity of the company, as well as its competitive environment (Raisch et al., 2009). Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) often lack resources to create separate organizational units and therefore rely more on contextual approaches (Lubatkin et al. 2006). Fewer hierarchical levels and closer top management involvement balance both strategic and operational activities, which can support ambidexterity without formal structural separation (Lubatkin et al., 2006). This is relevant because many product-line level GTM decisions may not be made through large corporate structures, but rather in smaller teams where sales, product, marketing and customer success interact closely.

Furthermore, Koryak et al. (2018) suggest that ambidexterity is supported by clear vision and targeted investments in both research and development (R&D) and continuous improvement (Koryak et al., 2018). Successful companies may also combine approaches by using structural differentiation for major technical shifts and contextual integration for ongoing adaptation and innovation within existing business units (Raisch et al., 2009; Koryak et al., 2018). This combined approach is relevant in GTM context, where some activities may be separated into dedicated functions, while others require daily coordination across existing teams. Hochstein et al. (2023) support this view by showing that customer success management complements sales and service efforts, but its effectiveness depends on customer health data, internal positioning and coordination across functions Hochstein et al. (2023).

The main implication for this thesis is that structural and contextual ambidexterity help explain different ways of organizing GTM work. Structural ambidexterity is useful when different PLG, SLG or PLS approaches, onboarding or customer success activities require dedicated roles or units. Contextual ambidexterity is useful when the same teams must independently balance, for example product-led efficiency, sales-led experimentation and post-sale value realization.

2.3.3 Ambidexterity within the dynamic capability process

Birkinshaw et al. (2016) connect dynamic capabilities and ambidexterity by showing that ambidexterity can complement the dynamic capability process. In this thesis, dynamic capabilities explain how companies recognize, choose and implement GTM change, while ambidexterity explains the tension between old and new GTM logics within that process. Birkinshaw et al. (2016) suggests that firms do not rely on one universal set of dynamic capabilities. Instead, the required capabilities depend on the chosen adaptation mode: structural separation, behavioral integration or sequential alternation (Birkinshaw et al., 2016). Table 1 summarizes these modes and translates them into the SaaS GTM context.

This logic is directly relevant for this thesis because B2B SaaS companies may organize GTM approaches in different ways. Some may separate PLG and SLG activities into different teams, some may integrate both logics into shared cross-functional teams, while others may shift the focus between PLG and SLG over time. Alaghband et al. (2023) describe that product-led sales require different functions to take ownership of different parts of the customer journey, while Narayen et al. (2023) emphasize clear triggers for human engagement, cross-functional collaboration, and dynamic resource allocation across product-led and sales-led activities.

Birkinshaw et al. (2016) also emphasize that dynamic capabilities are not always a single set of skills, processes or routines that can be applied in every firm. Instead, the capabilities needed depend on which adaptation mode the company chooses. Their case

studies show that firms can develop different higher-order reconfiguring capabilities that support adaptation, such as resource-linking, context-shaping, and focus-shifting capabilities (Birkinshaw et al., 2016). For the GTM context, this suggests that firms may aim for a similar outcome, such as integrating two growth logics, but use different internal routines and coordination mechanisms to do so. This strengthens the value of qualitative case research because on paper, similar GTM approaches may hide different organizational processes.

Table 1 presents a simplified GTM interpretation of Birkinshaw et al's (2016) adaptation modes. The table does not present ambidexterity as a separate outcome or as a replacement for dynamic capabilities but instead shows three possible ways B2B SaaS companies may organize the exploration-exploitation balance during GTM reconfiguration.

Table 1. Three ways to organize ambidextrous GTM work (adapted from Birkinshaw et al., 2016)

Ambidexterity mode	Main idea	SaaS GTM context	Main tension in GTM reconfiguration
Structural separation	Separate teams handle existing and new GTM logics.	A product growth team develops PLG or self-service motions, while an enterprise sales team manages SLG and high-touch customers.	How to connect separate teams without creating silos, unclear handoffs, or competing targets
Behavioral integration	The same teams or shared roles handle both existing and new GTM logics	Product, sales, marketing, and customer success share responsibility	How to avoid role confusion, conflicting incentives, and

		for hybrid GTM across the customer journey.	unclear customer ownership
Sequential alternation	The company shifts focus between existing and new GTM logics over time	The firm first focuses on PLG adoption, then later increases enterprise sales focus when enterprise demand or product usage signals justify it.	How to know when to shift priorities, resources, and leadership attention between PLG and SLG

2.4 Conceptual Framework: GTM reconfiguration in B2B SaaS companies

The conceptual framework, visualized in Figure 2, is proposed to explain the GTM reconfiguration process in B2B SaaS companies. To address the research problem, the theoretical framework integrates dynamic capabilities and organizational ambidexterity with SaaS GTM reconfiguration. Dynamic capabilities are used as the main theoretical lens, while ambidexterity is used as a supporting concept that explains the exploration-exploitation tension during the process. Together, these perspectives explain why capability reconfiguration is necessary, how it takes place and what kind of organizational tensions must be managed.

Dynamic capabilities serve as the main lens explaining how SaaS companies move from recognizing GTM-related limitations or opportunities to implementing a new or adjusted GTM model. This follows the logic that dynamic capabilities can be divided into sensing seizing and reconfiguring activities. Birkinshaw et al. (2016) further show that the specific capabilities needed may depend on the firm's chosen adaptation mode. At the same

time, organizational ambidexterity is not conceptualized as a separate outcome or only as background condition. Instead, it is used as a balancing logic that operates across the framework and explains how companies manage the tension between exploiting existing GTM routines and exploring new GTM arrangements.

The two theories are combined to fill a gap. While dynamic capabilities explain the process of GTM change, they do not explain how organizations balance competing demands, maintaining current performance and experimenting with new growth logics. Ambidexterity explains the balancing tension, while microfoundations make the process observable through concrete routines, decision rules and resource allocation. This suggests that GTM reconfiguration is not only a strategic choice, but a capability change process. In this framework, the limitations of existing GTM models act as triggers for reconfiguration. In B2B SaaS context, these triggers may for example include a PLG growth ceiling, or high SLG customer acquisition costs.

By applying these theoretical lenses to the GTM context, this framework aims to identify the key capabilities and microfoundations required to balance the tensions between GTM models successfully. Leveraging, creating, accessing and releasing are not treated as separate stages that replace sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring, but rather as resource actions that operate across the process. During sensing, companies may recognize resource limitations. During seizing, they decide which resources should be leveraged, created, accessed or released. During reconfiguring, these choices become visible through investments, changed roles, routines, processes and resource allocation. Therefore, these resource actions are connected to the whole process but become more visible during reconfiguration.

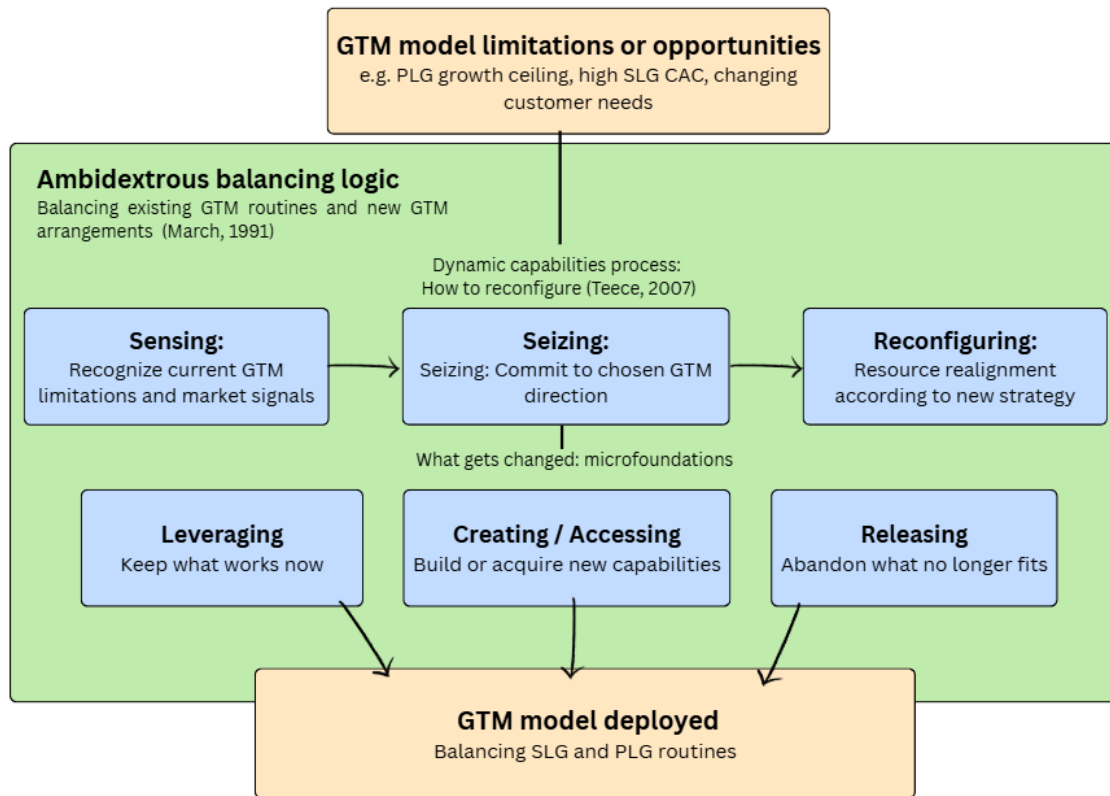


Figure 2. Conceptual framework of the thesis

The proposed framework serves as an analytical tool for qualitative study and guides the analysis of interview data. It helps examine how companies recognize GTM-related signals, choose a GTM direction, reconfigure resources and routines, and manage the tension between existing and new growth logics.

3 Methodology

Building on the conceptual framework proposed earlier, this chapter explains the methodological choices made to answer the main research question. The purpose of this chapter is to explain how research design supports the study of GTM reconfiguration as a managerial and organizational process. The chapter first outlines the research strategy and case selection. It then explains data collection, data analysis, and finally research quality, reliability and reflexivity.

3.1 Research Strategy

To achieve the methodological fit between the research question and the study design, emphasized by Edmondson and McManus (2007), the methodology of this study follows the Research Onion framework (see Figure 3) developed by Saunders et al. (2023). This framework helps to organize the research process into six different layers, starting from research philosophy and moving to specific techniques. These methodological choices were made to understand the GTM reconfiguration as a managerial and organizational process.

The first layer of the research onion is philosophy. This study uses interpretivism as its guiding philosophy because it is suitable for understanding the meanings, interpretations, and reasons behind human action in a business context (Saunders et al., 2023). The study focuses on understanding the "how" and "why" of complex organizational changes and managerial decisions rather than measuring objective performance outcomes. The second methodological choice is an abductive approach. An abductive approach was chosen because the study starts from an existing theoretical foundation but remains open to finding new empirical patterns from the interview data (Saunders et al., 2023). The framework built for the study provides concepts such as sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring and ambidexterity, but the analysis is based on how interviewees describe GTM changes in their own practical language and approach.

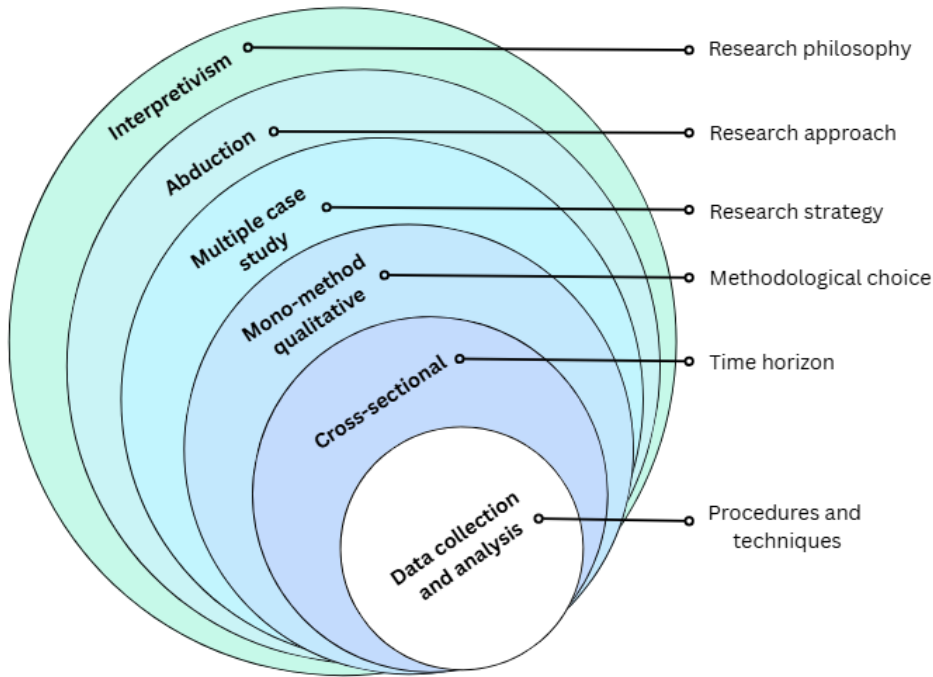


Figure 3. Research onion (adapted from Saunders et al., 2023)

The research method should be chosen in a way that supports the research problem and questions (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). The methodological choice for this study is a mono-method qualitative study. Qualitative research is the most effective way to investigate complex organizational changes (Edmondson & McManus, 2007; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). The chosen research strategy is a multiple-case study of B2B SaaS companies. A multiple-case study is more suitable for comparison than a single-case study because it allows comparison across different companies and product contexts, while still enabling an in-depth understanding of each case (Eisenhardt, 1989). This fits the purpose of the thesis because the aim is not to measure which GTM model performs best, but to understand how companies select, implement and adjust their GTM models through changes in routines, roles and resource allocations. The time horizon for the study is cross-sectional meaning that the data is collected at one specific point in time (Saunders et al., 2023). This provides a snapshot of how executive leaders in the Finnish SaaS industry currently understand their GTM logic and how they describe the decisions and routines that led to it.

3.2 Case Selection

This study used purposive sampling, which means the case companies were selected based on their suitability for answering the research question rather than by chance. Purposive sampling is appropriate in qualitative case research when the aim is to gain rich and relevant insight from information-rich cases (Saunders et al., 2023; Yin, 2018). The cases were selected to provide insight into companies that had experience with sales-led, product-led or combined GTM characteristics. Therefore, the selected cases did not have to have completed a full transition from one GTM model to another, but had to have experience with evaluating, combining or organizing sales-led and product-led elements.

The final sample consists of three companies' senior executives providing a suitable base for comparative analysis. This range was suitable for a multiple-case study because it allows comparison across cases while still making in-depth analysis possible (Eisenhardt, 1989). To ensure the suitability of companies and the quality of the data, a few criteria for case companies were defined. The companies had to be B2B SaaS providers that operate with a subscription-based revenue model. Companies had to have at least one product line with relevant sales-led or product-led experience. An important third criterion in the selection was organizational maturity. The chosen case companies had to be past the early startup stage and mature enough to have established routines, structures and role definition. Fourth, and most important, the case companies had to be willing to discuss internal changes beyond surface level descriptions and provide insight into their operations, thought processes, and organizational patterns and change processes.

The three cases were selected not only because they are B2B SaaS companies, but also because they represent different GTM reconfiguration paths. Company 1 provides insights into hybrid product-led sales path, where self-service entry and product usage data are combined with selective sales involvement. Company 2 provides insight into a more enterprise sales-led international direction where trust-based buying and industry access shapes GTM choices. Company 3 provides insight into a shift away from original

self-service assumptions toward a narrower ICP and more guided sales-led interaction. This supports the cross-case comparison because the cases do not represent one identical path but different responses between sales-led and product-led growth.

In addition to the company selection, the respondents had to hold senior roles such as CEO, co-founder, or product director with strategic visibility of the product line and its history. The interviewees held direct access to internal GTM reconfiguration processes and had to be able to explain the logic behind changes made. The primary unit of analysis was the individual SaaS product line rather than the entire company. This choice allowed more precise findings because larger companies often manage multiple products at different GTM stages (Benchmarkit, 2025). Focusing on the product line level made it possible to examine how specific routines, structures and decision rules are changed during GTM reconfiguration.

Access to the case companies' senior leaders was gained through company websites, LinkedIn and the researcher's contacts from previous work experience in the B2B SaaS field. Potential case companies' websites, news and other public material were first screened against the selection criteria, after which initial contact was made through cold emails, phone calls, and LinkedIn messages. The interview invitation briefly described the purpose of the study, the expected interview duration and the planned time window for data collection. To encourage open discussion, anonymity was proposed during the first contact. The companies are therefore referred to as Company 1, Company 2, and Company 3.

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were appropriate because they allowed interviewees to describe GTM decisions, resource allocation, and routine changes in their own words. This method supported the goal well, because it provided enough flexibility to explore

specific company experiences more in depth (Yin, 2018). To maintain a conversational tone, the interviews were built to feel like a guided conversation rather than a rigid questionnaire (Yin, 2018). During the interviews, it is important that the interviewer guides the discussion in terms of relevant themes, while offering the interviewee the opportunity to freely express their own experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The interview guide intentionally avoided using theoretical terms such as dynamic capabilities, sensing, seizing, reconfiguring and ambidexterity. Instead, the questions were formed in business-oriented language so that interviewees could describe concrete decisions, routines and changes in their own words. After the interviews, the results were theorized in the analysis to further strengthen the research. This was important because the aim was to understand how theoretical concepts appear in practice.

The data collection phase included one interview per company, totaling three interviews across the selected case firms. Yin (2018) emphasizes that case studies seek explanations and the aim of this study was to find answers as to why certain technological or business choices were made. However, because the interviews were limited to senior leaders, the data primarily captures management-level interpretations and strategic sensemaking. This does not provide direct evidence of how operational employees experience the daily routines or tensions.

The interview guide was divided into seven different categories that followed the conceptual framework. After background questions on the interviewee's role and responsibilities, the interview covered GTM-related signals, decision-making and resource commitments, and continued with changes in roles and routines, resource and capability needs. It then focused on tensions between old and new growth logics and finally reflected on current growth logic and future requirements. This structure later supported the analysis. The interviews were conducted in Finnish to lower the participation threshold for the interviewees. The English translation of the interview framework is presented in Appendix 1. All the interviews were held online through Microsoft Teams meeting

platform and took place as one-on-one meetings. Table 2 presents the interview details.

Table 2. Interview case data.

Case	GTM context	Sector	Target customers	Em- ployee amount	Interviewee role	Interview duration
Company 1	Hybrid product- led sales; Free- mium;	SaaS / Customer experience	SMBs with constant new customer acquisition	10-30	CEO & Co- Founder	61m 55s
Company 2	Enterprise SLG; PLG legacy	SaaS / Sales ena- blement	Enterprise sales teams	10-30	CEO & Co- Founder	36m 56s
Company 3	SLG with outbound ICP refine- ment	SaaS / Legal tech	Compliance- heavy customers	10-30	CEO & Co- Founder	47m 26s

3.3.2 Triangulation

The study uses triangulation to support credibility. According to Yin (2018), using different sources of evidence helps create “converging lines of inquiry”, while Saunders et al. (2023) note that triangulation can reduce informant bias. In this study interview data was compared with secondary data, such as official websites, product documents, company-related news and blogs. Table 3 summarizes the secondary data used for each case and the GTM indicators observed from public materials.

Table 3. Secondary data used for contextual analysis

Case	Secondary data analyzed	Visible GTM indicators observed	Purpose in this analysis
Company 1	Website, product documentation, pricing page, demo path, free trial path, CEO blog and podcast appearances, customer reviews.	Clear hybrid/product-led signals: “Start for free”, “Book a demo”. Ready & customizable integrations and workflows.	Used to contextualize interview claims about product-led and hybrid GTM elements.
Company 2	Website solution page, platform usage page, case studies, pricing & news page.	Minor hybrid signals: “Sign up for free”, and “Book a demo”. Strong position around niche target industry.	Used to contextualize the company’s visible customer acquisition path and niche market positioning.
Company 3	Website, platform page, demo, pricing, case studies, company blog articles, customer reviews.	Sales-led / enterprise oriented: “Schedule a demo” “See how it works”. No self-service. Enterprise pricing. Easy to use functionalities.	Used to contextualize interview claims about sales-led orientation and enterprise-focused GTM logic.

The secondary data was analyzed using the same logic across all three cases. The analysis focused on visible GTM indicators, such as guiding customers towards contacting sales, requesting a demo, starting a free trial, or begin using the product directly. Also, pricing visibility, customer cases, and customer support and onboarding materials were observed. These visible features do not explain internal GTM processes, but they help illustrate how different SaaS products present their customer acquisition approaches in practice.

3.4 Data Analysis

In practice, abductive analysis meant moving between empirical observations from interview data and the theoretical foundation (Saunders et al., 2023). Because qualitative data collection and analysis are closely linked, the analysis started during the semi-structured interviews by presenting follow-up questions. Miles et al. (2014) emphasize that

the strength of the qualitative data collected mainly depends on the researchers' skills and careful analysis process. All interviews were recorded using Microsoft Teams and transcribed into text using an automated transcription tool. The transcriptions were then reviewed and compared against original interview meeting recordings to correct issues and clarify ambiguous sections. This helped to avoid any misunderstandings before the data was further analyzed.

To analyze and structure the data, the study used a Gioia styled methodology (Gioia et al., 2013). This approach was suitable because it provides a transparent way to move from raw interview data toward theoretical interpretation, while still allowing the existing framework to guide the analysis. The analysis followed the three-stage data structure. First-order concepts were built from themes, words, phrases, and terminology used by the interviewees. Special attention was paid to themes such as growth limitations, customer behavior, sales involvement, onboarding, self-service, resource gaps, role changes and internal tensions. In the second stage, first-order concepts were grouped into second-order themes by identifying recurring patterns across cases and connecting them to the theoretical discussion. Finally, second-order themes were grouped into aggregate dimensions. The aggregated dimensions were aligned with the conceptual framework and later findings structure: sensing GTM limitations and opportunities, seizing GTM direction, reconfiguring GTM routines and resources, and ambidextrous balancing. This three-stage coding structure improved analytical transparency by showing how the findings were built from raw interview material towards more general theoretical conclusions (Gioia et al., 2013).

Figure 4. presents the data structure based on Gioia style methodology (2013), developed from the interview material. The first-order concepts were developed from the interview transcripts and translated from Finnish into English. The concepts were then grouped into second-order themes and finally into four aggregate dimensions that structure the findings chapter.

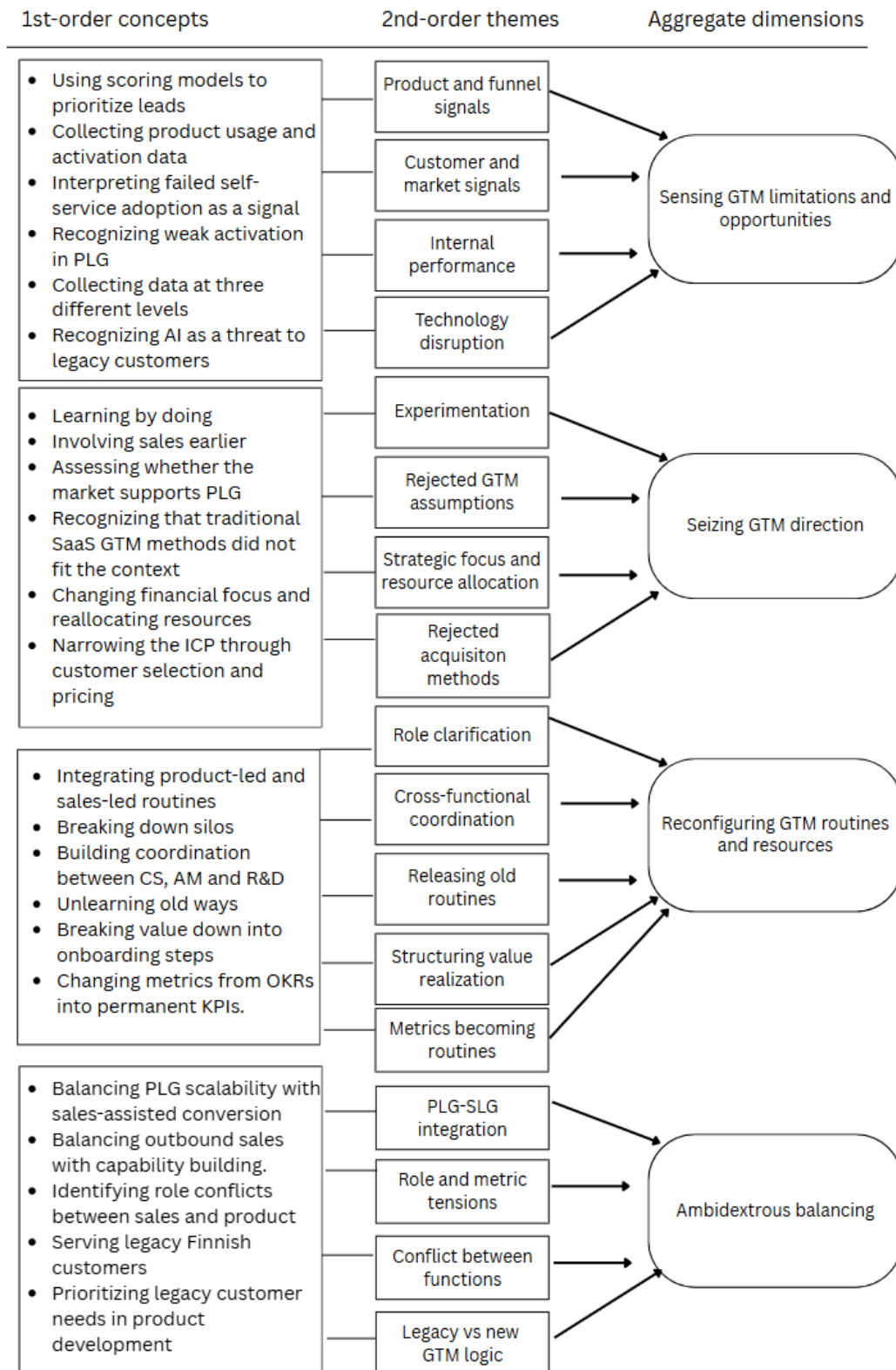


Figure 4. Data structure.

3.5 Research quality, reliability, and reflexivity

The credibility of this research was supported in several ways. The study focused on respondent relevance by selecting interviewees who had direct role in strategic GTM decisions. Additionally, a semi-structured interview guide was used so that every participant was asked the same core questions, while still allowing follow-up questions, which made the cases comparable without removing flexibility. Transcript checking supported data accuracy, while secondary data supported contextual triangulation, although it was not used as direct evidence of understanding internal routines or organizational tensions. Finally, the study followed a structured data collection and Gioia styled (2013) analysis process to ensure the findings are based on actual interview data.

Reflexivity was also important in this study because the researcher has previous professional experience in B2B SaaS related business context. This background helped the researcher understand GTM terminology and organizational issues. At the same time, the researchers' own interests partly sidetracked interview conversations beyond the topic and created a risk of interpreting the data through prior assumptions. Finally, all data was anonymized to protect participants and follow ethical standards. Company names, individual names and other significant identifying details were removed or generalized so the case companies and participants cannot be identified.

4 Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the case study. Findings are based primarily on semi-structured interviews with Finnish SaaS executives and organized according to the conceptual framework developed in Chapter 2. First, the chapter analyzes how companies sense GTM-related limitations and opportunities. Second, it analyzes how they seize a GTM direction through decisions, resource commitments, and rejected alternatives. Third, it explains how the chosen direction was implemented through changes in roles, routines, resources and coordination. Finally, the chapter discusses the ambidextrous tensions that appeared when companies balanced existing routines with new arrangements.

It is important to note that the findings do not assume that all companies followed the same GTM model transition path. Instead, the analysis focuses on how each company selected, implemented or adjusted its GTM model based on product context, customer behavior and organizational capabilities. The interviews revealed three different GTM paths. Company 1 built a product-led sales model based on freemium and usage-based qualification, while Company 2 moved toward a more enterprise sales-led model in a completely new business area while retaining selected product-led elements in the legacy business. Company 3 introduced a different path, as they initially expected self-service to become a relevant acquisition channel but later recognized that the product category required trust and a narrower and more defined ideal customer profile (ICP). Together, these cases show that companies may respond to sales-led and product-led tensions in different ways.

4.1 Case company overview

Company 1 represents a SaaS company that has developed a hybrid product-led sales (PLS) model over the years from an initially pure PLG approach. Its international GTM model starts with freemium signups, which are enriched with company data and evaluated through precise scoring. If the customer is small and activates successfully, the

customer may continue as self-service. If the account has higher commercial potential, the user is moved from signup to product-qualified leads (PQL) and later towards sales qualification. This means that the product creates the first signal, but sales become involved when the account context, user behavior, or company size suggests larger potential. This was also supported by public secondary data, as both a self-service entry path and a sales-assisted path were available.

Company 1 also illustrates how product usage data, enrichment and sales involvement can be combined into a PLS model. The case shows how different customer segments may require different GTM paths. Company 1 does not treat PLG and SLG as fully separate models but instead uses product data and customer segmentation to decide where human interaction is needed. This illustrates how a SaaS company balances product-led scalability with sales involvement and monetization.

Company 2 represents a SaaS company where the current international GTM direction is strongly sales-led. The company has PLG elements in its domestic legacy SaaS business, which is not being discontinued, but is being served with limited resources with an 80/20 emphasis towards the new international direction. Most of the attention is focused on the new product's international strategy, which is built on a market that emphasizes trust-based access, networking, pilot customers and long-term customer relationship building in enterprise segments and requires a strong SLG approach. Public secondary data show both self-service and demo-based customer entry points, but overall messaging is strongly focused on a specific niche target industry and a sales-led positioning.

Company 2 illustrates how a company may intentionally reduce emphasis on PLG when the target segment requires high-touch sales involvement, relationship building and implementation support. Therefore, the case widens the analysis by showing that responding to SLG-PLG tensions does not always mean moving toward stronger PLG. In this case, the company is moving toward a focused enterprise SLG logic in the international market, while still retaining some PLG elements from the domestic legacy business.

Company 3 represents a SaaS company that initially expected self-service to become an important acquisition channel but later moved towards a more sales-led and outbound-driven GTM model. The company built a self-service channel from the beginning, which in the end only produced a few customers over several years. The company learned that its highly trust-based customers require high-touch sales instead of discovering the product independently. This was also reflected in secondary data, as the company website emphasizes demo-oriented and sales-assisted paths, such as “schedule a demo” and “See how it works.” These signals showcase enterprise-oriented instead of self-service driven approach.

Company 3 illustrates how ICP definition can become a central part of GTM reconfiguration. The company started as a general “one-size-fits-all” solution, but gradually narrowed its focus towards more regulated industries, compliance-heavy customers and mid-sized companies. The company deliberately moved away from smaller customers through pricing and avoided the very largest corporate customers, because their buying processes and implementation needs can be too heavy for the current organization. Company 3 is useful for the analysis because it shows how a company can respond to the tensions between SLG and PLG by rejecting the self-service assumption and strengthening a focused sales-led model around trust, ICP fit and guided customer interaction instead of building a hybrid model.

4.2 Sensing GTM limitations and opportunities

The first aggregate dimension concerns how the case companies recognized the fit and limits of their GTM model in target customer segments and product context. The findings emphasize that sensing was not a single event. Instead, it appeared as an ongoing learning process where companies interpreted customer behavior, product usage, sales feedback and market context. The type of sensing differs between the cases. Company 1 relied strongly on product and funnel data to understand where customers activated or dropped out, while Company 2 relied more on direct market learning, customer

context, and industry specific buying behavior. Company 3 first expected self-service to work, but weak self-service traction, trust-based customer behavior, sales conversations and ICP refinement later guided the company towards stronger outbound and guided sales models.

4.2.1 Product and funnel signals

In Company 1, sensing capability works as an active data sorting routine as it was closely connected to product-led data and qualification logic. The company followed targets like how many people move from an ad to a landing page, then to signups, activation, onboarding events, widget creating and widget installation. Later this data was enriched and used precise scoring to decide whether the user should remain self-service or move toward sales qualification.

“A scoring model has been created around this: who to target and who not. When certain criteria are met, the user goes to sales. It depends on the logo and the company whether to contact immediately or wait and see if the user activates more or if other users join.” Company 1

The quote indicates that sensing was not only about measurable product activity. Signup and activation data became a way to decide when human sales involvement was needed. This internal claim is confirmed by Company 1’s public website, where an unassisted “Start for free” and prominent “Book a demo” button exist together, which show a structural readiness separate customers into different groups based on user analytics. This was further visible in the PQL (product qualified lead) logic:

“Ideally, the users who come in are first signups, i.e. qualified by marketing in a way. They have come across one of our messages, and marketing has made them interested in us. The next stage should be PQL qualification: the product should validate that users are activated and doing the right things in the product. After that comes the qualification of the sales or SQL phase.” Company 1

Company 1 also sensed limitations through failure in the early pure product-led journey. According to the interviewee, the company originally pushed users too directly into the full product, assuming that they would be able to understand the value independently:

“The initial idea was wrong: users were driven directly into the product and then we wondered why they did nothing” Company 1

This finding suggests that sensing did not only happen through market analysis, but through “learning by doing” and detailed observation of where users failed to progress in the funnel. The customer journey had to be redesigned from advertising and landing pages to onboarding and product activation. The emphasis was then put on creating new sensing routines. Later, live chat became an important additional sensing routine because it allowed the company to contact users while they were inside the product page. This revealed that with PLG emphasis, users sometimes entered the product with a different intention than the company had expected.

“That's when we realized that the user's intent might be completely different than we had imagined.” Company 1

Company 3 captures an alternative sensing mechanism characterized by negative signal interpretation. Rather than analyzing active user data streams, the firm captured signals from a complete lack of traction. Company 3 learned that the product category itself required trust building and customer interaction. The manager explained that the company had built a self-service channel from the beginning, but it never took off.

“We created a self-service channel... During nine years, we have received two customers through it, and both have already churned” Company 3

In this context, sensing is an evaluation of resource waste. This lack of self-service adoption acted as an empirical warning that the added GTM design was mismatched with the buying habits of its target market.

Together, Company 1 and Company 3 illustrate that failed PLG assumptions can become important sensing signals. In Company 1, the signal was weak activation, and in Company 3, it was almost complete lack of self-service customers over time. These findings emphasize that companies do not necessarily sense opportunities or limitations from positive data, but also from failures, weak traction and customer behavior that did not match the original GTM assumptions.

4.2.2 Customer context and trust-based buying

Company 2 illustrates a sensing path grounded in contextual environmental scanning. The company looked past internal funnel data and focused on understanding and diagnosing the purchasing habits of their international enterprise target industry. The interviewee highlighted that it became clear that these customers did not behave like typical SaaS buyers.

“We realized that they don’t come to our website looking for the best [Target industry] sales tool in the world.... Then it was discovered that traditional digital marketing does not work. Cold calling does not work. Various marketing and outreach campaigns produce poor results.” Company 2.

The issue was not product complexity, but rather the buying behavior and trust building logic of the industry. This points to a complete breakdown of typical marketing routines. The markets were described as trust-based, network-driven and enterprise oriented. Therefore Company 2 sensed that a different approach to sales, relationship building and trusted industry contacts were needed to open doors. This contextual barrier is verified by Company 2’s public case studies, which show a narrow positioning around a traditional niche industry. Thus, PLG elements of the domestic legacy business could not be transferred directly into the international chain context, where deals require high-touch validation rather than self-service paths.

Company 3 highlighted a similar trust-based sensing pattern. The interviewee explained that [Specific product] is difficult to sell through pure self-service because their ICP handles confidential information. This fact made it unlikely that customers would independently search for a small provider offering the service.

“During the first two years, we understood that the industry is quite strongly trust-based business. Nobody just googles a [specific product] and thinks that there is a small provider somewhere, lets enter credit card details and upload all confidential information there”

A similar pattern can be seen in Company 2 and Company 3 as both sensed that product-led acquisition is limited by customer trust and more traditional customer buying

behavior. However, there is a difference between customer contexts. Company 2 faces the problem in singular international enterprise industry segment and Company 3 faces limitations due to broader ICP configuration.

4.2.3 Sales conversations, usage data and external disruption

At the same time, Company 2 illustrates that sensing in a sales-led model can still include structured product and usage data. The company collects data at three levels: individual seller behavior, administrator behavior and portfolio-level behavior across the whole customer chain.

“From these usage possibilities we get from these tiers and based on that we can do product development and customer health care points: how the customer is doing.” Company 2

In this case, decision-making is still data-driven in SLG driven markets as it supports product development and understanding customer health after the customer relationship has started. Therefore, it shows that a sales-led enterprise GTM model may still require product-based sensing routines, even if the customer acquisition path is not product-led.

Company 3 demonstrates how customer dialogue can be turned into a structured knowledge routine. The interviewee emphasized sensing capabilities in sales-driven activities, where strongest market knowledge comes from sales conversations. Instead of traditional sales reporting, the company’s sales meetings had continuously shaped the understanding of the market and ICP. More recently, AI note-taking tools made this sensing activity more systematic and accessible.

“The quality and quantity of data has improved significantly. But from the beginning, the best market knowledge has come from sales meetings... We get really good material from there... now the whole lot is in the database. We can ask directly from there, for example, what kind of things about competitors have come up in the meetings.”

Utilizing AI-driven tools to understand customer objections and competitive moves represents a distinct microfoundation. This active scanning mechanism allows a sales-led organization to become more data-driven and maintain strong market awareness. It also

helps illustrate that data-driven sensing is not limited to PLG funnels but can also emerge from structured sales interaction.

Companies 1 and 2 also identified technological disruption as a sensing signal. For Company 2, AI was seen as a threat to the domestic legacy product as it could soon replace it almost completely. At the same time, AI was also seen as an opportunity to build a new AI-first product direction for the international market segment. Company 1 described AI as an accelerator on top of the traditional business model as it enabled completely new up-selling opportunities and sales engagement for current customers. Company 3 also identified AI as a broad strategic sensing signal. The interviewee described that the whole SaaS business model is in disruption because AI changes both competition and customer expectations. In Company 3, this signal was connected to roadmap work and the need to clarify how the company justifies its position in the changing market. Across cases, the same external change created pressure to move away from old product logic, and an opportunity to strengthen the current GTM direction.

The cases suggest that sensing GTM limitations and opportunities is both data-driven and context driven. Company 1 sensed GTM fit mainly through product usage, funnel conversion, activation signals and events, live chat conversations and ICP scoring logic. Company 2 sensed GTM fit through direct market learning, pilot customer feedback, enterprise buying behavior and industry specific dynamics. Company 3 sensed GTM fit through sales meeting insights, trust-based buying behavior, ICP narrowing and pricing signals. Taken together, this shows that companies recognize their GTM limitations, opportunities and tensions through a combination of digital signals, customer interaction, failed assumptions, and interpretation of target market context. These findings also show that sensing was not only market scanning activity, but a set of practical routines connecting product data, customer conversations and understanding market-specific buyer behavior.

4.3 Seizing GTM direction

The second aggregate dimension concerns how the case companies evaluated alternative GTM approaches and committed their resources after recognizing limitations, opportunities or tensions in their existing GTM model. Across the cases, seizing was also not seen as a single strategic decision. Instead, it appeared as a decision path where companies tested their assumptions, rejected some alternative GTM options, and gradually committed to a model that matched their customer segment, product context, and internal capabilities. The companies translated the sensed signals into more concrete choices about customer focus, sales involvement, product development and resource allocation. However, the companies chose different GTM directions. Company 1 moved towards a product-led sales logic, while Company 2 committed to an enterprise sales-led direction in the international markets. Company 3 rejected the early self-service assumption and strengthened its outbound sales, guided trials and narrower ICP focus.

4.3.1 Experimentation

In company 1, the seizing process was based on experimentation and gradual learning. The company rejected firm upfront planning but instead tested different product-led funnel structures, onboarding steps, and ways to provide value to customers.

“We figured it out by experimenting. We also did some A/B testing. But often, when enough insight is gained, the improvement is so obvious compared to the previous one that it doesn't even need to be A/B tested.” Company 1.

This experimental routine allowed the company to understand that the current direction was not chosen as a fixed predetermined plan from the beginning. The current model was formed by testing what users could do independently in the product and where they needed support. In this sense, seizing was closely connected to learning by doing. The company experimented to decide how far PLG could carry the user and where sales should enter the process.

Company 3 shows a similar experimentation logic. The interviewee described the company's approach as a "fail fast" mentality.

"Failure is not punished. Anything legal and tasteful can be tested with a low threshold and usually with a small budget. We test different things, and if we see even a little that something works, we allocate more resources to it." Company 3

Company 3 is similar to Company 1 because both companies describe seizing as experimentation and learning-by-doing rather than a fully planned strategic plan. However, the direction of learning differed between the companies as Company 1 learned how to combine product-led activation with selective sales involvement, while Company 3 learned that sales-led outreach had to become the main GTM approach.

Company 2 also described seizing as a learning process. Instead of optimizing a PLG funnel or traditional SLG funnels, the company learned that generic SaaS GTM methods did not fit its international target industry or enterprise market.

"They don't actively experiment with new tools, and they're not early adopters in the same way that some other industries are... They're digitally traditional when it comes to person-to-person sales. Through lessons and mistakes, we noticed that traditional SaaS GTM methods do not work in the target industry." Company 2.

This quote illustrates that seizing involved rejecting a generally used SaaS logic when it did not fit the target market. In addition to rejecting pure PLG, Company 2 also rejected the assumption that standard digital marketing, cold calling or broad outreach could be utilized directly into a trust-based enterprise market.

4.3.2 Choosing GTM model

An important decision for Company 1 was to move away from a too pure PLG interpretation. The company first treated the PLG path and SLG paths as separate but later recognized that this separation created problems.

"We pushed the salespeople to the side for a while at first. We thought that if the salespeople have a good idea, we won't listen to it because it doesn't come from PLG data. Perhaps the biggest realization was that sales can be part of the pipeline." Company 1.

In this case, seizing was not simply about choosing PLG over SLG, but rather about choosing which customers could remain self-service, while larger or more promising accounts could be supported by sales. Company 1 then responded to the tension between PLG scalability and revenue conversion by involving sales earlier than originally planned and then connected this decision to their market fit. The interviewee emphasized that customer segment, market situation, buying behavior, and size of the customer problem shape whether users can act independently. This means that the seizing logic was not only based on internal PLG preference, but also on recognizing that target customers may require sales assistance to capture the product value.

Company 2 demonstrate a different seizing path. After recognizing that its target market did not fit self-service acquisition, the company committed to a modified enterprise SLG approach. The chosen direction was built around a focused ICP and direct customer contact. The company also targeted acquiring a pilot customer used for product development and market validation. By developing the product together with the first large pilot customer, the company can build a product strong enough to scale towards similar customer chains.

Company 3 also rejected an early self-service assumption and through learning-by-doing, started focusing on building trust and committing to strong outbound strategies as the main customer acquisition logic.

“We quickly understood that the sales process requires some kind of touchpoint with the customer. Sales are still very outbound driven. Also in inbound cases, some kind of interaction with the customer is needed before the customer relationship is created. That has perhaps been our biggest learning and change. We had to move from self-service to outbound execution.” Company 3

Together these examples show that seizing is strongly connected to rejected assumptions. Company 1 rejected a pure PLG interpretation, Company 2 rejected generic SaaS GTM sales methods in its target industry, and Company 3 rejected self-service totally and refined its ICP and sales methods.

4.3.3 Resource allocation and commitments

Seizing becomes operational through reallocation of resources. Company 2 demonstrates this by shifting focus from commercial customer acquisition to fund its product's engineering core.

"I have changed the financial focus and allocation so that I have reduced expenses a little from sales and marketing and increased them to product development, so that we can get more momentum and people there. " Company 2.

The decision provides an example of seizing as a concrete resource commitment, not only strategic discussion. Company 2 had to decide where limited resources should be directed to. Resource allocation toward product development surfaced especially important in multiple cases, because the product value needed to be clear in solving real customer problems. At the same time, sales remained crucial in target segments that require personal access and enterprise-level relationship building.

Company 3 shows resource allocation in a different way. Instead of reallocating mainly towards product development, the company gradually narrowed its ICP and committed resources to sales routines and internal sales capability building. An important seizing decision for Company 3 was to abandon the smallest customer segment through pricing. The interviewee explained that selling the product's cheapest package required the same sales effort as selling the largest, most expensive package but created significantly less revenue. This made it logical to move away from small customers and focus on more suitable mid-size customers. Company 3 did not only commit to a sales-led direction, but also changed which customers were worth pursuing. This suggests that GTM direction is not only about choosing between SLG or PLG, but also about defining an optimal target customer segment the company can effectively serve with its current capabilities.

To summarize, the cases suggest that seizing GTM direction translates sensed tensions into concrete strategic choices. Company 1 responded to sensed limitations and opportunities by combining PLG activation with selective sales involvement. Company 2 responded by reallocating resources for product development for the selected

international ICP. Company 3 responded by moving away from the early self-service assumption, strengthening its outbound sales routines and creating missing organizational routines as the company scaled. Hybrid GTM was not a required outcome in any of the companies, but each company chose a direction that matched its customer context, product maturity and available capabilities. In dynamic capabilities terms, seizing appeared as a process of turning sensed GTM limitations and opportunities into concrete strategic choices, rejected alternatives and resource commitments.

4.4 Reconfiguring GTM routines and resources

The third aggregate dimension explains how the case companies applied their chosen GTM direction into practical organizational changes. Across the cases, reconfiguration became visible through changes in roles, customer journey ownership, onboarding routines, product development, and coordination between internal teams. However, the approach to resource reconfiguration differed between the companies. Company 1 reconfigured its GTM model by connecting PLG and sales more closely, while Company 2 reconfigured enterprise sales approach, customer success and onboarding capability. Company 3 reconfigured by strengthening sales-led routines, insourcing SDR work, using guided trials, and creating organizational processes that had not previously existed.

4.4.1 Company 1

In Company 1, reconfiguration was strongly connected to breaking down the separation between the product-led and sales-led path. The Company had initially treated PLG and sales as separate logics but later learned that this created unnecessary silos.

“Breaking down silos was really central here. We had an outbound history, and we also had the false belief that the PLG path and the sales path should be developed as separate paths” Company 1.

The quote indicates that reconfiguration was not only about improving the product funnel through R&D but also required changing how different functions understood their role in the GTM model. Company 1 moved from treating PLG as a separate experiment

towards a more integrated model, where product, marketing, sales, and customer success could support different parts of the same customer journey. This supports the idea that GTM reconfiguration requires changes in internal coordination, not only external customer acquisition processes.

A central part of Company 1's reconfiguration process was the changing role of sales. The interviewee explained that sales had initially been pushed too far away from the PLG process because the company wanted to build a pure PLG path. Later the company recognized that sales knowledge could have improved the journey earlier.

"Thinking afterwards, the interaction could have been better. The silo would have been broken down better if the product manager had been supported more strongly by sales experience and history" Company 1

These findings emphasize that Company 1 did not abandon its PLG logic. Instead, it reconfigured how sales knowledge was used inside the product-led process. Sales was not only a closing function, but also a source of customer understanding, negotiation knowledge and commercial interpretation. Analytically, this suggests that reconfiguring can mean leveraging existing sales capabilities in a new way rather than simply adding more salespeople.

Company 1 also reconfigured role ownership between product, marketing, sales and customer success. Smaller self-service customers remained mainly under the product-led path responsibility, while customers exceeding certain size, product usage or ICP thresholds were moved towards customer success or sales. The interviewee explained that product-related communication was gradually clarified as the responsibility of the product team and marketing focuses on communication related to upselling, general visibility and staying in customers' minds. This case shows that the company had to define who owns customer communication at different stages of the journey. In this context, this further shows that GTM reconfiguration created new decision rules for when internal teams should act and take responsibility.

Company 1 also shows how metrics became a part of reconfiguration. The interviewee explained that funnel metrics and OKRs and later KPIs developed over time. Early goals focused on signup and activation metrics, later on upgrades and monthly recurring revenue (MRR). The interviewee even emphasized that some OKRs later became permanent KPIs. This is relevant because reconfiguration was not only about roles, but also about implementing new GTM logics into measurable methods.

4.4.2 Company 2

Company 2 showed a different approach to reconfiguration. Because its international GTM direction was based on enterprise SLG, the main internal challenge was not connecting freemium users to sales but building an organization that had the ability to sell, onboard, and roll out the product across customer company chains. The interviewee explained that strong industry expertise and trusted door-openers are needed.

“Our future sales organization looks like this: we need 3-5 strong industry experts who already have networks. In addition, we need trusted people from [Referenced industry] who can further support the salespeople and open doors to us.

This points out that Company 2’s reconfiguration was strongly linked to accessing and creating new capabilities to gain access to the target markets. The interviewee emphasized that generic SaaS sales capacity is not enough, but instead the company needed industry specific knowledge, local networks and cultural understanding. In cases like this, responding to SLG-PLG tensions may require companies to reconfigure their SLG approach rather than move towards PLG elements. This creates a contrast between case companies. While Company 1 reconfigured by integrating sales into PLG, Company 2 reconfigured by building new a more specialized enterprise sales capability.

The role of customer success and account management also became significant reconfiguring areas in Company 2. Initially, the customer success function was responsible for customer service, onboarding and rollout (a widespread release of a new product), while account management for large industry specific customer company chains remained

with the sales function. The interviewee emphasized that coordination between customer success, account management, and product development was still being built.

“We have a revamped product development team and a new CTO who is going big to build the product together with [pilot customer name] and selected existing pilot customers to move from product-market fit to scaling the process.” Company 2

“We are currently building out how customer success, account management and product development will coordinate and work together to deliver a top-notch product to the selected ICP.” Company 2

This illustrates that reconfiguration is still ongoing. The company had chosen a direction, but the internal coordination model was not fully stable yet. The finding is relevant for this thesis because it shows that GTM reconfiguration is not completed when the strategy is chosen. The chosen GTM direction must be translated into practical routines, ownership roles, and cross-functional working practices.

The strongest reconfiguration need in Company 2 concerned the difference between onboarding and rollout. The interviewee explained that the company could onboard customers, but the industry’s enterprise chains required a broader rollout plan across many different locations.

“We must be able to offer onboarding, but also rollout: how it is rolled out first to 10 locations and then 200 locations. That is where I have a resource problem”

This quote reveals a capability gap. A routine that worked for smaller domestic customers did not work in the enterprise context. The company therefore needed to create a new capability for rollouts and release older assumptions about how implementation should happen. This connects directly to the resource actions introduced in the theoretical framework: Company 2 had to leverage its existing product and customer understanding, create or access new rollout capabilities, and release old onboarding routines that no longer fit in the international enterprise customer context.

4.4.3 Company 3

Company 3 adds a third approach to reconfiguration. Unlike Company 1 and Company 2, the main issue was not integrating product-led and sales-led paths or creating a successful enterprise rollout. Instead, Company 3 made changes to its sales-led routines after learning that they needed to release the idea of self-service as the main acquisition path.

Company 3 illustrates reconfiguration through operational integration. The company stopped using outsourced sales partners and instead built a dedicated internal outbound sales engine.

“Our SDR, or contact side, was completely outsourced until two years ago. We bought it from partners... Now we have insourced this, meaning we have our own SDR team. Outreach is mainly by phone, a little email, and LinkedIn is an important part of it. We try to book the first meeting, where we map out the need and do a little demo. We always want to show the product. SDR also has incentives related to booked meetings”

The choice to insource SDR shows an organizational ownership change and is a prime example of resource creating. Company 3 improved its control over its target customer definition, ensuring that incentives are directly linked to high potential accounts.

Company 3 also reconfigured the sales process around guided product demonstrations and guided trials. The interviewee explained that the company wants to show the product early and then move into a classic sales pipeline: need mapping, product demos, and then using a trial when the customer is serious enough. They utilize a product trial as a part of their GTM, but unlike having a product-led trial based on event tracking and independent use like Company 1, Company 3 uses the trial as a guided sales process.

“We do not have event tracking built into the product. We do not just give an account and trust that the customer does something and then makes the purchase at the end. We try to actively guide the customer in using the product” Company 3

This provides a useful insight into a different trial approach as Company 1 used the product usage to decide when sales should enter the process, but Company 3 had the trial organized as a sales-led routine to guide the customer towards purchase. In that sense,

the same concept of a “trial” can support different GTM logics depending on the product and customer context.

Company 3 differs from Company 1 and Company 2 in its relationship to unlearning. The interviewee did not describe many old routines that had to be unlearned or stopped. Instead, the main issue has been that certain routines did not exist and had to be built on the go, as the company grew through bootstrapping without external investors. Because of this, the company had to build key capabilities, such as recruitment, customer support and HR gradually when the business had grown enough to support them.

“I do not really recognize that we would have had to unlearn some established way of working. It has rather been that there has not yet been an established way of working, and now that we have grown to a certain size, one has to be created”
Company 3

The quote broadens the meaning of reconfiguration. For Company 3, reconfiguration appears more as creating missing routines as the organization scales. This reinforces the idea that reconfiguration is not always about abandoning old routines. It is also about creating routines and capabilities that did not previously exist.

Company 3 also emphasizes how customer success became a new organizational capability supporting the customer lifetime. Earlier, sales were responsible for selling the solution, onboarding the customer and supporting the customer afterwards. Later, customer success became a more active function that managed customer meetings, upsell opportunities and churn prevention.

“Now we have regular meetings with all our customers. In them we hear about the customer’s worries and experiences, but we also actively tell them that something new has come up, would they be interested in hearing more? Now we are also actively selling upsells and growing customer relationships. Yes, the customer success function easily pays for itself.” Company 3.

This finding is relevant because it shows a shift towards a more structured post-sale function. This resource reallocation moved responsibility away from sales, allowing sales to

focus more clearly on new customer acquisition while customer success developed retention and expansion routines.

4.5 Ambidextrous balancing

The final aggregate dimension that emerged is ambidextrous balancing. Across cases, ambidextrous balancing appeared as a practical tension between current revenue generation and future growth development. However, this tension appeared differently in the interviews. Company 1 had to find balance between PLG scalability and sales-assisted monetization. Company 2 had to balance its legacy business logic and new international enterprise direction. Company 3 had to exploit its working sales model while continuing to explore inbound growth, partner channels, new customer segments and new organizational routines required for scaling. Across cases, companies had to balance their current revenue logic while deciding how much attention, resources and responsibility should be directed to new GTM arrangements.

4.5.1 Balancing PLG and SLG characteristics

In Company 1, the main ambidextrous tension was created by the company's initial attempt to keep PLG and sales too separate. Tight PLG focus was first driven by investor expectations. The company wanted to build a scalable self-service path but later recognized that this ideal model did not always support revenue conversion.

“We had to prove to the investors that we were doing what they invested in us for. In hindsight, I would say that sales should have been involved much earlier, even if it was not the ideal state we were aiming for”

This shows the tension between exploring a scalable PLG model and exploiting existing sales knowledge. Company 1 did not reject the initial PLG logic but learned that pure self-service was not realistic for all customers. Sales experience became important for understanding customer intentions, buying readiness and converting customers who could not move through the product independently. This further supports the role of

ambidexterity in this thesis. The company had to balance the long-term scalability of PLG with the short-term need to generate revenue through direct sales support. As a result, a model that balances the best of both approaches was created.

Company 3 showed a similar limitation of pure self-service, but for a different reason. While Company 1 reduced PLG emphasis because users needed help in activation and conversion, Company 3 reduced self-service because the product category required trust before getting customers to adopt the product.

Tensions between growth channels appeared in role ownership and lead interpretation between separate units. Product and marketing could see a signup or lead as promising because a user had entered the funnel or performed events in the product, but sales evaluated the same lead through commercial potential.

"There are many challenges. Some of it comes from the fact that teams don't always understand each other and the goals are a little different.

The same lead or signup can look good from a product development perspective. .. the user is using the product just fine... Marketing may also think that the site and the user look good.

Salespeople look at it a little differently. They can quickly see that this person or company is not worth spending time on. Marketing can say that there are 15 leads here... Salespeople will say that they are not worth spending time on. " Company 1

This is a great example of exploitation-exploration friction. Marketing and product celebrate broad platform exploration, while sales demand immediate commercial potential. To achieve behavioral integration, (Birkinshaw et al., 2016), Company 1 introduced explicit lead scoring rules to control data interpretation across units.

Similar logic appears in Company 3, where inbound growth is increasing but the potential inbound customer still needs interaction before becoming a paying real customer. In both cases, product interest is not always enough, and companies need human contact to confirm the fit. Company 1 gradually developed clearer decision rules for when customers remain product-led and when they move toward customer success or sales

involvement. The challenge was both strategic and operational units had to learn how to interpret user signals together and divide responsibility across the customer journey.

4.5.2 Balancing old and new habits

Company 2 showed a different form of ambidextrous tension. The challenge for Company 2 was to balance its existing domestic SaaS business with a new international enterprise focus after merging two companies. The interviewee described the post-merger situation as difficult because two companies, two market views and two product priorities were combined. This created friction internally between old and new business logics and the people within.

“About tension, it started because the sales results weren’t good enough because our imagined fusion product was not suitable for [Target market]. Sales did their best and blamed the product, and product blamed sales.” Company 2

Strong internal tension because of not only poor performance, but also disagreement over whether the problem was sales execution or the direction of the product. This finding is important to understand for the thesis, because it demonstrates how reconfiguration can create conflict when existing routines no longer fit the chosen GTM direction. The balancing act described was to make changes to the current organization and personnel.

Company 2 uncovered path dependencies following the merger. Ambidextrous balancing was challenging because they had to balance current revenue from the domestic legacy business with investments into the new international strategy. The old mindset and old customer focus was a major obstacle:

“The problem occurred when two companies, two different views and two different markets were put together. A big part of the problem was the old mindset towards that old business. Our product development didn’t want to make a product according to our plan but continued to make a product for old customers.” Company 2

For this thesis, the quote highlights that product development preferred exploiting a known basis instead of exploring possibilities on the new international platform. This structural drag shows that ambidextrous balancing may require more than adding new

routines. It requires leaders to actively stop and release old assumptions and reallocate resources towards a new strategic direction. In Company 2, the tension was closer to sequential alternation as the firm still maintained legacy revenue even though the focus shifted towards the international enterprise ICP.

Company 3 highlights old and new habit tensions between maintaining outbound sales as the current revenue engine, while exploring new channels such as inbound, partner channels and AI-related product changes. Company 3 balances its working sales-led processes with scalable growth options in the future.

“Fortunately, we have also scaled up the inbound side. The customer finds us, contacts us and comes in as a warm prospect... Outbound is still the main source of business. Another channel that is hopefully now taking off is partner sales.” Company 3.

As a practical example of ambidextrous balancing, Company 3 continues to exploit its current outbound strategy because it generates revenue, but at the same time continuously explores inbound and partner channels because they can become a more scalable growth channel.

4.5.3 Balancing outbound sales and capability building

Ambidextrous balancing surfaced as resource and capability problem across the cases. While evolving their strategies, the companies could not develop all GTM capabilities at once, so they had to decide which existing routines to exploit, which new capabilities to explore and build, and which assumptions to release.

The findings also highlight ambidexterity as a resource problem. Company 3 presents challenges of managing ambidexterity within a bootstrapped organizational setting. Unlike venture-backed startups that can buy capabilities ahead of growth, as a bootstrapped company, they must fund their expansion using current cash flows and gradually build missing organizational routines. As the interviewee explained:

“Because we have grown by bootstrapping, we have scaled all the time according how the business has scaled. We have been one step behind all the time.” Company 3.

This creates constant tension, where the company must maximize exploiting its current growth with limited resources, while creating new routines and whole units to support the next growth stage.

Company 3 also shows a shift between balancing sales and customer success. Earlier, sales handled the whole customer onboarding journey but later, customer success was created as an active function. This changed the balance between acquiring new customers and expanding existing customers.

“Before, sales sold and onboarded the customer, and then we let the customer live their own life. We did not actively manage the relationship... When CS came in, this became active.” Company 3.

The same broader pattern appeared across the cases. Company 1 and Company 2 also had to clarify when customer success should be involved in the process. Company 1 moved larger and more active customers from PLG funnel to customer success or sales. Company 2 redefined the roles of sales, account management, customer success and product development around the enterprise rollout. For Company 3, as the GTM approach matured, customer success became a balancing mechanism between acquisition, retention and expansion.

4.6 Cross-case synthesis

To move beyond individual cases, this section provides a cross-case analysis to compare how the three B2B SaaS companies reconfigure their capabilities. Following the guidelines for multiple-case research by Miles et al. (2014) the cross-case synthesis looks for patterns, differences, and strategic variations linked to dynamic capabilities and organizational ambidexterity. Table 4 aggregates the primary empirical observations from the interviews. Rather than showing a single GTM path, the table reveals that a company's

capability reconfiguration is deeply shaped by its ideal customer profile (ICP), its target industry buying behavior, and its financing structure.

Table 4. Cross-case analysis synthesis

Phase	Company 1:	Company 2:	Company 3:
Primary sensing routines	-Monitors digital product funnels -Uses automated scoring models to track user activation data -Captures early buyer intents through live-chat data	-Scans enterprise environments -Tracks chain rollout barriers -Uses pilot client for needs mapping -Tracks macro industry threats like AI disruption	-Uses AI data to audit sales meetings -Tracks negative data signals from 9 years of failed self-service adoption -Monitors customer health through close account management
Key seizing decisions	-Rejects pure “no-touch” self-service assumptions -Commits sales resources to high potential users early -Allocates resources to precise lead-scoring systems	-Shifts funding from generic SaaS marketing lines -Reallocates capital to specialized R&D and industry knowledge -Secures high-profile pilot customers to validate product development	-Abandons small, low-revenue customer segments with price corrections -Commits strictly to outbound sales execution -Rejects and abandons inbound self-service as a revenue driver
Reconfiguring actions	-Removes functional siloes between units -Clarifies communication roles across organization -Turns sales OKR’s into permanent sales KPIs	-Transfers resources from legacy products to concentrate on new international platform building -Builds specialized structures for larger rollouts -Recruits deep	-Fully insources SDR outreach team to replace external partners -Converts independent product trials into guided sales actions -Builds active post-sale customer success

		industry experts to open strategic doors and building relationships	function to reduce churn and create more revenue
Ambidexterity mode	Behavioral Integration: Shared ownership of customer data metrics across the entire pipeline	Sequential alternation: exploiting legacy cash flows while exploring an international enterprise product	Contextual ambidexterity: Strong focus on exploiting sales-led outreach while testing new inbound partners.

In conclusion, the empirical findings across the three case companies show that reconfiguring a go-to-market model is not a simple, one-time decision. Instead, it is an ongoing process of changing internal structures, roles and mindsets. The cases showcase that a company's internal authority, influence and decision-making structure changes how they can adapt. Company 1 shows a highly integrated approach, where investor expectations and clear data analytics helped the managers combine product-led characteristics with active human sales teams. Company 2 highlights the friction of a post-merger structure, where internal disagreements between product and sales teams made it difficult to unlearn old habits and move towards an international enterprise sales logic. Company 3 illustrates a swift operational shift, where the founders used their complete control in a bootstrapped company to drop their self-service assumptions and concentrate on building dedicated outbound sales channels, partnerships and customer management teams.

5 Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings of the study in relation to the research questions and theoretical framework. First, the summary of key findings is presented. The second section reflects on theoretical implications connecting them to existing dynamic capabilities and organizational ambidexterity literature. Third section introduces managerial implications for companies operating in the B2B SaaS environment. Finally, the limitations of the study are acknowledged and directions for future research are suggested.

5.1 Summary of the key findings

This study answers the main research question by suggesting that, in the studied cases, B2B SaaS companies reconfigure their go-to-market model through a non-linear dynamic capability process. The findings suggest that this transformation did not appear to be a simple, one-time choice. Instead, it is an ongoing process where companies sense GTM limitations, seize a context specific strategic direction, and reconfigure internal resources while managing ongoing ambidextrous balancing tensions protecting old routines while developing new growth arrangements (March, 1991; Teece, 2007). Rather than following a single trend, the findings identified three different GTM paths. Company 1 built an integrated hybrid model, Company 2 executed a focused enterprise sales pivot on top of an old legacy business, and Company 3 implemented corrections in their outbound sales driven strategy.

In the sensing phase, companies recognized the limits of their existing GTM models by tracking both digital data and context driven signals. For example, Company 1 utilized micro-level product usage events and digital funnel data to sense when user activation drops. Meanwhile Company 2 and Company 3 captured qualitative signals directly from their sales conversations, refining their ICP, and revealing that high-touch trust was missing from their self-service channels. Across all cases, external market disruptors, especially the impact of AI in tech, acted as major alerts that forced teams to evaluate their customer fit, growth potential, and limitations of current GTM model.

In the seizing phase, companies translated these market signals into concrete resource commitments. Seizing was also heavily driven by rejecting false assumptions. Company 1 rejected a pure product-led growth model to involve human sales teams earlier, while Company 3 moved away from the self-service path and placed more focus on outbound outreach. Furthermore, Company 2 committed limited capital strictly to specialized R&D actions to build their product around a key pilot customer. These results suggest that the studied case companies did not pick a GTM model just because it sounds attractive. Instead, they selected a direction that matches what their internal organization can realistically support in practice.

In the reconfiguration phase, the chosen GTM direction was translated into everyday work across internal functions. Reconfiguration became visible through changes in roles, routines, customer ownership, sales involvement timing, and customer success. Company 1 reconfigured its model by creating lead-scoring rules to break functional silos. Company 2 built missing structural processes to handle massive, multi-location rollouts. Company 3 reconfigured its operations by insourcing its SDR team and turning all standalone trials into guided sales actions. These findings suggest that GTM innovation may require realigning internal handovers, roles and metrics.

Finally, ambidextrous balancing appeared throughout the process as a balancing logic. Case companies had to protect the mature revenue-generating routines while exploring new scaling mechanisms. This balancing task appeared in three different modes based on the firm's specific structure (Birkinshaw et al., 2016). This created tensions between current business and future growth, human sales support and scalable product-led processes, and existing routines and new capabilities.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

The study was designed to address the research gap concerning how B2B SaaS companies reconfigure their capabilities when responding to tensions between sales-led and

product-led growth logics. Earlier SaaS GTM literature explains the difference between SLG, PLG and hybrid models, but gives less attention to how companies change their roles, routines and resources internally when these models no longer fit the product or customer context. This is especially relevant because the current literature often treats GTM models as strategic choices while the findings of the study suggest that GTM change is often a process of continuous reconfiguration. Given the exploratory nature of the study, the theoretical implications are positioned around B2B SaaS go-to-market reconfiguration rather than as a broad extension of dynamic capabilities or ambidexterity theory.

This study applies dynamic capabilities theory (Teece, 2007; Teece et al., 1997) to the B2B SaaS GTM context by showing how sensing, seizing and reconfiguring can be used to analyze internal GTM change. The empirical evidence challenges a static view in GTM literature (Hunt & Madhavaram, 2020) by suggesting that in the studied cases, GTM models were adjusted through ongoing resource and routine reconfiguration. Instead, the GTM model functioned as a continuous cycle of resource reconfiguration.

Furthermore, these results are consistent with the microfoundations discussion (Felin et al., 2015; Teece, 2007) because the studied cases illustrate how abstract capabilities became visible through concrete routines, role adjustment, and decision rules. For instance, Company 1 illustrates how product usage analytics and scoring models appeared to support sensing when the information is translated into clear lead qualification and sales involvement rules. This supports Eisenhardt and Martin's (2000) view that dynamic capabilities are best understood as highly specific, identifiable organizational routines and processes.

The study also relates to the digital transformation (Warner & Wäger, 2019) and digital business model (Chirumalla et al., 2023; Witschel et al., 2023) literature by showing that SaaS GTM reconfiguration can be interpreted as a form of organizational change. The findings suggest that B2B SaaS context may require changes in processes, structures,

capabilities, and ways of working as digital transformation literature suggests. However, GTM reconfiguration was not only about adding sales capabilities or adding a product-led self-service channel. It involved internal changes in how teams interpret customer signals, divide ownership and coordinate the customer journey. This supports the view that digital growth models depend on organizational capabilities and not only on product or market choices.

Rather than simply confirming the existence of tension between exploitation and exploration (March, 1991), this study uses ambidexterity theory to interpret how the case companies balanced existing revenue routines with new GTM arrangements. The tension is visible when companies must protect existing revenue engines, while developing new growth arrangements. However, the cross-case synthesis suggests that this balance did not appear in the cases in one universal way but instead revealed that a firm's choice between behavioral integration, sequential alternation, and contextual ambidexterity (Birkinshaw et al., 2016) appeared to depend upon its target customer profile and product complexity. The findings also highlight that ambidexterity is not an outcome after reconfiguration and in this study it should be understood as balancing logic.

While prior practitioner studies often present hybrid models as an ideal goal or natural endpoint in SaaS growth (Alaghband et al., 2023), the analysis suggests a more nuanced view. Hybrid models may work when different functions share a sufficiently clear understanding of customer signals, sales involvement rules, and customer ownership. However, hybrid GTM was not the only possible outcome in the cases. Some companies strengthened their sales-led routines, or reduced self-service assumptions if ICP, trust building, product complexity or buying behavior appeared to require more guided interaction. Therefore, sales-led, product-led, and hybrid go-to-market may be understood as organizational logics and not only as customer acquisition models. Each logic may require different roles, routines, metrics and resource commitments to work which depend on the capabilities acquired in the first place. These insights move the discussion from theory towards more practical understanding and managerial implications.

5.3 Managerial Implications

The results of this study provide practical insights for B2B SaaS CEOs and product-line directors seeking to develop their go-to-market models. To achieve long-term strategic renewal, CEOs and product-line directors should avoid treating GTM transitions as simple marketing selections. A key recommendation is to treat GTM development as an organizational capability process, not only as a choice between implementing sales-led or product-led growth characteristics. Managers could strengthen their sensing routines by combining product data, sales conversations, customer feedback and market signals. This helps to understand whether the customer can adopt the product independently or whether trust building, guidance or sales support are needed. For example, weak self-service traction may signal that customers need more trust and sales intervention. At the same time, strong product usage data may indicate the timing when sales should enter the process. Therefore, managers could establish regular routines where teams review GTM signals together.

The findings suggest that managers should not assume that sales-led and product-led routines need to be connected as hybrid GTM. Instead, the chosen GTM direction should be aligned with product complexity, chosen customer segment and buying behavior. In some markets, product-led sales integration works well. However, Company 2 and Company 3 illustrate that when a product is built for enterprise buyers or handles confidential data, direct relationship building may need to remain as the primary growth engine. CEOs should first assess whether their ICP can realistically find and adopt the software alone. If the market requires high trust, forcing a pure product-led model could cause a growth ceiling, waste resources and stall company scaling.

Furthermore, GTM adaptation is more likely to succeed when internal routines are actively reconfigured. This may require product, sales, marketing, and customer success to share ownership of the customer timeline. Company 1 shows that reconfiguration slowed down when functional silos interpreted customer goals differently. To prevent

this friction, managers should consider applying clear resource actions (Huikkola et al., 2016). Managers should also establish explicit decision rules for data handovers, and for example define the exact conversion metrics on who owns lead qualification, customer onboarding, and active expansion and retention.

Additionally, effective resource allocation requires managers to assess whether the organization has the capabilities to support changes. When important capabilities are missing, leaders may need to decide whether to leverage existing assets, create new resources internally, or release outdated habits (Danneels, 2011). This is critical especially during international expansion. As Company 2 illustrated, ordinary routines that successfully served smaller domestic accounts appeared less suitable when facing global enterprise chains. This led the company to develop a more specialized rollout capability and deeper industry knowledge. Managers should look beyond past attractive industry trends and focus on the specific capabilities that their organization can support.

Finally, strategic renewal requires an ambidextrous balance between current revenue and future exploration (March, 1991). Leaders should protect current cash flows and not abandon existing routines too quickly if they still create value. At the same time, companies may need to be willing to release old assumptions, reallocate resources, and build new capabilities to explore new acquisition channels. As seen in Company 3, a bootstrapped company may need to rely on its current outbound sales engine to fund operations while gradually building new functions that further support its growth. Ultimately, GTM innovation appears more likely to succeed when the chosen growth strategy is supported by aligned internal capabilities, metrics, and workflows operating together.

5.4 Limitations of the study

While the qualitative multiple-case design provided useful insight into the GTM context, some limitations should be acknowledged. These limitations do not necessarily weaken the main findings but should be considered when evaluating how transferable the results are to all settings.

The most significant limitation is the scope of the sample. The study is based on only three Finnish B2B SaaS case companies and one interview per company. The leading positions of the interviewees provide rich and relevant insights into GTM reconfiguration and a detailed analysis of selected cases, but the number is limited. Therefore, the findings should not be generalized to all SaaS companies. The study also did not reach full theoretical saturation, which means that more interviews could have revealed additional patterns, tensions or ways of working.

The second limitation concerns the size of case companies. The study focuses on small and medium-sized company context, which affects the findings because smaller SaaS companies often have fewer hierarchical levels, limited resources and stronger founder or CEO involvement in GTM decisions. Thus, the companies are more agile and may experiment by learning-by-doing. Larger international SaaS companies may have more specialized teams, different organizational structures and more formal processes. As a result, the findings are more useful for understanding product-line-level reconfiguration in relatively small and growth-oriented SaaS companies.

Furthermore, there were also limitations that relate to interviewee perspective. The interviews were conducted with CEO & Co-Founders, who all had strong strategic visibility in the product line and its history. This was appropriate for studying and understanding the reconfiguration process, but it also means that the findings only reflect the management's interpretations. Employees that are working in sales, marketing, product development or customer success could have described the daily routines and tensions differently.

Finally, the researcher's professional background must be acknowledged. The researcher has previous professional experience working in B2B SaaS Sales and GTM-related work. This background helped in understanding industry terminology, asking relevant follow-up questions and gaining access to suitable interviewees. Meanwhile, it may have created a risk of data interpretation through prior assumptions about SaaS sales and

sidetracked the interviews due to interviewer's own interests. However, this risk was reduced by using a semi-structured interview guide, avoiding theoretical terms in the interviews and following a structured Gioia-based analysis process that was based on high quality transcripts. Still, this background should be considered when interpreting the results.

5.5 Suggestions for future research

The findings of the study open several directions for future research. A useful and logical next step would be to examine the reconfiguration process across a larger number of B2B SaaS companies. The study provided qualitative insight into three Finnish case companies, but broader research could show whether the same patterns appear in different SaaS context. A larger sample would help compare how reconfiguration patterns appear between early-stage, growth-stage and more mature SaaS companies, including large SaaS powerhouses which hold multiple products at different stages of the product lifecycle.

Comparative research across national and target markets would also be valuable. The Finnish SaaS company context is relatively small, and studies in international markets could examine whether similar GTM tensions appear in companies with more specialized teams and larger functions. This would help clarify if some findings are specific to Finnish companies or if they may apply more broadly.

Especially valuable would also be to conduct longitudinal study. This thesis captured information at one point in time, but dynamic capabilities evolve gradually. Following SaaS companies over several years, moving from early-stage towards maturity, would make it possible to study how sensing, seizing and reconfiguring activities change as companies enter new markets, adjust their ICP, build new functions, or move between sales-led, product-led and hybrid logics. It could also show if early GTM decisions create path dependencies that later support or limit future reconfiguration.

The role of artificial intelligence (AI) also deserves further attention around the topic. In the interviews, AI appeared as both a market disruptor and as a new sensing mechanism. Future research could examine how AI changes product expectations, product usage analysis, sales conversations and overall balance between SLG and PLG. This would be especially relevant because AI may change the companies' need for traditional SaaS products, how they are developed, and how they are brought to market.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Semi-Structured Interview Questions Translated in English

Background

1. Could you briefly describe your current role and how it relates to the growth of this product or business area?
2. How would you describe the current GTM strategy for this product line?
Specify: Is the growth based more on direct sales, product-led, or a combination of both?
3. What kind of product and customer context are we discussing here?
Specify: Target customers, product complexity and usual buying process?
 - a. Has the current GTM model been the same or has it changed over time?

The decision path that led to the current GTM model (sensing)

4. When and how did the current GTM model start to take shape?
 - a. Was there a concrete signal or "growth ceiling" that forced you to change direction? (Customer behavior, product usage data, sales feedback, rising customer acquisition cost, slower growth, increased competition)
5. Who identified the need to evaluate GTM and what practices were involved (e.g. regular meetings, data analysis)?
 - a. Was for example data, customer feedback, sales observations or product usage data used?
 - b. How did these signals influence discussion and action? What happened next?

Alternatives, selection, and foregone paths (seizing)

6. What GTM alternatives were considered alongside or before the current model?
7. Why was the current direction chosen?
 - a. Did you want more self-service?
 - b. Was the goal to change the role or timing of sales?

- c. Did the needs of enterprise customers influence the choice?
 - d. What alternatives were considered but not pursued, and why?
- 8. Who were the key decision-makers in the GTM change, and which functions had the strongest influence on the decision?
- 9. Was the change in direction a planned strategic decision or did it proceed through experimentation and “learning by doing”?
 - a. What resources were committed first when the new direction was chosen, and why?
 - b. How did the change affect investment priorities in terms of sales, product, marketing and customer success?

What changed in the organization? (reconfiguring)

- 10. What practical changes did the implementation of the current GTM model require? (e.g. sales processes, marketing, product development, or customer acquisition tracking)
- 11. How were roles, teams and responsibilities divided to support the current model?
 - a. Role of sales?
 - b. Role of product development?
 - c. Role of marketing?
 - d. Role of customer success?
- 12. What metrics, goals or incentives does the current model require to work? Have they changed over time?
- 13. How do product, marketing, sales, and customer success coordinate with each other after the change?
- 14. What elements were kept from the old strategy because they still work well?
- 15. Which established practices or ways of working were reduced or abandoned? What had to be “unlearned”?
 - a. Can you give one concrete example of an old routine that had to be stopped?

Capabilities and resources

16. Which resource gaps only became apparent after the current growth model had already been implemented in practice?
17. What
 - a. resources or capabilities had to be developed or created first so that the current GTM model could work?
 - b. capabilities does the current GTM model still require to maintain its functionality?

Balancing the old and the new

18. What has been the most difficult part of designing, implementing or developing the current GTM model? Clarification: if the company had old and new logics side by side, what was the most difficult part of balancing them?
19. What tensions or compromises has the current GTM model created between teams, goals or operating methods?
 - a. Sales vs. product
 - b. Short-term vs. long-term results
 - c. Enterprise requirements vs. self-service experience

Follow-up:

- How do you manage these tensions concretely?
- Were responsibilities divided between teams, or handled within shared teams?

Learnings and conclusions

20. How do you think the current model works in terms of acquisition, conversion, retention and expansion of customer relationships?
21. What things need to be in place for this current model to work and continue to grow in the long term in the future?
22. What would you do differently if you were starting from scratch now?
23. Is there anything you would like to add to the topic?

Appendix 2. The Use of Artificial Intelligence in the Study

The guidelines of University of Vaasa encourage students to transparently declare the use of artificial intelligence tools during the thesis process. According to the University instructions, both students and teachers are generally allowed to utilize Artificial Intelligence, but specific language models and AI tools used must be clearly declared (University of Vaasa, 2023).

Artificial Intelligence and more precisely large language models were used as tools during various stages of the writing process of this thesis to support the initial brainstorming, research process and refinement:

- OpenAI's ChatGPT-5.1, ChatGPT-5.2. and ChatGPT-5.5. were used to assist analyzing the author's grammar, clarity and coherence of written text in the finalizing phase. ChatGPT also assisted with the initial review of articles and helped to eliminate irrelevant authors and contexts from further research and utilization.
- Consensus AI for research was utilized to assist in the literature search process and in analyzing subject areas relevant to the study.