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What Makes Product Launches Successful?

A Qualitative Study Exploring Success Factors of the Swedish FMCG Industry

by

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Abstract

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Thesis Purpose: The purpose of this thesis is to identify whether the success factors for NP launches in the FMCG industry remain the same as those identified by previous literature, or whether these factors have changed due to the developments of constantly changing market conditions.

Methodology: This study is based on a qualitative methodology with an exploratory approach. By exploring the nuances of success factors in new product launches, an abductive approach was used, with the lenses of a social constructivist epistemology and a stance from a relativist ontology.

Theoretical Perspective: The study explores previous success factors identified from earlier literature, these factors act as a foundation in identifying potential changes in the contemporary environment. By adding current success factors, the study emphasized the possibility of identifying new perspectives on what influences success.

Empirical Data: This study is based on 11 interviews, conducted with 7 different firms operating within the Swedish FMCG industry. The firms were divided into three different categories based on the market scopes they operate within: multinational, national, and local.

Findings/Conclusions: Previous success factors remain fundamental for successful product launches, while they are not sufficient and therefore complemented by current factors which increasingly influence how success is achieved. Although the same success factors apply across firms, differences in resources affect how success factors are implemented.

Theoretical and Practical Implications: This study verifies the continuous importance of previously established success factors for new product launches in the FMCG industry. In addition, illustrates how the application regarding the market environment has evolved. Success for new product launches should be seen as context-dependent factors, rather than universal factors.

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Glossary

Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG): A category of products in different categories, consisting of frequently purchased and low-cost consumer goods, such as food, beverages and household products.

New Product (NP) Launch: Market introduction of a newly developed product.

Success Factors: A set of internal and external attributes, activities and capabilities that increase the likelihood of achieving both short and long-term success in NP launches.

Private Label Brands (PLBs): Products that are owned and sold by the retailer rather than a manufacturer.

1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the background and problematization around new product launch success within the FMCG industry. The problematization identifies previously established success factors of new product launches in the FMCG industry. Further, research gaps and the overall structure of the thesis are explained, motivating further relevance of the thesis in examining how practitioners within FMCG firms perceive and work with success factors for new product launches today.

1.1 Background

The Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry is characterised by swift manufacture and consumption of products used in everyday life, such as beverages, food, hygiene products, and household goods (Nwabekee et al., 2024). Today, FMCG companies are the third largest manufacturing sector in Europe, operating in increasingly complex and uncertain environments (European Brands Association, 2024). Due to firms' constant development and adjustments of consumer-driven products, companies in the FMCG industry have never been more successful in the contemporary environment (Thain & Bradley, 2014). In this context, it is important that companies continuously optimize their operations, as inefficiencies in supply chains and distributions can directly limit product availability and hinder the overall market performance (Bateh, 2024).

Research estimates that only 1 out of 5000 new product (NP) launches becomes successful (Iyyaz, U., 2012), indicating the need for planning before launching new products, as it is both resource- and time-consuming (Lamey et al., 2018). The main argument for new product development and launch is to generate company growth to keep up with competitors in the market (Iyyaz, U., 2012). Due to constant evolution in the market environment, it is significant that companies in the FMCG industry keep up with the development of demands and aspirations, to become relevant (Iyyaz, U., 2012). Thus, marketing efforts from both manufacturers and companies, NP's tend to fail in the market, due to factors such as innovativeness, price premium, and promotion intensity (Lamey et al., 2018).

For firms to achieve a favorable position on the market, they need to prioritize innovation, operational efficiency, and implement an effective communication strategy towards consumers. Therefore, when launching new products, it can be seen as beneficial to have a considerable product range, a culture of entrepreneurship, and a unique footprint to create a company with a strong global presence (Thain & Bradley, 2014). In addition to a firm's strategies during their launches, it is important to understand who else in the market determines the success of their product. In this context, both customers and consumers play a crucial role and must be considered to fully understand their respective contributions (Kang et al., 2021). ICA, Axfood, and Coop are three major players, also seen as customers or retailers, that dominate the Swedish market. Together they account for over 90% of sales in the country (Axfood, n.d). They influence the success of NP launches by different in-store executions, making the product visible and available on the shelf, while consumers determine success by behavioral aspects of purchasing decisions and their preferences.

1.2 Problematization

Success for brands is a complex and multidimensional construct that cannot be measured from a single perspective (Chematony et al., 1998). Brand success is explained by the interrelationship between two criteria: business-based and consumer-based factors, which are assessed over a longer period of time, and compared to both stakeholders and competitors (Chematony et al., 1998). Chematony et al. (1998) highlight that for a brand to be successful, profit (business-based results) should originate from a positive consumer response. Where both sets of criteria are mutually dependent on the general brand success. As this definition originally was developed from the perspective of brand success, its context becomes relevant in light of factors of success in new product launches, as launch success illustrates similarities between consumer acceptance and market performance. While this perspective is relevant, NP launches represent a dynamic and time-sensitive context, as success is not only determined by long-term brand outcomes but also short-term factors such as trial, adoption, and initial sales performance.

Based on Chematony et al.'s (1998) definition of brand success, the authors of this study define success factors, in terms of new product launches, as the set of internal and external attributes, strategic marketing activities, and capabilities that enhance achieving both

short-term (e.g, trial and sales) and long-term (e.g, satisfaction, trust, and loyalty) profitability. Firms need to align their resources, consumer needs, and market dynamics to differentiate products within a competitive environment to be successful.

Ataman et al. (2008) argue that prior research often examined marketing mix elements in isolation, which does not provide a full picture of the NP launch, since it ignores how the coincidental strategies interact. Steenkamp & Gielens (2003) claim that the success of new products within the FMCG industry is based on several factors (e.g., marketing strategy, marketing communication, and trial probability).

Although Ataman et al. (2008) and Steenkamp & Gielens (2003) had different approaches to their research, they all concluded that the brand's communication and marketing strategies in stores are all significant factors in terms of achieving success when launching new products. Further, Ataman et al. (2008) based their research in France and Steenkamp & Gielens (2003) based theirs in the Netherlands; this indicates gaps and the need for investigation in other markets. Additionally, Ataman et al (2008) and Steenkamp & Gielens (2003) research lack a formal explanation of how employees of various firms coordinate their organizational capabilities and how to manage the spread of a new product within a company. Sweden, therefore, becomes relevant to further research as the country may differ in decision-making and other determinative factors, such as unique insights into product developments and launch strategies. As for this research paper's method for data collection, the authors of this paper aim to investigate employees' perceptions and perspectives on NP launches.

Further, Gielens & Steenkamp (2007) highlight how product factors (e.g. brand reputation, product newness, and market power) influence the success of NP launches. Consequently, while manufacturers prioritize and invest heavily in developing and launching NPs, a significant portion of newly launched products fail in the market (Gielens & Steenkamp, 2007). Gielens & Stenkamp (2007) also emphasize the important role of acknowledging the external environment factors that are shaping firms' performance. Additionally, the authors mention the competitive environment, showing how factors like market concentration and category advertising can act as an external barrier to new product acceptance. Despite this acknowledgement, a significant gap remains regarding how external drivers operate in a contemporary FMCG industry.

To our knowledge, Di Benedetto (1999) implies key success factors in NP launches and suggests that NP launches are crucial for companies to gain profitability and market share. Di Benedetto (1999) argues that the key factors that drive success are strategic activities, such as positioning and launch strategies, and tactical activities, such as implementation of advertising, price, and distribution. Another significant aspect is the importance of cross-functional collaboration between departments (e.g., marketing, tech, production, and logistics), as a lack of coordination reduces the chances of success for the launch. Finally, gathering information (data of the market, feedback from customers, tests of the market, and competitive analysis) is seen as crucial for achieving success.

While Di Benedetto's (1999) research focus of the study is similar to the present one, there are evident limitations that need to be addressed due to the relevance to the modern landscape. Firstly, the study was published in 1999 and relies on data collected from product launches occurring even earlier. Findings of this study may have therefore been impacted by the current evolution of digitalization and global supply chains since the late 1990s. Secondly, the research specifically focuses on the US market, which makes the study less generalizable to other countries or diverse business environments. Finally, the study applies a quantitative methodology based on a survey answered by 200 respondents working with product launches. To address the gap, our study seeks to address these limitations by offering a more current and niche perspective of selected firms when executing successful product launches.

Since research on the success factors of NP launches is limited, this study aspires to adopt an approach aimed at identifying research gaps from previous literature. This is done by revising an established problem regarding NP launches within firms of the FMCG industry. From the previous literature, the authors of this study have identified four different research gaps. First, there is a gap regarding how established success factors are implemented in today's market environment. Further, previous literature is vulnerable, as it was established 10-20 years ago. Therefore, it becomes relevant to examine whether existing knowledge of success factors is considered relevant in the contemporary market. Moreover, these factors need to be studied in other market contexts, other than the U.S, France, and the Netherlands, to see if the phenomena can be applied to other regions. Finally, previous research has mostly studied the phenomenon of success factors by quantitative research methods. This calls for the relevance

of a study with a qualitative approach to explore if a changed approach can generate different insights.

1.3 Research Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to identify whether the success factors for NP launches in the FMCG industry remain the same as those identified by previous literature, or whether these factors have changed due to the developments of constantly changing market conditions. To achieve the purpose of the thesis, the following research question was formulated:

RQ: Are the success factors for product launches in the FMCG industry the same now as they were in previous literature, or have what creates success changed?

1.4 Aimed Contributions

This study aims to contribute to the already existing literature and research of new product launches within the industry of fast-moving consumer goods by re-examining established success factors in the contemporary context. Prior studies (e.g., di Benedetto, 1999; Ataman et al., 2008; Gielens & Steenkamp, 2007) have previously identified factors of key drivers to the success of NP launches. Since previous findings are based on earlier market conditions and other important factors that have been developed, it reflects findings that may not apply to today's dynamic environment. This argues for an updated study to investigate whether previous drivers of success still remain relevant, how they have changed, and which forces of influence have affected this development. Moreover, as previous studies of success factors have been researched from a quantitative approach, it becomes highly relevant to see if a qualitative approach can generate other insights.

By focusing on the Swedish FMCG market and practitioners' perspectives, this study adopts a qualitative approach to further provide an updated and context-specific insight into success factors when launching NP. Theoretically, it contributed by reviewing previously established success factors, identifying which remain important, which have evolved, and which may have lost their importance. Further, the study contributes by also highlighting drivers behind these changes, by extending existing literature into a modern setting.

In addition, the study is practically relevant in providing firms with a more current understanding of which factors are significant and should be implemented when launching NP's, as well as insights into how changing market conditions influence success. This understanding is therefore relevant in an industry that is characterized by rapid changes and increasing competitive pressures.

1.5 Outline of the Thesis

This paper is structured into six chapters. The first chapter, introduction, highlights the background, problematization, research purpose, and our aimed contributions. The second chapter, the literature review, highlights the chosen theories that will be used for framing the paper's research purpose. Next, in the third chapter, we will present the method chosen for this paper, which sheds light on the data collection and selection of firms, relevant for this purpose, to collect relevant data to answer the research question. The method chapter also addresses methodological accuracy through discussion on reflexivity, dependability, credibility, transferability, confirmability, and ethical considerations. Further, we present our data analysis results, followed by a discussion chapter that applies the results to the previous literature, with a focus on previously identified success factors. Lastly, the study concludes with an overall summary, including our reflections on what one can take from our results and suggestions for future research.

2. Literature Review

This chapter distinguishes between previously explored success factors in earlier literature and current factors identified as relevant to understanding the success of NP launches in the contemporary landscape. The contemporary factors are illustrated as “hypothetical” factors, as the authors themselves have suggested these may have an impact on how launches become successful. Together, these factors reflect both internal and external factors that have an influence on the success of the launch. Table 1 summarizes previously studied success factors with their interpretations, while Table 2 presents our chosen factors and their connection to the influence of both consumer behaviour and firms' performance.

2.1 Previously Explored Success Factors in Literature

The authors have established five different success factors from the previous literature (see the previous chapter), linked to new product launches. First, by identifying factors related to consumer-centric activities, the authors have established success factors regarding trial probability and customer experience. Further, it was possible to identify product and brand-related factors affecting success. These factors include the perspectives of product newness, brand reputation, and market power. Additionally, the aspect of marketing activities related to the success of new product launches could also be identified. This factor highlights the context of implementing both marketing strategy and marketing communication. Moreover, distribution and execution were identified as meaningful factors for establishing successful launches, calling attention to cross-functional coordination and timing of the launch. Finally, factors related to the market and its environment, relating to the perspectives of a competitive environment, entry barriers, and information gathering.

2.1.1 Consumer-Centric Perspective

2.1.1.1 Trial probability

Steenkamp & Gielens (2003) claim that the success of new products within the FMCG industry is based on several factors. *Trial probability* is affected by firm activities, which indicates the probability of a consumer making a first-time purchase. Steenkamp & Gielens

(2003) highlight that trial probability is not static, but rather moderated and influenced by the market environment. It varies across three different dimensions when exploring it in relation to new products. Firstly, across consumers, individuals can have varying predispositions and opinions towards new products. Secondly, across the lifecycle, as trial probability shifts due to time-related marketing tactics, such as mass advertising and in-store displays. Lastly, it also varies among products. Some products are able to achieve higher average trial rates due to a certain uniqueness in their characteristics in the product category. Increasing importance relies on advertising that legitimizes new products and raises the probable social acceptance before the consumer makes a purchase decision (Steenkamp & Gielens, 2003). Opinion leaders, also named as *market mavens*, are able to influence trial probability and spread awareness about the specific new product, highlighting that trial is affected in many aspects. This is further supported by the fact that market mavens are likely to try new products if they are launched under a strong and already known brand name (Steenkamp & Gielens, 2003). In terms of archiving trial probability, it is important to consider factors such as the consumer's personal experience and innovativeness to be open to new products and ideas.

2.1.1.2 Customer Experience

Lemon & Verhoef (2016) claim that success can be achieved by creating *customer experience* along the entire customer journey. Customer experience is defined as a construct of multiple dimensions grasping the consumer's emotional, cognitive, sensorial, behavioural, and social reactions of the entire purchase journey (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). By focusing on the entire purchase journey, including different touchpoints, companies can gain more control of their impact (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). As the phenomenon of customer experience is seen as multidimensional, it includes factors such as satisfaction, quality of service, relationship marketing, and consumer centricity. Consumer satisfaction and service quality is relevant in terms of creating consumer experience, as it reflects the cognitive evaluation of a firm's offerings. The relevance of relationship marketing is argued to be important as it reflects the influence on consumers' experiences after purchase. Consumer engagement is a vital part of creating experience, as it reflects how consumers initiate interactions with the firm. These interactions can reflect both behavioural and emotional attitudes towards a brand. A good consumer experience can potentially generate brand trust. However, Lemon & Verhoef (2016) argue that trust can also influence consumer experience, reducing the cognitive efforts given by the “halo-effect”.

2.1.2 Product and Brand Related Factors

Gielens & Steenkamp (2007) illustrate how factors related to the product can influence the success of NP launches. Factors regarding brand reputation, product newness, and market power are critical to increase consumers' acceptance of NP launches. If a firm carries a good reputation, consumers will believe their current and newly launched products contain high quality. Therefore, products launched by a brand with a good reputation will exhibit a more rapid acceptance in the first year on the market. Gielens & Steenkamp (2007) also suggest the positive relationship between product newness and trial rate, affecting success on NP launches, as products that indicate novelty bring higher consumer acceptance. Finally, market power affects the acceptance of NP launches in the market. Gielens & Steenkamp (2007) highlight two different factors: the power of the firm within the category, and the general power of the firm. Gielens & Steenkamp (2007) link these drivers to firm performance and long-term profitability (success) in terms of managing the consumer's experience of every purchase stage with the company.

2.1.3 Marketing Activities

Steenkamp & Gielens (2003) claim that the success of new products within the FMCG industry is based on several factors. Marketing communication is related to strategy and category characteristics, which are all influenced over time, when exploring drivers toward a product (Steenkamp & Gielens, 2003). This suggests that marketing activities are not isolated to solely promotional activities, but are connected to how firms evaluate and choose to apply different factors to boost the introduction of a new product. Covering both marketing strategy and marketing communication, Steenkamp & Gielens (2003) highlight the importance of physical features in stores. Features and in-store displays build awareness around the new products and influence consumers' decisions before making a purchase. The store environment, therefore, becomes an important aspect where communication activities can influence an individual's behavior. Steenkamp & Gielens (2003) further discuss how features and displays, in combination with other marketing activities, help to express the quality of new products. Moreover, by taking into account the perspective of mass advertising, reflected in marketing communication and category characteristics, which is effective in information

spreading, covering product-specific information, and helping to remind consumers about the product. Further, Steenkamp & Gielens (2003) state that advertising can be used in support of quality. Advertising is mainly covered in light of in-store flyers and local newspapers that help intensify information about new products. An immediate impact is created when applying intensive advertising to the introduction of a new product (Steenkamp & Gielens, 2003).

2.1.4 Distribution & Execution

2.1.4.1 Cross-Functional Coordination & Timing of the launch

A significant aspect when launching new products is the importance of *cross-functional collaboration* between departments (e.g., marketing, tech, production, and logistics), as a lack of coordination reduces the likelihood of a successful launch (Di Benedetto, 1999). Di Benedetto (1999) further emphasizes the significant role of logistics in strategy development. Involving the logistics early in the process enhances a successful launch. These cross-functional coordinations are vital in the later formulation of distribution strategies and management of the inventory (Di Benedetto, 1999). Success for the launch is therefore not only about communication but also about a certain set of skills across departments, which need to be implemented alongside marketing and sales. In addition, the *timing* of the launch is also an important aspect, according to Di Benedetto (1999). If a product is introduced to the market at the wrong time (when the market is not mature and competitors have just launched similar products), it can greatly deteriorate the outcome (Di Benedetto, 1999).

2.1.5 Market and Environment

2.1.5.1 Competitive Environment & Entry Barriers

Gielens & Steenkamp (2007) emphasize the important role of acknowledging factors related to the external environment, shaping firm performance. The competitive environment is illustrated as a barrier to entry for both current and new firms, influencing the acceptance of new products. Further, the competitive environment is highlighted as being affected by competitive structures and competitive conduct. The competitive structure suggests how collaboration between firms hinders a new firm's ability to enter the market and is effortlessly

made in markets where power is concentrated (Lupcsynski & Wilson, 2001; Gielens & Stenkamp, 2007). Additionally, when power is concentrated to fewer actors, monitoring of competition and threats becomes a painless process, enhancing attention directed to new launches (Chen, Smith & Grimm, 1992; Gielens & Stenkamp, 2007). Gielens & Stenkamp (2007) explain that acceptance of NP launches is reduced within markets and categories where a high concentration of power is noticed.

The competitive conduct is highlighted by Gielens & Stenkamp (2007), consisting of two main parts. First, the authors illustrate price competitiveness, referring to the usage of promotions at the point of purchase. Firms competing with promotions empower fewer actors to enter the market (Lal, 1990; Gielens & Stenkamp, 2007). Furthermore, Gielens & Stenkamp (2007) explain how firms' ability to create barriers to entry through non-price competition. Non-price competition refers to new product introductions and marketing initiatives. New products with varying attributes of a category are valued higher by consumers. Marketing activities can increase acceptance and power by leveraging differentiation and loyalty to “shout louder” than competitors (Shankar et al., 1999; Lypczynski & Wilson, 2001; Gielens & Stenkamp, 2007).

2.1.5.2 Information Gathering

According to Di Benedetto (1999), information gathering is seen as crucial for achieving success. Information gathering refers to data providing firms with essential information and guidelines. Relevant data for firms to use are, for instance, market data, feedback from customers, tests of the market, and competitive analysis. The process is viewed as continuous, as the project moves closer to its launch, the information collected typically becomes more reliable (Di Benedetto, 1999). This ongoing feedback makes it possible for managers to have a possibility to make adjustments to their plans even if the product is already on the market.

Table 1: Identification of Success Factors, Based on Previous Research

Success Factors	Subcategories	Connection to Success
Consumer Centric Perspective	Trial probability (Steenkamp & Gielens, 2003) Customer experience & Touchpoints (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016)	Consumer innovativeness and willingness to try new products influence trial. Success depends on how well the product aligns with consumers' experience and behaviours.
Defining the Product and Its Value	Product factors (Gielens & Steenkamp, 2007)	Product factors such as its newness and overall brand reputation are key drivers of long-term success.
Marketing Activities	Marketing strategy, communication & category characteristics (Steenkamp & Gielens, 2003)	The combination of promotion and advertising of products is critical for short-term performance. Success is driven not by individual activities, but by the integration of the entire marketing mix.
Distribution and Execution	Cross-functional coordination (marketing, R&D, sales, etc.) (Di Benedetto, 1999)	Broad distribution significantly enhances both growth and market potential. Distribution amplifies the effectiveness of other marketing activities.
Market and Environment	Competitive Environment & Entry Barriers (Gielens & Steenkamp, 2007) Information gathering (Di Benedetto, 1999).	Entry barriers limit new and current firms' ability to create success within the category. Data-driven insights and understanding of customer experience are crucial for success. Market research and customer feedback, therefore, improve launch outcomes.

2.2 Current Success Factors

Success factors established from previous research have contributed to a fundamental understanding of the performance of new product launches. However, the market environment has evolved over recent years, resulting in a shift in the conditions that previously shaped product success and factors that may not be sufficient to explain the current state of the industry. It is therefore relevant to complement already established knowledge about success factors with a broader perspective from the literature that investigates updated factors that may influence NP launches in the contemporary market context. Based on the review of relevant literature, this study identified six additional factors considered relevant for understanding the success of NP launches in today's FMCG market environment (presented in Table 2).

Table 2: Current Factors and Their Connection to The Success Phenomenon

Current Factors	Connection to Success
Brand Awareness	Increases the possibility of consumers recalling and recognizing the brand. Influencing purchase decisions and helping new product launches with the connection of the firm, especially in the early stages of the market.
Innovation	Enables the development of differentiation that meets consumers' needs, making the new product launch more attractive, which helps market acceptance.
Shopper Marketing & The Role of Retailers	Success for brands is dependent on several strategies, where firms need to adapt themselves across the entire purchase journey. As retailers increasingly control in-store factors (pricing, shelf space, and existence of private labels), which influence brand performance in the retail store context.
The Phases of the New Products Process	Clearly structured processes and internal coordination reduce potential risks and enable a more effective and well-planned product launch.
Drivers of Success	Success is dependent on both financial outcomes and positive consumer responses (e.g. loyalty and trust), making sure that the success keeps its longevity beyond the launch.
Digitalization	Enables real-time communication, interaction, and reach to the customers. Provides more dynamic marketing strategies and strengthens the impact and adaptability of new product launches.

2.2.1 Brand awareness

Brand awareness is defined as consumers' consciousness of particular brands in different situations (Aaker, 1996; Chi et al., 2009). Brand awareness consists of two different parts: brand recall and brand recognition. Brand recall signifies how consumers can remember and recall a brand name. Brand recognition refers to how well consumers are able to identify brands by cues only, meaning how well consumers identify a brand correctly when they have seen and heard of it before (Chi et al., 2009). Similar to brand recall and brand recognition, brand awareness can also be distinguished between width and depth. Width refers to how well consumers come to think about a brand when they are in need to purchase a product, while depth refers to how to make the brand more identifiable and memorable for consumers (Hoeffler & Keller, 2002; Chi et al, 2009). The brand name is stated to be the most significant part of brand awareness, as it stands for a symbol and indicator that guides the consumer in

the right direction to predict positive and negative outcomes by its use (Herbig & Milewicz, 1993; Janiszewski & Van Osselaer, 2000; Turley & Moore, 1995; Chi et al., 2009). Consequently, brand awareness affects purchase intentions and purchase decisions, as consumers' associations towards the brand change as their knowledge expands. A positive/high brand awareness indicates larger market shares and evaluation of perceived quality, which can generate favourable marketing activities (Keller, 1993; Chi et al., 2009). A previous study by Aaker (1992) illustrated how important brand awareness can be for the consumer when choosing peanut butter from three different brands. The result indicated that 70% of consumers always select a well-known brand over a lesser-known brand, even though they had never used it or bought the brand before. Being a well-known brand for consumers can enhance both brand loyalty and provide a reason to buy their products (Aaker, 1992).

Brand awareness increases the possibility of analyzing consumer recall and recognition of the brand and its products. It may be a factor that influences purchase decisions and increases NP launches linked to the brand in the early stages of the launch.

2.2.2 Innovation

When developing new products, innovation is a significant factor for firms' new offerings (Kotler et al., 2022). Innovation can be expressed when introducing something new: new approaches to brand building, new technology, new pricing, new channels of communication, or new products in general. Kotler et al. (2022) explain that new product development is an iterative process. In this process, managers first discover an idea and translate it into a viable market offering.

Moreover, Kotler et al. (2022) highlight the diffusion of innovation, which refers to one's knowledge of an idea, product, or service, further spreading to markets, and how quickly this particular item is used or purchased. The start of innovation begins when individuals generate an idea that identifies a market need and make a suggestion of how this need can be addressed. Kotler et al. (2022) define two methods to explore how idea generation takes place. *Top-down idea generation* starts when you identify an opportunity in the market, and *bottom-up idea generation* begins with an invention and then focuses on the identification of a market need that remains unfulfilled and can be addressed by it. In comparison, the top-down approach is usually favored when developing new products (Kotler et al., 2022).

Furthermore, Sorescu & Spanjol (2008) differentiate and highlight two different types of innovations, *breakthrough innovations* and *incremental innovations*. Breakthrough innovations are explained as products that are the first to bring significant consumer benefit to the market. More specifically, can these benefits be around: packaging, positioning, merchandising, new markets, formulation, and technology (Sorescu & Spanjol, 2008). Incremental innovations are defined as new products that do not deliver the same consumer benefits to the market, often being more of a line extension. These types of innovations are categorized since they are based on the consumer benefits that they are able to deliver (Sorescu & Spanjol, 2008).

The theory of innovation enables the understanding of how products succeed in the aspects of unique differentiation, increasing the attractiveness of product launches, which increases market acceptance.

2.2.3 Shopper Marketing & The Role Of The Retailers

For national brands to improve brand performance, they need to adjust traditional marketing strategies to a shopping marketing approach to better capture actions of the entire path to purchase, and at the same time, allow the influence of retailers' in-store context. A shopper marketing perspective is relevant to consider while launching a new product in the FMCG industry since it considers the whole process of consumer engagement before making a purchase (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Lamey et al., 2018). Previous research illustrates that 50-70% of consumers' decisions are made in-store (Shankar, 2011; Lamey et al., 2018). This view is important for brands and manufacturers to take into account as it broadens their management of how to reach consumers across multiple stages across the purchase funnel (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Lamey et al., 2018).

There are two main arguments why a shopper marketing approach should be considered. First, manufacturers and national brands are in charge of branding, innovation, and advertising of their products. Yet they have limited ability to negotiate retail pricing of their goods, as the lower funnel shopper marketing activities depend on the retailer. The lower funnel activities include factors such as NP price premium, NP promotion intensity, and store context (e.g, retail banner, PL share, and NP uniqueness) (Gyot & Gijsbrechts, 2014; Lamey

et al., 2018). Second, the success of new products is shown to vary across different retail-shopper environments. Taken together, it is essential to reach the consumer both in-store and out-of-store to capture effective stimuli at the point of purchase and in different contexts (Lamey et al., 2018).

Additionally, shopper marketing includes factors such as private labels and shelf space allocations. Taking into consideration the evolving retail environment, which has led national brand marketers to reconsider their roles within different retail landscapes to sustain brand performance (Bonferer et al., 2022). Retailers often tend to prioritize their own private labels when compared to national brands, which involve different merchandising strategies and allocation of bigger shelf spaces to them compared to other brands in the store. This results in national brands facing challenges in higher competition within the retail environment, where positioning and visibility are controlled by the retailer rather than the brand itself (Johansson & Hultman 2024).

Furthermore, shelf space allocation became a key tactical factor that influenced consumer behavior and response (Bonferer et al., 2022). In this case, national brands have limited control over decisions regarding pricing and being visible in stores, decisions mainly determined by the retailer, and based on demand (Wu et al., 2021). The consumer response is further context dependent, referring to the uniqueness of different store formats. Therefore, national brands must adapt their strategies to different retail environments, where both physical placement and retailers' priorities can shape their performance. Additionally, since shopper marketing has evolved and has moved from a multichannel approach to an omnichannel approach, it has made the retailers' efforts not only offline (in-store) but also online. For national brands the high competitiveness can be seen as a challenge and is where different peer-to-peer markets can help them with visibility and sales (Einav et al., 2016).

Shopper marketing and retailers' roles are important to consider, whereas brands need to adapt across the entire purchase journey to increase consumers' attention. Retailers increasingly control in-store factors such as pricing and shelf space, may influence brand performance in the retail store environment.

2.2.4 The Phases of the New Products Process

To define and analyze key phases of NP launches, a framework will be applied (see Figure 1). The framework by Crawford & Di Benedetto (2006), *The Phases of the New Product Process*, will help the study to outline the key strategies in NP's development, from opportunity identification and concept generation to development and the final launch stage. Phase 1: Opportunity Identification and Selection illustrates strategic activities linked to how a firm identifies and selects opportunities. There are three main strategic activities linked to idea generation: ongoing market planning, ongoing corporate planning, and special opportunity analysis. From these activities, four different types of opportunities can be identified: An underutilized resource, a new resource, an external mandate, and an internal mandate. An underutilized resource refers to assets that the firm has in their possession, but does not take advantage of. A new resource signifies new assets that the firm gets access to, such as technology or raw materials. External mandate, mirrors the external changes in the market, making gaps or forcing new ideas/products. Lastly, internal mandate reflects how a firm's internal goal can force new ideas and product development (Crawford & Di Benedetto, 2006).

After a firm has identified an opportunity, they need to determine which product should be developed and launched, which leads to the second phase, Phase 2: Concept Generation. The solution can sometimes be crystal clear, and other times not apparent. The most effective way of generating concepts for firms is to base the generation of concepts on consumers by listening to their needs and wants. In this way, firms can take advantage of real problems. If the problem is considered to be relevant for the firm, they can put it in an idea bank. In this way, firms can easily create a base of problems to navigate among solutions and concepts that can be accepted by consumers and other stakeholders (Crawford & Di Benedetto, 2006).

The third phase: Concept/Project Evaluation, describes the importance of evaluating the generated concepts or products before moving on to the stage of development. The activities of concept evaluation can vary among different firms, but it is often called screening or pre-technical evaluation. These two types are often categorized as informal evaluation, as firms often quickly screen the potential cash flows and net present value. If a concept becomes accepted and valid in the eyes of the firm, the concept will proceed to the next step: formal evaluation. The formal evaluation is more time-consuming than the informal

evaluation, and can consist of end-user screening (e.g., what do potential consumers think?) or technical evaluation (e.g., is the idea technically feasible?), and sometimes both of them. If the concept gets approved in the formal evaluation (the last stage of concept evaluation), it proceeds to project evaluation. The project evaluation shifts the focus from ideas and moves to a focus on how the idea becomes a project, and how to practically capitalize on it (e.g., what the product is intended for; which needs it would solve; how it should be developed) (Crawford & Di Benedetto, 2006).

Further, after the evaluation phase, one moves to the development stage. During this stage, the product concepts are transformed into a clearly defined service. The fourth phase includes both technical development of the product (such as design, prototyping, and testing), while conducting a market plan and business analysis (Crawford & Di Benedetto, 2006). During this stage, an important aspect is the resource preparation, when the innovation aspect moves beyond the firm's existing capabilities, where employees may require new systems, organizational adjustment, or new competencies. Therefore, both the technical and marketing decisions are closely connected and require continuous evaluation to ensure that the new product can meet customer needs while remaining commercially relevant. Lastly, this phase highlights a comprehensive business analysis to grade prices' financial potential before moving to the fifth phase (Crawford & Di Benedetto, 2006).

During the last phase, the focus relies mainly on the launch or the commercialization of the product (Crawford & Di Benedetto, 2006). Traditionally, this phase was associated with a clear decision of *go* or *no go*, while today, a launch phase typically includes a series of activities before and after the public introduction of the product. A significant element of this phase is *market testing*, where the firm combines the product with its marketing in a real-world context to test the outcome. Overall, the last phase required continuous coordination across the departments, adjustment, and careful management to ensure a successful launch (Crawford & Di Benedetto, 2006).

This framework will be applied for examining how firms of three different market scopes organize and coordinate their activities related to NP's across the Swedish market. By using a process-oriented framework, the study aims to map and define the chosen firms' practices onto established theoretical phases and identify potential adaptations shaped by market conditions. This framework is particularly relevant for this study as it offers a

process-oriented lens that enables the empirical findings to be organized and interpreted in relation to established stages of the new product process. This perspective allows the framework to serve as an analytical lens for interpreting how firms describe NP launches in practice.

Successful product launches are therefore supported by structured processes and cross-functional internal coordination, which reduces uncertainty and improves the effectiveness of execution when working with a NP launch.

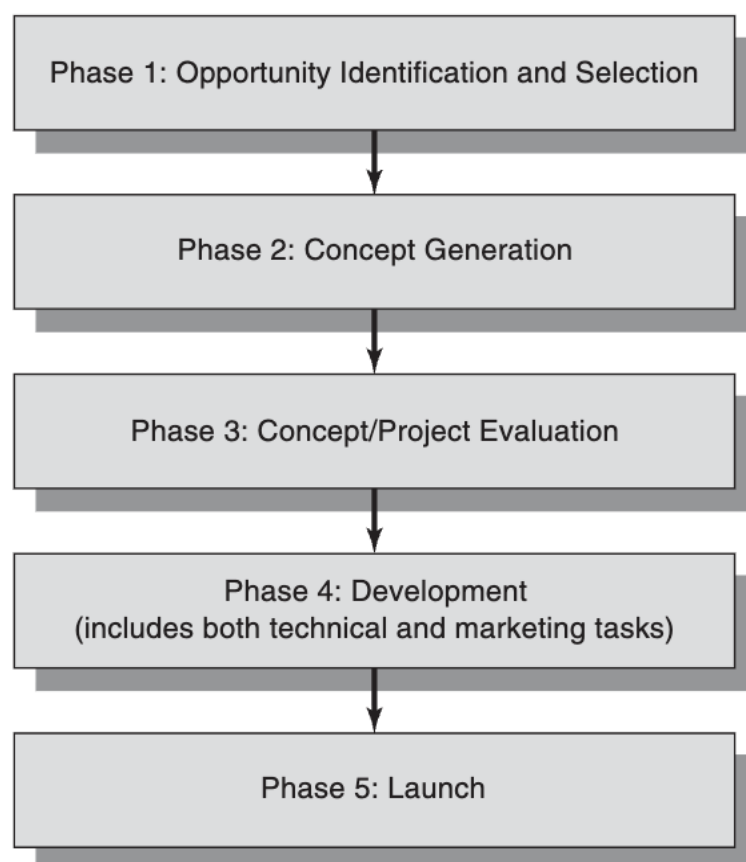


Figure 1: The Phases of the New Products Process (Crawford & Di Benedetto, 2006)

2.2.5 Drivers of Success

Once the brand becomes successful, it can easily grow through its coherence by multiplication (Kapferer, 2012). From there, a brand can introduce new variants of the initial NP that originally founded its success in response to its customers. Moreover, to be able to successfully compete on the market, firms need to launch products that are differentiated. Meaning that attributes of a product launch can include differences in their core functionality,

features, form, style, or customization (Kotler et al., 2022). Several factors are crucial in a successful product launch for a firm. Fabo et al. (2023) explain this by further highlighting that, besides an acknowledged brand, firms are recommended to transition from underestimating the different launch phases, emphasizing more focus on educating their specialized staff and carefully planning the project.

Brand performance is stated to be one of the most significant measures of brand success, as it enables marketers, such as brand managers, with the ability to understand the value of the brand and compare it across different markets (Chapman, 1993; Molinillo et al., 2018). Molinillo et al. (2018) introduce a Consumer-Based Brand Performance Model that consists of four measures to identify the success of brands: Brand equity, Brand trust, Brand satisfaction, and Brand loyalty. *Brand loyalty* is seen as the end goal for brands, as this stage is the most important for achieving success. For global brands, brand equity and brand trust are seen as the most important stages, in contrast to private label brands, whereas brand trust and brand satisfaction have the biggest impact on brand loyalty to succeed in the market (Molinillo et al., 2018).

Brand equity is defined as the importance of incremental utility and value that brands give consumers. This applies to products across different categories, such as food, beverages, and household goods. Brand equity, in turn, directly affects brand satisfaction and indirectly brand trust and brand loyalty. Secondly, *brand satisfaction* refers to consumers' symbolic experiences with the brand (e.g., identity, feelings, and status) and functional dimensions (e.g., quality and performance). Brand satisfaction is stated to play an important part in constructing strong brands in the long run, regardless of the product category. Third, *brand trust* concerns consumers' willingness and ability to trust that the brand keeps its promise about its products and/or services. Trust for consumers is not only about the function of the products, but also about the emotional aspect of faith over a period of time. Finally, *brand loyalty* implies the positive attitude of consumers towards a brand, and their willingness to continue their purchases and recommendations to others (Molinillo et al., 2018).

Success should therefore be understood as a combination of financial outcomes and positive consumer outcomes, such as trust and loyalty, which contribute to long-term success beyond the launch itself.

2.2.6 Digitalization

Digital branding can be summarized as the sum of our digital experiences, in which brand awareness extends beyond visual identity (Rowles, 2025). The foundational understanding of branding has evolved since the rise of social media, as it now enables two-way communication between brands and consumers. Common understanding of branding has, in addition, evolved from focusing solely on brand management to individual customer relationship management, as the rise of Web 2.0 has transformed consumers from being passive recipients to active participants (Morokhova et al, 2023).

Another aspect affecting brands and their branding strategies is artificial intelligence (AI), which has impacted the world around us. Rowles (2025) illustrates how different AI tools make it possible to create a better user experience. The use of different machine learning factors, optimizing website experience, and other communication touchpoints, websites can increase the feelings of being more personal as they are customized to the customers.

Digitalization and higher social media presence have also contributed to a shift from fixed launch periods to more flexible ones. Dwivedi et al. (2021) point out that the shift from traditional and static marketing strategies has moved to dynamic, immediate, and real-time interactions caused by social and digital media. Consequently, traditional marketing strategies may no longer be sufficient for successful NP launches. This study seeks to identify if practitioners may highlight the rise of digitalization as a factor that has contributed to and reshaped their NP launches. Digitalization, therefore, supports real-time engagement with customers and increases market reach, while allowing firms to develop more adaptive marketing strategies that strengthen their impact in NP launches.

2.3 Summary of Theoretical Perspectives

By concluding theoretical perspectives, this study makes a distinction between previously explored success factors and current success factors that were identified as absent in exploring the modern landscape. Therefore, five previously explored factors are further supported by additional six factors, which are explored with additional literature to build a

base for this study. Current factors are viewed as supplementary factors that contribute to an updated perspective and may be significant when exploring how success is viewed in new product launches today. The literature review, moreover, highlighted that the success of NP launches in the FMCG industry is a complex and multiphased phenomenon, shaped by firm-driven strategies and influenced by consumer-related factors.

Five of the previously explored success factors covered a consumer-centric perspective, highlighting both trial probability and customer experience. Further, product and brand-related factors were discussed as significant in understanding the influence that they have on the success of NP launches. In addition, marketing activities were explored, covering both marketing strategy and marketing communication, emphasizing the importance of in-store activities that contribute to the introduction of new products. By highlighting distribution and execution factors, authors explored how cross-functional collaboration and timing can act as a success factor. Lastly, market and environment were also discussed, underlining the importance of the competitive environment, entry barriers, and information gathering aspect.

Six of the currently identified success factors are later explored in the literature review. One among these factors was brand awareness, where the importance of brand recall and brand recognition was discussed. Current success factors explored innovation to further emphasize how introducing something new can contribute to brand building. Furthermore, shopper marketing and the role of the retailers were also discussed, covering retailers who have an important role in determining the product's placement and capture of the consumer both in-store and out-of-store. To structure the process of success, the framework of The Phases of the New Product Process provides the study with analytical perspectives as the framework divides new product development into a structured and distinct set of stages, which enables a systematic understanding of the internal process.

An additional perspective of the literature on the definition and drivers of success emphasizes that brand success is a construct of multiple dimensions, which requires both aspects of business performance and positive responses from consumers. It is significant to understand the term success and its drivers, as new product launches go beyond short-term sales and are important for building long-term value for consumers' perceptions over time. Lastly, as another significant current success factor, digitalization was covered, summarizing digital

experiences that have had an influence on new product launches, by increasing real-time engagement with customers. Together, all of the above-mentioned theoretical areas provide the study with a basis for factors of success in the context of new product launches.

3. Methodology

This study is rooted in a qualitative approach, and explained in the methodology chapter to provide transparency for the reader of the collection of empirical data. Following, the research design is introduced, and how the researchers selected and divided the chosen firms into categories to provide a better understanding of potential differences and similarities. This study further seeks to examine practitioners' interpretations of success factors rather than objectively measurable outcomes, and to demonstrate how the chosen research design supports the interpretation of subjective experiences, methodological transparency becomes particularly important.

3.1 Research Approach

The research design of the study has its foundation in a *Relativist Ontology*, as the researchers seek to understand whether and how success factors for NP launches are perceived to have changed in a contemporary context. From a relativist perspective, reality is not viewed as a single objective truth but as something shaped by individuals' experiences and an organization's context, which is socially constructed (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). A relativist ontological perspective was considered appropriate since the study does not aim to identify a single objective definition of success factors of NP launches, but rather to get an understanding of how success factors may be differently interpreted by experienced practitioners. Success factors of NP launches can be seen as a dynamic set of activities, meaning these can be interpreted differently and depend on the perspectives from which they are observed.

The research further takes a stance in Epistemology from the perspective of a *Social Constructionist*. This lens justifies that knowledge is created and defined by individuals and their experiences (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). The lens of social constructionism is justified by the knowledge about NP's is considered to depend on socially constructed managerial interpretations, interactions, and organisational processes within the organisation. To align with the study's purpose, this epistemological position was chosen since knowledge about NP

launch success is not assumed to exist independently of firm actors. Rather, this knowledge is seen to emerge through practitioners' experiences, interpretations, and interactions.

Given the philosophical foundation above, a qualitative research approach was appropriate for this study. A quantitative research approach was considered less favorable, as the purpose of this study does not seek to measure how statistically significant success factors are. Instead of aiming for statistical generalizations, the study emphasizes the generation of analytical insights into how success factors are perceived to have evolved, ensuring that conclusions are grounded in experience-based data from professionals.

To underpin the qualitative choice, there are three main reasons to highlight. Firstly, this study aims to explore whether factors of success in relation to NP launches have changed over time, due to the dynamic marketing environment. To investigate this, the aim requires in-depth insights from firms (employees) to increase the understanding of the phenomenon in a variety of aspects, rather than a standardized viewpoint. Secondly, a qualitative study approach enables the study to investigate a nuanced, contextual understanding of the FMCG industry, as success factors may vary in the perspective of different firms. Characteristics such as the market scope, market dynamics, and organisational factors may generate different insights into the study. Finally, a chosen qualitative approach supports the identification of different emerging themes or shifts across variant firms operating in the Swedish FMCG industry.

3.2 Research Design

This study employs an exploratory, cross-sectional lens of research design to capture perceptions of success factors of NP launches within FMCG firms (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). The study explores perceived changes in success factors over time, it does not seek to longitudinally explore historical development in performance of NP launches or practices in firms. Instead, by capturing practitioners' reflections at a single point in time, the study aims to explore how success factors are currently understood in relation to previous conditions. Success factors can be interpreted as context-dependent, suggesting the relevance of an exploratory research approach, increasing the possibility of investigating a relatively unexplored phenomenon. To understand how success factors are constructed and understood

in practice, and to capture nuanced insights from different perspectives in different firms, this study employs a qualitative approach, based on semi-structured interviews. The aim is to give an in-depth and context-sensitive understanding of how success factors are constructed and to further identify themes that may inform broader theoretical insights into today's product launch strategies.

3.2.1 Data Collection Method

This study draws on primary data, focusing on semi-structured interviews. Primary data helped the researchers gain insights into participants' experiences and interpretations. Semi-structured interviews collected the primary data and aimed to interview practitioners directly involved in NP launches at selected firms, to obtain valuable insights into the factors that define success. The purpose of semi-structured interviews for this report is to gain access to a flexible interview approach, allowing the researchers to use predefined themes and questions, while the respondents could elaborate freely. The authors informed the respondents of the questions in advance to increase transparency (Easterby-Smith, 2021). Sharing the questions in advance gave the respondents time to reflect on their experiences in previous and current NP launches before sharing their insights during the interview. This supported more thoughtful responses and minimized the risk of incomplete recall. The data collection was carried out in a *synchronised way*, meaning that the interviews were conducted online (via Microsoft Teams). Categorizing them as *mediated interviews*, as the participants' availability was limited due to their roles in the firms (Easterby-Smith, 2021).

The data-sheet provided by Yougov was considered as secondary data (Easterby-Smith, 2021). The authors partially based their selection criteria for firms on a datasheet from a global research data and analytics group, YouGov (YouGov, n.d.). The datasheet included successful launches of new FMCG-related products on the Swedish market between 2023 and 2024. When identifying a product and brand, the authors went to the local grocery store to identify if the product was available for purchase, indicating a successful launch by the firm. Since the datasheet from YouGov had limited launches and firms available, local businesses were identified through Mylla, an online platform that promotes local firms operating in the FMCG industry. Additional secondary textual data used for this study were mainly based on

material for gathering firm-specific information regarding their general information and descriptions of their business (Easterby-Smith, 2021).

A *topic guide* (interview guide) was constructed to address the main themes and key questions in all interviews. The topic guide provided a structure for both the researchers and the participants, while maintaining flexibility (Easterby-Smith, 2021). Questions were structured progressively, beginning with background questions to establish context and explore their relation to NP launches. The interview then moved towards the respondents' own understanding of what defines success in NP launches. Moving from here, questions were designed around success factors identified in previous literature and linked to theory, including consumer-related factors, product factors, marketing activities, distribution, and market influences. Concluding questions opened up for broader reflection to at the end capture changes and ensure none of the relevant factors had been overlooked (see Appendix B). *Probes* and *laddering* were used during the interviews, these techniques encouraged the respondents to further expand and elaborate their answers. These techniques included follow-up questions and enabled respondents to answer spontaneously (Easterby-Smith, 2021). Furthermore, *icebreaker questions* and lastly, *closing questions & comments* were used as techniques to build rapport, and to enable respondents to be in a safe atmosphere (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). All interviews were conducted with both researchers present. The responsibility for asking questions was alternated between the authors to ensure that all planned questions were covered, providing opportunities for additional follow-up questions.

A total of 11 interviews were conducted for this study (see Table 3). For the multinational and national firms, two interviews were conducted with different respondents in different roles, as their knowledge can be seen as fragmented, meaning that their knowledge of product launches is distributed across the entire firm. This was done to ensure a broader perspective and to include more experiences. Local firms included respondents with broad roles, covering various roles in several departments; one interview was considered enough since each interview provided a wide perspective from a single viewpoint.

Overall, the length of the interviews varied and ranged from 24 to 76 minutes. This was dependent on the respondent's availability and their ability to elaborate on their answers. To ensure that different angles and perspectives were covered, the study examined respondents'

different roles in the firm to capture both strategies and operational viewpoints from various departments.

The presence of both authors actively participating during the interviews also contributed to a broader interpretation of the answers given by the respondents. Since the native language of both the participants and authors is Swedish, all of the interviews were conducted in this language. This allowed the respondents to express their experiences more freely, making the interviews more flexible and comfortable. During the interview process, all of the discussions were audio-recorded using smartphones. The audio-recorded material was later transcribed, and specific citations were translated into English to ensure both accuracy and transparency in the reporting.

Table 3: List of Interviewees

Interviewee	Role	Firm	Date & Location	Length of interview (min)
Elina	Nordic Senior Brand Manager	Nestlé	10 March & 27 April, Online	29:46 & 24:32
Per	Marketing & Business Development Manager	Nestlé	7 May, Online	41:30
Ola	Marketing Director	Midsona	29 April, Online	40:50
Marie	Brand Manager	Midsona	8 May, Online	44:58
Axel	Head of Category Management	Pågen	30 April, Online	40:04
Maja	Chef Product Management	Pågen	27 April, Online	43:57
Calle	Business Development Key Account Manager	Apolinarie	24 April, Online	30:19
Klara	Founder	Popp	6 May, Online	27:31
Lucas	Founder	Roots	5 May, Online	76:29
Lars	Co-founder	Tamini	28 April, Online	47:01

3.2.2 Sampling

This study applied a non-probability sampling approach, using both a *snowball* and a *purposive sampling approach* for data collection. A non-probability sampling approach was considered suitable, as the study does not aim to generalise findings statistically to a broader population, but rather to identify participants with direct experience relevant to the research purpose who met the criteria (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). The authors relied on three main criteria for participants to be considered relevant in this study. First, the chosen firm had to be operating in the Swedish market. Second, the chosen firm had to operate in the FMCG industry. Third, the respondent's roles had to be relevant in the context of product launches. A snowball sampling approach was applied, as contact with the multinational and national firms was established by referrals such as other respondents and by the supervisor of this study (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). As Easterby-Smith et al. (2021) explain that purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling design in which a defined criterion is used to determine their inclusion in the sample. In addition to the three main criteria, multinational and national firms also needed to be identified in the datasheet provided by YouGov, and their products still needed to be available in stores. The local firms needed to be listed on Mylla, where the first screening took place to see whether they met the criteria. The authors began their sampling by directly contacting chosen firms on Mylla by email. This approach aligns with the purpose of this study of generating in-depth and context-dependent insights into FMCG practices in the Swedish market, specifically regarding success factors in NP launches.

The companies selected for this particular study were Nestlé, Pågen, Midsona, and local firms, such as Tamini, Roots, Apolinarie, and Popp (see Table 4). By focusing on seven different companies, the authors argue that the study is more likely to generate holistic insights in order to gain a deeper understanding of the research topic. Additionally, the selection of seven firms was considered sufficient for the study's design to understand the phenomenon more in depth. By examining launches of various products that differ in category and strategic positioning, the study explores how NP launches are managed within FMCG organisations. The authors divided the seven different firms into three categories: multinational, national, and local, based on market scope. This was made in an effort to

investigate whether any similarities and differences among the success factors identified could be attributed to different market scopes. Market scopes could potentially be an interesting factor to investigate, as resources (both financial and materialistic), risk assessments, and capacity for distribution may vary along with the geographical reach.

Multinational firms

Nestlé was identified by the data sheet from YouGov and considered a suitable case by the researchers regarding the sampling criteria. Nestlé is a large multinational firm with a global presence across Europe, Asia, Oceania, Africa, and America, selling products across 185 countries and operating in more than 335 factories (Nestlé, n.d. a). The multinational firm has substantial capabilities for launching new products, alongside continuous product innovation, particularly within the food and beverage sector (Nestlé, n.d. b). By including a leader in the industry, our study explores their purpose, receiving their insights, and understanding how their strategies are implemented in practice.

National firms

In addition, Midsona and Pågen were identified by the data sheet provided by YouGov, considering the sampling criteria. Midsona is a leading company within health and well-being, specializing in organic, natural, and plant-based products, narrowing its focus on consumer health trends and sustainability. Their strong footprint is based in the Nordic region, as well as expanding markets, including northern and southern Europe and countries such as Germany, France, and Spain. Midsona's brand portfolio includes brands such as Friggs, Kung Markatta, and Urtekram. Together, they actively shape the future of food-wellness by innovation, efficiency, and responsibility (Midsona, n.d.).

The authors also categorize Pågen as a national brand, as they are distributed across the whole Swedish market and in a few expanding markets. Pågen specializes in freshly baked bread, made for consumers on every possible occasion. The firm's brand portfolio consists of a variety of brands such as Lingongrova, Höno, and Gifflar (Pågen, n.d.). Both Midsona and Pågen become relevant to examine since they, together with their brand portfolios and products, are categorized as FMCG firms operating within structures relevant to examine.

Local firms

The local firms were identified through Mylla's website, and based on the sampling criteria. Apolinarie is a local producer of organic and non-alcoholic beverages within the Swedish FMCG market. Its close collaboration with local farms enables the sourcing of high-quality raw materials for the beverages (Apolinarie, n. d.). Second, Popp is a newly launched snacks producer of vegan and gluten-free popcorn, developed as an inclusive and innovative snack within the FMCG market (Popp Snacks, n.d.). The third, local firm chosen for this study is Roots of Malmö. Roots is the biggest producer and seller of kombucha in Sweden, aspiring to become Sweden's leading producer of fermented non-alcoholic beverages. Their value proposition is unique as they own their entire value chain, from handpicking their ingredients in the forest, to transporting their goods to stores (Roots, n.d.). Lastly, Tamini Street Food Meze is a Malmö-based concept inspired by Middle Eastern traditions and the idea of shared dining experiences. Tamini Street Food Meze describes its food as crunchy, funky, and 100% social food (Tamini, n.d.). Insights gathered from local firms contribute to the study's understanding of how firms within smaller market scopes manage success factors when they operate within a single market and may lack capabilities that multinational and national firms have access to.

Table 4: List of Selected Firms

Firm	Category	Market Scope
Nestlé	Coffee	Multinational
Midsona	Confectionery	National
Pågen	Bread	National
Apolinarie	Beverages	Local
Popp	Confectionery	Local
Roots	Beverages	Local
Tamini	Food	Local

3.2.3 Data analysis

The empirical data collected were analysed through a thematic analysis, defined as a method for identifying themes within empirical data to enhance the possibilities of organizing and analyzing its relevance (Nowell et al., 2017). A thematic analysis helped identify recurring themes related to NP launch practices and perceived success conditions within the context of FMCG. By approaching the empirical data with a thematic analysis approach, the analysis had the chance of enabling a more comprehensive understanding.

In a collaborative manner, both researchers reviewed all of the transcripts to identify emerging patterns. To classify the most relevant information to the research question in the study into themes, the authors reduced the gathered data to focus on aspects relevant to the research question. Further, categorizing the data in sub-categories helped the analysis by sorting the material in relevant groups to effectively identify and compare with the chosen theory and frameworks to review the results. When all of the interviews were conducted, codes were established by identifying segments of the empirical data, as these were to represent the key ideas presented by the respondents. Examples of codes used included “Brand Promise” and “Visibility” (see Appendix C: Coding Scheme) (Rennstram & Wästerfors, 2018).

Coding Scheme [Link](#).

Table 5: Data Analysis: Themes, Sub-categories & Codes

Themes	Subcategories	Codes
<i>Previous Explored Success Factors in Literature</i>	Consumer Centric Perspective	Visibility Building Relationships
	Product and Brand Related Factors	Brand Promise Package Design Category Positioning
	Marketing Activities	Online Presence Multi-Channel Marketing
	Distribution and Execution	Retailer Listing Inventory Management Launch Windows
	Market and Environment	AI-Supported Analysis Consumer Insights Competitive Pressure
<i>Current Considerations Affecting Success</i>	Brand Awareness	Product Awareness Customer Experience
	Innovation	No Need for Rocket-Science Responsiveness
	Shopper Marketing	In-Store Impact Retail Access Differentiation of Packaging
	The Phases of the New Products Process	Experiments Feedback from Consumers Slower Coordination Process
	Drivers of Success	Win-Win Increased Sales Long-term Relationships with Consumers, Instead of Cash
	Digitalisation	Buzz as Influence Influences Quicker Processes AI-Tools for Navigation

Novell et al. (2017) describe thematic analysis as a flexible analytical approach that can be adapted to the specific design of a study. In this research, this flexibility enabled researchers to shift continuously between data and theory. This further aligns with the research approach applied in this study. This study applies an abductive research approach, where the empirical findings are interpreted with the help of existing theories, while theoretical understanding is refined through reasonable explanations derived from the collected data (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). An abductive approach is suitable for the purpose of the study, which seeks to understand how FMCG firms define and strategically work with new product launches, while relating these practices to existing theoretical perspectives on NP launch success. The analysis is developed through an iterative process, where the continuous interplay between theory and empirical insights can occur (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021; Bell et al., 2019). Established theories contribute as a starting point for shaping the interview topics and the selection of knowledgeable respondents. However, insights occurring from the interviews can challenge, nuance, or further develop the chosen theoretical framework, allowing the analysis to evolve through the research process.

3.3 Methodological Considerations

The following section evaluates the methodological quality of this study by critically reflecting on the strengths and limitations of the chosen research design. Given the qualitative nature of the study, aspects of trustworthiness, including reflexivity, dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability, were reflected upon. Finally, this section discusses ethical considerations and the limitations related to this study's research approach.

3.3.1 Reflexivity

Reflexivity aims to reflect how elements of the researchers' identities have influenced the research process (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). When discussing reflexivity, researchers are expected to critically reflect on the research process, considering both internal and external dialogues (Nowell et al., 2017). As the researchers entered the analysis with previous theoretical knowledge on success factors in NP launches, internal dialogue became important

throughout the process. Therefore, continuous reflections were essential to increase the awareness of how pre-existing assumptions could affect the interpretations of the empirical data. To address this problem, the authors continuously discussed results and conclusions with the supervisor, while journaling to critically reflect on the research process.

3.3.2 Dependability

To demonstrate the dependability of the research, a strong focus was emphasized on providing transparent and structured documentation of how the study was carried out, providing information for others to understand how the results were reached (Bryman, 2019). An interview guide was used in all of the interviews to provide consistency, while still allowing flexibility for respondents to elaborate on their experiences. Further, with consent from participants, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were stored locally to further support the dependability in this study. The coding scheme acts as a navigator, enhancing the reader's understanding of the research process and how conclusions were developed from the collected data gathered (see Appendix C).

3.3.3 Credibility

Credibility, which parallels internal validity, concerns how believable a study's findings are, reflecting the participants' perspectives and experiences (Bryman, 2019). A common critique of qualitative interviews is perceived subjectivity, explained as the risk of providing less credible findings (Kvale, 1994). In this study, credibility was supported by interviewing respondents with direct professional experience of NP launches in the Swedish FMCG context, including brand managers, marketing directors, and founders. This ensured that the data was based on relevant insights from the industry. Additionally, both authors were present in all data collection sessions and analyzed the transcriptions in a detailed manner (Collis & Hussey, 2014). In addition, to provide comprehensive results from the interviews, conclusions were drawn from employees' insights, patterns, and similarities.

3.3.4 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which this study's findings may be relevant beyond the specific context of success factors in NP launches (Anney, 2014). To broaden the contextual understanding of the phenomenon and to capture a range of perspectives on success factors in NP launches, this study includes firms of different market scopes within the Swedish FMCG environment. The study provides a *thick description* of details about purposive and snowball sampling of participants to facilitate transferability to this study (Anney, 2014; Nowell et al., 2017). Detailed descriptions were provided of the selected firms, roles of the respondents, and organizational contexts, presenting the reader with deep insights that facilitate transferability.

3.3.5 Confirmability

Confirmability in this study illustrates how well the results could be confirmed by other researchers, to ensure that the empirical findings are well linked to data and theory (Anney, 2014). The authors of this study sustained confirmability in different aspects. First, efforts were made to exclude personal reflections from the data analysis to enhance the aim for objective results. Second, the process of data collection involved following an interview guide, reducing the possibility of leading questions. Third, the process of identifying themes and codes from empirical data has been reported in a Coding Scheme (see Appendix C) to clarify and illustrate how personal reflections from the researchers have been excluded in the process of analysis. The coding scheme and transcriptions also provide clarity for the reader, increasing the understanding of the findings. Finally, to ensure transparency, the researchers did not have any prior knowledge or connections with the respondents.

3.3.6 Ethical considerations

The key principles in research ethics discussed by Easterby-Smith et al. (2021) and adapted from Bell and Bryman (2007) guided our study. Particularly involving the focus of the first four principles that highlight: no harm, respect for dignity, ensuring a fully informed conscience, and protecting the privacy of participants involved (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). In practice, the participants were informed prior to the interview about the purpose of this

study, the degree of their involvement, which included types of questions asked, an approximate duration of the interview, and how the data would be collected (Bell et al., 2019). As this report does not include any personal or sensitive information, consent forms were not provided. However, respondents' consent for participation in the study was given through email. Additionally, verbal consent was given to document and audio-record interviews. Further to protect the privacy of the participants, they were anonymized and given aliases.

Upon the request from interviewed participants, questions were sent to them before each interview. We argue that this procedure can both reduce participants' stress and make them more comfortable during the interview. However, providing the topic guide in advance may also reduce the spontaneity of responses, as participants had time to reflect on the questions beforehand rather than reacting to them in the moment. Further, the transcription was done locally on our computer with local software OpenAI Whisper, a trusted program securing respondents' privacy when transcribing.

3.3.7 Limitations

The limitations of the study are also acknowledged. Firstly, focusing only on the Swedish market causes the study's findings not to be directly applicable to other contexts than firms operating within the Swedish FMCG industry. As this study follows a relativist ontology, it views reality as not a single objective truth and recognizes that individuals' experiences can change over time. However, by researching the phenomenon in greater depth, this study provides a unique angle and in-depth understanding of the researched topic.

The selection of firms is limited in scope, as the selection does not represent the diversity of the FMCG industry. Additionally, the firms included were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate in this study, which limited the selection process to a narrowed scope. Furthermore, given the study's limitations regarding time, resources, and firm access, a broader selection could not be included to capture a more diverse sample of firms.

Further acknowledging the risk associated with the relatively low number of interviews and representatives from the selected firms. The sample included 11 interviews from seven firms

operating within three different market scopes. The Swedish region comprises approximately 1,500 employees at Nestlé, 765 at Midsona, and 730 at Pågen, while local firms consist of a maximum of 10 employees. Therefore, the study did not fully capture all existing knowledge or interpretations directed towards success factors in new product launches.

Lastly, certain topics could not be explored due to the confidentiality aspect, which restricted the scope of the interview guide and limited the depth of some questions. As the authors did not conduct this study under non-disclosure agreements (NDA's) when collaborating with the selected firms, respondents may have been limited or restricted in sharing sensitive information regarding certain areas. As a result, the collected empirical data may not fully reflect the firm's approaches, as the richness of details in some areas could not be explored in depth.

4. Analysis

The analysis explores how firms in three different market scopes approach successful NP launches, by further comparing their strategies, actions, and perspectives with success factors identified in the literature. The analysis further covers influences relevant to today's FMCG environment and has an objective to explore how firms work and navigate in the contemporary landscape.

4.1 Previous Explored Success Factors in Literature

4.1.1 Consumer Centric Perspective

From a consumer-centric perspective, several aspects have been highlighted by the participants. When they were asked about factors that affect consumers' trial of new products, Axel from Pågen mentioned the importance of visibility and exposure, where their consumers are able to see and connect with firms' newly launched products. He further explained that the focus on visibility and exposure in the traditional context is shifting towards a more digital importance in social media. Axel elaborates that Pågen is constantly planning and performing activities that increase customer experience, exemplified by contests and demo campaigns.

We take a fairly traditional approach, focusing on visibility, exposure, and going all out in that area. It's a way to connect with customers and consumers. But what we're doing now is shifting quite a bit toward social media [...] We definitely have demo campaigns. We have contests where people can buy, collect, and get that little something [...]" (Axel, Pågen)

This nuances Steenkamp and Gielen's (2003) explanation of trial probability, which was mainly built on traditional mechanisms. Axel's reflections suggest that trial remains relevant as a success factor, but factors that used to push the consumer trial have evolved to digital and social touchpoints. To illustrate how this shift is further applied in practice, Per from Nestlé discussed the significance of communicating the product before launches, suggesting that traditional marketing channels play an important role in informing and making the product visible to consumers. PR, press releases, and influencer marketing are important parts of building a connection between customers and products to generate buzz around them.

"So, in terms of what influences it, [...] it's perhaps more the traditional foundation that's had some impact. It's the traditional marketing channels that did it, but that's kind of what we do PR for when we put out press releases and send them to the press; we host various events where we bring in influencers to get something started on social media, and then we run more paid marketing and repurpose it for social media, or if it's a video or more focused on connectivity [...] It's more than linear TV now, it's about generating buzz around products [...]" (Per, Nestlé)

Per suggests that while traditional activities remain relevant, their execution has changed through integration with digital and social channels, indicating a shift in how a multinational firm stimulates consumer trial today. When asked the same questions at local firms such as Roots, Lucas highlighted the importance of relationship-building with all consumers. He explained that their initiatives give them opportunities to interact with both consumers and other stakeholders, which is significant, since true relationships are valuable. He further illustrated that, whether it is at an event, trade show, or workshop, these moments are valuable as they tend to create brand ambassadors and positive word-of-mouth. Lucas' perspective nuances previous respondents by proposing that local firms may compensate for more limited resources through relationship-building strategies that help generate trust, and word-of-mouth to the firm.

"[...] whether it's offering samples in stores or building relationships through events, trade shows, and workshops. [...] where you can meet people who are genuinely interested and spend time talking with them, that you can truly build a relationship and, in that way, create brand ambassadors who are especially likely to speak positively about you at that moment" (Lucas, Roots)

Across the interviews, respondents touched upon trial probability and how they attract consumers to their first initial meeting with the product. This therefore suggests that trial probability remains as a relevant success factor in contemporary FMCG launches, supporting Steenkamp & Gielens (2003) discussions. Since the operating environment concerns both meeting the consumers both physically and digitally to spread information about the newly launched product (Steenkamp & Gielens, 2003). Therefore, the findings also indicate that firms working with trial have evolved beyond traditional in-store exposure. Further, all firms highlighted the importance of targeting their consumers at different stages along the consumer journey, suggesting that launch success can be associated with managing consumer experience and engagement beyond the initial trial of the product (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Lastly, this suggests that continuous engagement with the consumer throughout the customer journey is broader today than it was before.

4.1.2 Product and Brand Related Factors

The respondents were further asked how they communicated when a new product was launched and how they linked this to the product's quality and values. Elina from Nestlé illustrated that it is important for them to communicate the quality of their products and brand to both their customers and consumers to keep their promise. She develops her argument by stating that it is highly important to stay consistent and maintain a balanced profile. Elina points out that NP success is not only associated with functionality of a product, but rather with maintenance of consistency between brand promise, product quality, and expectations from the consumers. The argument can be linked to Giliens & Steenkamp's (2007) suggestion of how a firm's reputation can reflect the product's quality. Firms, therefore, need to keep their promises to gain a good reputation in order to increase the acceptance of their newly launched products.

"It's important to maintain high quality in order to keep our promise to consumers. We have a profile, and it's been clear that we maintain it, if you don't mess with it but keep it fairly consistent [...]"
(Elina, Nestlé)

Lars further discussed product-specific details, such as the importance of packaging that differs from other competitors. He highlighted that sustainable alternatives were not fulfilling their initial requirements in illustrating their product specifications. Packaging can be seen as a strategic decision, as it functions as a tool for communication to demonstrate the product's qualities and values. Lars' perspective extends Giliens & Steenkamp's (2007) discussion on innovativeness and newness in relation to the product factors, suggesting that product value is not only in the product itself, but also in how the packaging communicates sensory qualities and brand positioning at the purchase stage.

"[...] and we found this plastic container. It was shaped like a bowl, almost like those bowls they serve you in at the buffet. [...] We know that plastic isn't the most sustainable option, and we've tried using paper, but when you look at the product, its creaminess, you have to be able to see the product itself. [...] But when the product ended up high up on the shelf, you couldn't see the branding, we recently switched to this more colorful solution. It almost gives an ice-cream-like feel and conveys the creaminess [...]" **(Lars, Tamini)**

When discussing products, Ola mentioned the importance of acknowledging the brand's role within the category and having an understanding of your position. This was also highlighted when mentioning that firms are in need of sticking to the set parameters that they need to meet when defining the product within a category. For a brand to stand out, differentiation is highlighted. By highlighting this, Ola states that strategic category positioning and differentiation are important and make successful product launches not solely based on innovation.

"Based on what I said earlier about categories—our brand's role within the category—you have a number of parameters that you know you have to meet [...] Product innovation sounds really exciting. But unfortunately, it's that boring.[...] It's about understanding your position and sticking to it. Or finding a position that isn't actually the norm and then making sure to break into it. That's how you stand out. We can't just copy others, because then we'll be criticized right away. They have their own positioning." (Ola, Midsona)

Taken together, the respondents' reflections illustrate that the success factors according to Giliens & Steenkamp (2007) still indicate a relevant connection to product and brand factors regarding market power and brand reputation. Ola's reflections suggest the reflection of how firms highlight the importance of maintaining a good position within the category, to differentiate among competitors, instead of imitating them. The findings further indicate how brand reputation and market power influence acceptance from the consumers, highlighting that firms need to balance consistency between established brand identity while still being able to offer new products.

4.1.3 Marketing Activities

The third part of the analysis further explored the implementation of marketing activities across the firms. Steenkamp & Gielens (2003) emphasized the importance of physical features in stores when exploring marketing-related activities. However, the respondents shifted their focus towards a digital presence instead, highlighting platforms and strategies they use to be visible to their customers online. Elina from Nesté highlighted the importance of showing their presence online and communicating through different platforms to reach current and potential customers. Firms need to communicate their new product launches, which calls for relevance to engage their audience by building a community of engaged followers to get involved with their content.

"[...] We have a strong presence on social media, we've built it up as much as possible—so we have to be on TikTok too. You also need to post there and make sure we're on YouTube. We've currently getting a lot of engagement on Instagram and those platforms, so we have to be active and engage our own audience with contests and questions, gathering their input and registering them as members. You could say that's an important factor for success today [...] to reach the younger crowd, that's what we want [...]" (Elina, Nestlé)

Elina's reflections suggest that success in contemporary FMCG launches is increasingly associated with digital engagement rather than one-way communication, where continuously building communities becomes a vital part of launch visibility. However, while communicating online is of the utmost importance, Maja from Pågen stated how they also communicate their products in the store environment. Store-oriented communication is pointed out as a significant place to target customers who are not present in the store environment. This highlights the value of your product already being on the mind of your customer before the official entrance to the store, which aligns with previous emphasis from Steenkamp & Gielens (2003). As complementary to Nestlé's insights, Maja mentioned how Pågen is working with several methods and also uses platforms where their future buyers are active. Maja, therefore, highlights store-oriented communications that at the same time influence purchase decisions at critical moments close to the actual sale.

"[...] we're on TV, and that's what drives 60% of in-store purchases, that's where the communication has to start [...] it's better to focus on a store-oriented communication, being on a big screen right by the parking lot before you go into ICA [...]. But if you're also on your way to drive to ICA, then it's store-based, and maybe you've already decided to buy the bread, you're adding extra value so that's why it becomes a bit like this—this is a choice [...] by working with many methods, we've started with bread on TikTok, like where we were in Giflar before, but it's also a way to test a new platform—because who are the bread buyers of the future?" (Maja, Pågen)

The local firms were also asked about their views on engagement in different marketing activities. They were all aware of the importance of communication in physical stores, but expressed difficulties as a local firm. These challenges were further expressed when they discussed digital marketing activities. They all concluded that they had not made enough effort to be visible online. Calle from Apolinarie stated that he should put more effort into it, but he finds social media boring right now. Previously, he hired a photographer, but he got tired of it and focused on something else. Calle's reflections contrast with both multinational and national firms and suggest that marketing implementation may be limited not by its relevance but rather by limited resources regarding time and internal prioritization.

"We should put more effort into it. I find it a bit tedious to do. Right now, I'm feeling a bit burned out. But that's just our take on it. Sometimes you lose your momentum. At times, I've had help from photographers—we helped them take pictures so I could keep things going. Then you get a little tired of it. You have to try something else." (Calle, Apolinarie)

Promotions were also highlighted by multinational, national and local firms to have an impact on the success of new products. Axel from Pågen gave an example, connecting promotions with increasing trial for consumers, in line with Steenkamp & Gielens (2003) argument.

"I think it's important [promotions], and I think it's really important in most categories to run a promotion. It lowers the barrier to trying something new, period." (Axel, Pågen)

All respondents illustrated a shift moving from solely marketing activities in-store environments to marketing activities taking place in the digital space. Only one firm of a national market scope expressed the importance of activities in the store, although complementary with digital marketing activities, which partly supports Giliens & Steenkamp's (2003) argument. This suggests that marketing-related success factors are today mostly considered from a digital perspective, where in-store activities remain relevant but have evolved. How these activities are executed appears to differ significantly between firms' scopes and resources. Results indicated that the bigger the firm's scope was, the better attitude they had towards marketing activities and communication, especially on social media. The category of local firms (Apolinarie, Roots, Popp, and Tamini) all blamed a lack of resources as the reason for not engaging as much as they would have liked (e.g., not cost-efficient, time-consuming). Some of the local firms expressed a negative attitude toward marketing, especially social media, suggesting that internal prioritization and attitudes can influence how actively firms engage with marketing communication, beyond purely resource limitations.

4.1.4 Distribution and Execution

For the aspects of distribution and execution, the respondents were asked about how distribution affects the success of their new product launches and how available their products were to their consumers. Per from Nestlé illustrated how distribution can be time-consuming, but very important, for various reasons. He explained that Nestlé's

distribution is decentralized. Meaning that their customers (like ICA) control their own stock and decide if and when they want to purchase Nestlé's new products. The process, therefore, becomes slow, as it requires more distribution channels, and may affect the availability for consumers in-store.

"It takes a little time for the products to arrive at the stores and then for distribution to be set up, but if you're counting on the general public, it might take a bit longer before you can be sure the products have actually made it out there. Since ICA has said these are local stores, each store has to check for itself whether the product is in stock." (Per, Nestlé)

From Per's statements, it is suggested that distribution is not solely an operationalized activity, but also a success factor that directly affects product availability. A clear decentralized structure further indicated that even multinational firms can have limited control over execution, making coordination with retailers a crucial aspect of success when launching NP's. There is a further description regarding the impact of distribution when a product is about to be launched. Within Midsona, Marie highlighted the challenge of minimum order quantities, explaining that products often need to be ordered in large volumes to secure distribution. This creates a risk of excess inventory, specifically if the product does not achieve desirable distribution or expected performance in sales. Poor distribution can cause higher costs through a risk of unsold stock and waste, while strong product performance can be seen as a factor that justifies broader distribution over time.

"There's a minimum order quantity they're produced in, to get any distribution at all, you have to order a huge amount, but you only get a tiny bit at a time, which means you quickly end up with old stock in your inventory, everything has to be on the tip of a needle. [...] if you see a product with poor distribution, you can look at your market data to see how quickly it's off the shelf, you can always argue to central customer service that where it is in stock, it rotates quickly and very well, it should get better distribution. If you have low distribution, it can become a very expensive product because you end up with a lot in stock that you have to throw away later [...]" (Marie, Midsona)

Reflection from Marie also suggests that distribution is not only related to market reach, but also to financial risk management and inventory efficiency. Furthermore, this underlines that distribution that is performed ineffectively can negatively impact launch success not merely through reduced availability but through increased costs and operational inefficiencies. For the local firm, as Tamini, distribution appears to be closely tied to market access and growth rather than optimization of existing systems. Lars further describes how gaining entry into key consumers on the markets, such as ICA, was a crucial turning point for their expansion.

Tamini opened up access to central distribution channels as they transitioned from direct local deliveries and approached a national reach. This insight can also suggest that for local firms, distribution is not only about the product being available but is also about a strategic mechanism for scaling and increasing presence on the market. Local firms put emphasis on broader market access and growth, while contrasting with multinationals and national firms, where their distribution evolves around optimization and execution.

“With distribution, we started in Skåne and grew from there. In the beginning, we delivered everything directly to the customer, but as demand increases [...]. And it’s important to get into the central warehouse because that makes a large delivery to the central warehouse [...]. As soon as you’re listed, that’s how it works, because it’s a large distribution center, and as they increase the volume [...].”
(Lars, Tamini)

In connection with distribution, timing was further highlighted by all of the respondents as being controlled by launch windows. Elina from Nestlé described that in Sweden, there is a set schedule that firms are following to time their launches.

“In Sweden, we have a schedule, and a launch window. For the product we have, for high-volume sales, there are two windows a year. Then you have to time it right—you submit all the data [...] by a certain date. So that you get listed; if you miss it during a launch, it’s super important.”
(Elina, Nestlé)

Together, the respondents illustrated how big an impact distribution and execution in-store have for new product launches, along with di Benedetto’s (1999). The insights further indicate the presence of timing, which is controlled by predefined launch windows. In addition, since the nature of the distribution challenge appears to differ depending on the firm's scope and market position, the distribution remains an important success factor across firms. The local firms are facing challenges in securing a listing at the distributor's main warehouse. At the same time, national and multinational firms are already listed at the distributors, and therefore can focus on negotiating quantity and exposure in-store environments. This highlights the shift in focus that goes from entry to execution within the existing retailers once the market access has been achieved. However, the national and multinational firms still indicate that their distribution is decentralized, making coordination an important aspect between firms and customers, which represents Di Benedetto's (1999) argument of the importance of effective coordination between departments.

4.1.5 Market and Environment

The respondents were also asked about how the market and its environment affect NP launches within the firms. Elina from Nestlé and Marie from Midsona both explained that their idea generation is dependent on consumer data, more specifically, Nielsen data. From this data, they get access to their target groups' buying behaviour, information about other brands and organizations within categories. On the other hand, local firms did not emphasize the same degree of data collection compared to multinational and national firms. Marie additionally added information about using internal sources such as AI-designed tools to help navigate among this data, to base products directly on trends and behaviours.

"[...] we have an internal innovation forum with stages [...] Where you start with an idea. It could end up pretty vague and loose. But there are four stages for each stage. It becomes more and more concrete [...] People love buying Nielsen data. And then we also have other internal sources [...] Databases. Trend data bases. There's a built-in AI function. You can chat about this as a product, and just base it on that. Simply build on your case. You won't get through the four stages just by having a vision of something [...]." (Marie, Midsona)

In this light, Marie's reflection suggests that market understanding is not based only on managerial intuitions or previous and historical knowledge, but increasingly on structured data analysis with digital tools that support evidence-based decision-making in future NP launches. Marie's statement illustrates a connection to Di Benedetto's (1999) argument of the importance of gathering information to succeed in the market.

In contrast, when discussing environmental aspects and view of competitors, both Maja from Pågen and Per from Nestlé, highlighted it as a contextual factor having an influence on their product development and positioning within the firm. However, competitive pressure was not viewed as consistently direct, but rather as contingent upon the degree of overlap between competing in product offerings and their respective target consumer segments. Maja's insight discusses that intensity may be more context-dependent and not universally threatening. The degree of overlap in the operating segment determines whether competition is viewed as solely parallel actors on the market or as barriers. The insight contradicts Gielens & Stenkamp's (2007) argument that competition is a barrier for firms to operate within, since they view competition as an opportunity to learn and grow.

"[...] it all depends on what we want to offer and what we see as the needs of the market. Sometimes we come up with something, and our competitors come up with something else—in which case, it might

not actually interfere with each other because they're targeting completely different consumers. Then there are times when you see them offering similar things, and then it's clearer that it becomes an active choice between their product and ours." (**Maja, Pâgen**)

Roots, Apollinare, and Popp all expressed that competition is important and is a possibility for them to differentiate and communicate to their consumers how they differ from everyone else. Lars from Tamini further made a distinction during discussions about the competitive environment in which they are currently operating. The role of competitors appears to be significant, as established market actors seem to actively respond to the company's new market entry and to their new product launches. By contrasting the multinational and national firm, Lars' reflections show another perspective that suggests that competition for local firms may be experienced more directly and aggressively. Newly launched brands can often face stronger competition and responses from already established market actors.

"[...]They [competitors] understand that we're an exciting new player bringing a modern touch to the whole thing, and we've heard that they've gone out afterward and run campaigns to compete with [us] because they want to somehow kill us." (**Lars, Tamini**)

This suggests that market and environment understandings are central to new products launched with firms relying heavily on external market conditions, consumer behavior data and competitive analysis to shape their further decisions. In addition, this indicates that successful NP launches are dependent on a firm's ability to constantly understand and respond to evolving external market signals. In light of Di Benedetto (1999), gathering of data and competitive insight appear to be important for product launches. However, insights regarding this theme reveal differences depending on the firm's scope of market and its market position. Having access to market intelligence and having the ability to act upon it can vary depending on organizational maturity. Multinational and national firms often view competition as a way to differentiate their offering, while local firms can perceive competitive pressure more negatively, as a direct challenge to win consumer preference. Depending on market position, competition is viewed differently. Multinational and national firms expressed a more strategic approach, without further emphasis, while local firms could express their insights more defensively. To connect to Gielens & Stenkamp (2007), this also aligns with the discussion about the competitive environment to acceptance of NP's. The increased usage of different digital data tools suggests that these external factors may operate differently in today's digital market environments. This highlights further that external market

environments remain relevant in success factors, the accessibility, speed, and digital interpretation of data have significantly evolved in the current FMCG environment.

4.2 Current Considerations Affecting Success

4.2.1 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness, explained as consumers' ability to recognize and recall your brand (Aaker, 1996; Chi et al, 2009), unfolds to play different roles depending on the firm's size. For both multinational and national firms, awareness-building is less about the establishment of their brand and more about creating awareness for new products, as a strong pre-existing brand already exists. The reflection of this is seen in a statement from Per at Nestlé.

“Everyone knows us anyway, it's more about launching a product, it's really about raising product awareness instead” (Per, Nestlé)

This suggests that high brand awareness enables multinational and national firms to leverage their brand equity when introducing new products, reducing the need to build trust and recognition from the beginning. Instead, the focus shifts towards being relevant to the consumer through other activities. This was further reflected in communication strategies described by multinational and national firms, particularly in relation to influencer marketing, which was discussed in previous themes, which can be seen as a favourable strategy that helps sustain visibility, relevance, and also product awareness (Keller, 1993; Chi et al, 2009).

In contrast, local firms appear to face more challenges when it comes to the awareness aspects. Their issue is not product awareness but brand recognition itself, where their brands are less identifiable and memorable for the customers (Hoeffler & Keller, 2002; Chi et al, 2009). Calle from Appolinarie indicated that experiential exposure is used as an alternative to traditional awareness spreading techniques.

“We've found that we offer products and let people experience them firsthand. Instead of spending money on marketing, we usually aim to raise awareness in this way.” (Calle, Apolinarie)

In addition, other local firms expressed similar attitudes towards their limited resources, and the fact that limited resources create a direct consumer experience strategy that forces them to build both brand recognition and recall when they directly get to meet the consumer.

4.2.2 Innovation

Depending on the first size, innovation appears to also be adapted differently. For multinational and national firms, innovation seems to be primarily incremental rather than breakthrough-oriented (Sorescu & Spanjol, 2008). They focus more on improving existing products rather than giving an introduction to something fundamentally new. Maja from Pågen expressed her reflection regarding the innovative aspect.

“It doesn't have to be rocket science” (Maja, Pågen)

Here, the suggestion is more towards the fact that in the FMCG industry, there is a place for smaller refinements rather than radical changes in the category. The insight further aligns with Sorescu & Spanjol's (2008) definitions of incremental innovation, where firms build on existing products rather than delivering something entirely new.

In contrast, local firms first show how they adopt a broader and more proactive approach of innovation, where their relevance is created through several unique product elements, such as flavors and packaging. At Popp, Klara explains how consumer trends are affecting local firms.

“There are so many new developments in the FMCG sector. You have to be quick to pick up on trends and act on them right away. Because if you're six months late, it's already too late.” (Klara, Popp)

When analyzed further, local brands use innovation to also differentiate themselves from others on the shelf. This can be linked to Kotler et al. (2022) discussions of innovation, where innovation is not only linked to product development but also the capability to identify and respond to market needs. Local firms expressed both insights regarding top-down and bottom-up approaches to innovation. On one hand, they identify consumer trends and market opportunities and then develop their products to meet these demands, reflecting a top-down approach. On the other hand, some other local firms highlighted previously how they used a

bottom-up approach when bringing up their new innovative packaging that was not on the market before, signaling their uniqueness and more courage to innovate compared to multinational and national firms.

4.2.3 Shopper Marketing

During the interview, all of the firms indicated that their main concern, when launching new products, lies with how well they will perform in the hands of their customers (retailers). Their concerns are in line with Bonferer et al.'s (2022) argument of the evolving retail environment, and how it is important for national brands to consider factors such as shelf space allocations as an important aspect for establishing product success in a retail environment.

When the multinational and national firms were asked about the importance of distribution and retail context, they all gave illustrations that the retail context is a common playing field for all brands, trying to reach the consumer. Axel from Pågen shared a valuable insight into this.

“It's a common playing field, after all. There are a certain number of people who walk into a store every day, they're regulars, and that number is pretty constant, a fairly slow-moving figure.” (Axel, Pågen)

When speaking to Maja from Pågen, she also mentioned how important it is to focus on in-store communication in order to catch the consumers' attention in their “shopping mode”. This links to Lamey et al. (2018) statement of the significance and effectiveness of firms' attempts to get consumers' attention at the point of purchase in different retail contexts.

“In-store communication, being on a big screen right by the parking lot before you go into ICA, or just being at a bus stop or some other location far away—it's clear that this will catch the attention of someone waiting for the bus while they're buying their bread. But if you're also on your way to ICA, then it's store-related, and maybe you've already been there for a while to buy the bread, so you're adding extra value.” (Maja, Pågen)

Local companies such as Tamini, Popp and Roots all explained that they constantly have to remain relevant to customers, in order to gain access to exposure in retailers' stores and on

their shelves. Lucas from Roots further elaborated that if they do not sell the right amount of products in the store, they get removed. Lucas' explanation links with Wu et al. (2021)'s argument of national brands' limitations of control in stores. Retailers often decide exposure on shelves based on the demand from consumers.

“And if you don't sell enough products per shelf space [in the store], you risk being dropped from the product lineup.” (Lucas, Roots)

Lars at Tamini expressed the same concern, but explained a solution, when focusing on their packages to differentiate among competitors in the customers' shelves. They believe that bright colours in their design help them solve this problem. Lars' concern can be linked to Einav et al. (2016)'s argument of national brands' need for adaptation of strategies to different retail contexts to remain relevant to the consumer.

“It's important that our packaging stands out from our competitors' on store shelves. We use bright colors, and we believe that this helps us stand out on the shelf.” (Lars, Tamini)

4.2.4 The Phases of the New Products Process

When asked about the process of launching NP's from idea generation to product launch and evaluation through the lens of Crawford & di Benedetto's (2006) framework, the respondents' experiences varied. For multinational and national firms, Nestlé, Midsona, and Pågen indicated a more detailed, structured, and internal process. The illustrations of their process for NP launches included stages such as internal meetings of opportunity selection, idea generation, extensive coordination between departments, and internal evaluation before development. As well as for technical development, marketing and analysis, which are implemented before the launch, which reflects Crawford & di Benedetto's (2006) framework's phases 1-5. This illustrates how firms that operate within larger market scopes rely on more formalized launch structures, evaluation, and how significant their coordination of cross-functional processes are, to reduce uncertainty and complexity in product launches.

For the local firms (Popp, Apolinarie, Tamini, and Roots), the process differed, as their processes are not as formalized as multinational and national firms. Clara from Popp illustrated her process of product development by describing how she based her products on

something that she felt was missing in the market. She further explained how she started to develop her concept before receiving feedback from her friends and family. Then, she launched the products on the market, to see if there was any interest from consumers, which indicates a connection to Crawford & di Benedetto's (2006) framework's phases 1-5. Clara's illustration suggests that local firms operate with flexibility and informal processes related to the launch, where the importance of factors such as experiments and consumer feedback becomes relevant earlier in the development phase. Findings therefore indicate that firms that operate within different scopes of the market, implement the phases differently depending on capacity and resources.

"So, I thought I'd give it a try and do it myself. I developed a product that I felt was missing in my own kitchen. I started experimenting and gathering feedback from friends and acquaintances until I had a product I was happy with. And after that, it was time to test the waters a bit and see if there was any interest in it, if consumers even liked the product." (Clara, Popp)

Calle from Apolinarie stated that they do not have a specific development, or launch process they follow. Making them work with situations as they come. Lucas from Roots further explained that, since their company has grown, their processes have become more complex and time-consuming than it was in the beginning. This revealed that organizational scale, as the scope of the market increases, may lead to formalization and complexity of the launch process, where additional activities become necessary to implement.

"I suppose I could say, to start with, that the process has become much slower and more complicated as the scale has increased." (Lucas, Roots)

4.2.5 Drivers of Success

Aligned with internal coordination before launching a NP, there is a recurring theme of what drives the success overall from the different firms. Multinational and national firms appear to define brand success as a balance between business-based and consumer-based outcomes, aligned with, Chematony et al., (1998) and positive consumer response. Axel highlights his experience when discussing drivers of success.

"The simplest answer is, when it creates a win-win situation for everyone. When we see increased sales, our customers see increased sales, and when shoppers love a product, it's a huge win." (Axel, Pågen)

By Axel's reasoning, it can be understood that success is evaluated through mutually beneficial outcomes for both the firm, customers and consumers, which further reflects their interdependent relationship between financial performance and consumer satisfaction. Additionally, the emphasis on shoppers' love for the product further connects to consumer-based measures such as brand satisfaction and brand loyalty (Molinillo et al., 2018). This suggests how both multinational and national firms refer to success as a multidimensional outcome.

Similarly, long-term brand building and consumer relationships are also emphasized by Maja as a central driver of success in national firms. Maja's suggestion indicates how success increasingly becomes dependent for national firms on long-term relationships with consumers building on emotional connections, rather than achieving short-term results.

“The driving force, is to deliver something we're proud of and that we can really see consumers want, and that's what this long-term relationship is all about, if you want to get closer and closer as you create more and more paths and builders” (Maja, Pågen)

At the same time, both multinational and national firms highlighted the importance of financial outcomes, that alone are not sufficient indicators of success.

“It just has to add something. Besides bringing in the cash.” (Marie, Midsona)

In contrast, local firms, like Tamini, Roots, Apollinaire and Popp appear to focus more on brand visibility as a key driver of success, rather than direct consumer outcomes. Lucas from Roots tight brand success which relates more to initial brand awareness rather than achieving immediate financial outcomes.

“But just as important, or even more important, is reminding people that we exist” (Lucas, Roots)

By being in contact more closely with consumers local firms need to constantly remind them about their existence. This supports Molinillo et al. (2018) discussions that brand equity, trust and loyalty builds over time and becomes a prerequisite to establishing brand presence.

4.2.6 Digitalisation

When asked about digitalization and its effect on firms' performance of new product launches, the respondents all agreed that digitalization had contributed positively in different aspects. They all elaborated on how the digital environment has made their work more effective, as it contributes to reducing time-consuming tasks. Elina from Nestlé further illustrated how social media can contribute to an early interest for consumers and create buzz and interactions even before the launch.

“Yeah, but that's cool too—it could turn into a real sensation, a huge buzz.” (Elina, Nestlé)

This links to Rowles (2025) statement about digital experiences, more specifically, how social media can help brands to go beyond traditional one-way communication, extending the possibility for consumers and firms to communicate with each other, making the consumer active rather than a passive recipient. Maja from Pågen contrasted this by explaining that even though digitalization has helped them, it's still very important to acknowledge that the customers (retailers) are their main playground. Therefore, it is still important to operate projects that are favorable in stores, to reach the consumer at the point of purchase, which contradicts Dwiveddi et al. (2025)'s statement of the shift from traditional marketing being inefficient in today's digital environment.

“Of course, it can definitely affect processes and how we run projects and all that, but the way we reach consumers is still, on the shelf.” (Maja, Pågen)

In the previous chapter, we established that Marie at Midsona used AI to help her navigate across consumer data to generate new ideas for products. This can also be drawn upon in the context of digitalization, as Rowles (2025) argues that AI tools can be an opportunity to create better user experiences to optimize work tasks and be customized to the consumer.

4.3 Summary of Empirical Findings

The analysis covered how firms within three different market scopes approached successful new product launches. While exploring their perspectives on previously identified success

factors, the study also collected their insight to the current factors providing a richer illustration of how it is viewed in today's FMCG environment. Empirical findings were organized into two main themes: previously identified success factors and current considerations affecting success factors.

The theme around previously identified success factors, interviewees covered the consumer-centric perspective, product and brand-related factors, marketing activities, distribution and execution, and understanding of market and environment. Across multinational, national and local firms respondents highlighted the importance of visibility and building relationships in relation to a consumer-centric perspective. Brand promise, package design and category positioning was highlighted when covering product and brand related factors. Further online presence and multichannel marketing were highlighted during discussion about marketing activities. In addition, retailer listing, inventory management and launch windows were emphasized when expressing insight about distribution and execution. Lastly, AI-supported analysis, consumer insights and competitive pressure were also pointed out when participants expressed their thoughts about the market and environment.

Further the second theme involved several current considerations affecting success in new product launches. Subcategories included brand awareness in relation to product awareness and customer experience. Innovation was highlighting the need for no rocket science and responsiveness. Shopper marketing was emphasized through in-store impact, retail access and differentiation of packaging. Respondents also discussed the internal phases of new product launches, maintaining experiments, feedback from consumers and a slower coordination process. Drivers of success involved win-win emphasis, increased sales and long-term relationships with consumers instead of cash. Furthermore, digitalization was frequently mentioned buzz as an influence of quicker processes and AI tools for navigation. Differences were observed in relation to the three different market scopes regarding the availability of resources in different practices.

5. Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings presented and illustrated in the analysis, to contrast previous factors found in previous literature, with current success factors reflected in the theoretical chapters. The discussion concerns the reflection of similarities and how these factors differ among firms within different scopes of markets.

Previous Success Factors

Based on the analysis in the previous chapter, a clear pattern emerges concerning how different firms use previously established success factors of NP's in the FMCG industry. Factors regarding the consumer, such as trial probability and consumer experience, suggest relevance in today's FMCG industry (Steenkamp & Gielens, 2003; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Findings suggest these factors no longer involve only reaching the consumer at the point of purchase, as consumer-related success in a contemporary FMCG industry is achieved by continuous interaction and visibility across both digital and physical channels. Simultaneously, the aspect of relationship-building activities was illustrated by smaller firms as significant. The findings of consumer-centric success factors suggest relevance, yet differences arose in market scopes. Multinational and national firms target the consumer from various aspects, while local firms aim to build relationships by meeting consumers. A wider approach can be advantageous as it increases the possibility for consumers' attention across multiple touchpoints across several occasions in their everyday life situations. A targeted approach diminishes a broader reach for engaging with the consumer in multiple touchpoints. Firms are dependent on implementing strategies to broaden the reach of consumers in multiple touchpoints, making their product relevant across multiple interactions in various occasions of daily life. However, firms operating through a local scope in the market suggested that a niche approach is favorable, since authenticity is important.

Further, success factors related to the product and brand, suggested the firm's ability to implement these aspects in various illustrations. Product and brand-related success factors are achieved by communicating symbolic values, making firms no longer solely focus on functional and physical aspects, as previous research established (Gielens & Steenkamp, 2007). Multinational and national firms expressed aspects involving awareness of your brand

promise and also of the category you operate in, in order to maintain high product quality. However, local firms emphasized the importance of physical values, referring more to their packaging and branding of their products, in order to communicate quality and characteristics to consumers. This suggests that firms emphasize different views of product and brand-related success depending on their market scope.

Marketing-related activities involving marketing strategy, promotions and advertising intensity, all remain germane for national firms (Steenkamp & Gielens, 2003). Multinational and local firms highlighted the importance of integrating digital communication in relation to marketing activities, enhancing the intensity. The digital presence is important, and becomes a complement to in-store communication to achieve a broader reach when launching new products. As Maja and Elina stated, digital platforms are highly integrated into younger generations' everyday life situations. Therefore, firms need to adapt their communication towards these generations in order to be successful in the future. At the same time, when firms adapt to digital communication channels, their reach goes beyond traditional methods, creating both visibility and knowledge for consumers from anywhere in the world. However, all of the firms agreed upon the importance of using promotions as bait for trial in line with Steenkamp & Gielens (2003) argument. In a broader context, this can reflect firms' challenge of attracting consumers' attention in environments where saturation and competitiveness is high. Consumers are constantly exposed to various product alternatives, signifying the importance of using promotions as a risk-reducing mechanism, increasing motivation for a purchase.

One more factor regarding the distribution, which touches upon the cross-functional coordination, showed how challenging it is to get market access and work with in-store executions (Di Benedetto, 1999). For multinational firms, distribution challenges were connected to retailer coordination, since the communication about newly launched products can sometimes be quicker than the distribution to the store. National firms further emphasized a poor distribution could result in increased costs and unsold products, while a strong performance in relation to the rotation of the product could open opportunities for broader negotiations for distribution with retailers. However, local firms expressed a stronger focus on securing listings within the Swedish retailers' and in that way entering the central warehouse to reach more stores and scaling distribution beyond direct deliveries. This, in practice, highlights that good distribution remains a success factor, although firms of different

market scopes face different challenges related to distribution. Interestingly, the timing discussed by Di Benedetto (1999) was not expressed in the same way by all of the respondents. Instead, their description of the predefined launch windows suggests that timing has become embedded within an established launch process rather than signaling a crucial attribute of success.

A further aspect of another factor connected to market and environment suggested that the view of market competitors varied across market scopes, while remaining significant to consider in NP launches. Regarding competitiveness and entry barriers, all firms contradicted competition posing as a barrier for entering the market (Giliens & Stenkamp, 2003). However, one local firm explained that competitors act as an obstacle for them to reach consumers. Therefore, competition in this context is better understood as a barrier to growth, rather than solely entering markets. Further illustrating examples of information gathering findings from multinational and national firms showed a dependency on insights, consumer data, market data, and competitive analysis, supporting Di Benedetto (1999). To additionally connect to the contemporary landscape, AI-supported tools were highlighted as mechanisms that improve the efficiency of information gathering. Nevertheless, local firms placed less emphasis on formalized data collection processes, indicating that their data may be collected through more experience-based approaches. This suggests that information gathering remains relevant, although its overall implementation highlights that it has evolved to more advanced data sources with additional AI-supported tools.

The pattern suggests a continuity of how firms perceive the success of NP launches compared to previous research, since these factors are significant and drivers of NP launch success that can not be fully replaced. As these factors still indicate relevance, findings illustrate how roles and operationalization have shifted to the response of today's market structures. However, findings also illustrate differences in how firms operating within different market scopes operate and prioritize these traditional factors within product launches. The findings related to previous success factors suggest that they remain fundamental when exploring successful NP launches in the FMCG industry. However, they indicate an evolution of meaning, as contemporary market conditions are shaped, dependent on the execution of market scope, internal resources, and closeness to the consumer.

Current Considerations Affecting Success Factors

The FMCG environment has evolved, and affected how firms approach their NP launches. Previous research about brand awareness mainly highlights the importance of recognition, recall, width, and depth (Hoeffler & Keller, 2002; Chi et al, 2009), while the findings indicate that brand awareness in a contemporary FMCG context is dependent on continuous consumer engagement across both physical and digital channels. Instead of solely functioning as a recognition mechanism, the phenomenon illustrates continuous interactions, as firms try their best to become relevant and visible across multiple stages of the purchase funnel rather than at the point of NP launches. Furthermore, strategies linked to brand awareness differ when examining different firms and their market scopes of the market. Firms that operate on a multinational market rely on an omnichannel approach, including a broad perspective to increase visibility. In comparison, local firms try to compensate for their lack of reach through direct consumer interactions, differentiation of packaging, and being authentic.

Previously, innovation has been framed by differentiation and product novelty as drivers to achieve success in NP launches (Kotler et al., 2022). This study's findings indicated an expanding viewpoint, extending the relevance for innovation of NP, as innovation today includes a more nuanced perspective of adaptation to consumer trends, positioning, packaging, and communication. However, findings also indicate challenges in creating innovative products with regard to competition and consumption patterns. Today, innovation is illustrated to function as an adaptable capability, enabling firms to adapt to their market scope.

This changing understanding of innovation also suggests the significance of shopper marketing. Findings demonstrate that shopper marketing and the role of retailers have become important drivers of when exploring success factors of NP launches in a contemporary FMCG industry. Multinational and national firms highlighted the retail environment as significant, as it reflects their playing field. To better defeat opponents in the retail environment, multinational and national firms expressed their need for in-store communication to capture consumers' attention. However, local firms illustrated their relationships with retailers as challenging, as they experience pressure to perform to keep being exposed in their stores, and advantageous placements on shelves. This reflects upon the idea that retailers today have influence over product visibility and survival in stores (Bonferer

et al., 2022). Firms are therefore in need of justifying their presence through the demand of consumers and the performance of sales. Additionally, findings also suggest that shopper marketing goes beyond traditional promotion activities of the marketing mix (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Lamey et al., 2018), indicating the significance of reaching the consumer in multiple perspectives to maintain differentiation, visibility, and retailer legitimacy in competitive environments.

As firms become increasingly dependent on visibility, attention from retailers and engagement from consumers, the need for a structured launch process also becomes significant in order to manage successful entrances. The phases presented in Crawford & di Benedetto's framework remain relevant for understanding the NP launch process. The findings suggest that the implementation varied depending on the firm's market scope. Multinational and national firms expressed more structured launch process procedures, involving coordination, planning and internal evaluation. These phases were included throughout the whole launch process in order to reduce uncertainty along the way. On the other hand, firms operating within local market scopes illustrated a more flexible and informal approach, as stages such as experimentation and consumer feedback became important earlier in their processes. Altogether, findings suggest that Crawford & Di Benedetto's (1999) framework remains relevant across all firms. However, firms' implementation of the stages is dependent on their context and market scopes, varying in resources and the condition of the market.

The variations in structures and in the internal launch process further suggest that perceptions of success can differ between firms operating in different scopes of the market. Multinational and national firms illustrate how success needs to balance financials with long-term values with the consumer, while local firms indicate a more symbolic lens. They emphasize only the perspective of continuous relationship building with the consumer, suggesting that local firms rely more on visibility and presence of their products to increase factors such as brand equity, trust and loyalty.

When exploring digitalization, findings illustrate that digitalization within the environment of today's FMCG industry moves beyond the usage of factors such as social media and other digital communication channels. Digitalization acts as a tool for shaping and optimizing firms' traditional launch activities, enhancing the creation of awareness, trial, and

engagement. Previous literature has indicated that these factors are often characterized as separate activities (Dwivedi et al., 2021). However, findings suggest that digitalization connects these factors through ongoing, real-time interactions with consumers. Finally, findings indicate differences in how digitalization affects firms within different market scopes, as their resource capacity tends to differ. Firms operating in multinational and national environments illustrated examples of better positioning to obtain visibility across various digital platforms. On the other hand, local firms faced challenges of brand presence as competition for visibility is high. This suggests a shift in the importance of digitalization as a crucial factor when launching NP in the FMCG industry, making this phenomenon create new opportunities for increasing the visibility of products, while simultaneously adding pressure to a competitive environment.

Philosophical stance on Success Factors in the FMCG environment

Apart from individual success factors, the findings also reflect a broader perspective regarding how success factors should be grasped. As the authors of this study have defined, success factors implies a combination of internal and external attributes, strategic activities, and features that contribute to short and long term end results. The empirical data supports this perspective as all of the selected respondents of firms indicated that success cannot be reduced to a single outcome or definition. Success rather arises as context-dependent, shaped by market scope, strategic priorities, resources and capabilities. Success may be associated for some firms with extensive market reach and for others the involvement of awareness, visibility, or establishing consumer relationships in the long term.

Therefore, the findings suggest that success factors in today's FMCG environment have not fundamentally changed, but evolved. To not replace traditional success factors, today's market conditional looks to have transformed how firms operationalize them and how they need to expand their views beyond the directly concerning factors to broader market related concerns. This further makes the success of a NP launch and their success increasingly dependent on the context, adaptability and ability to combine internal and external capabilities towards the market demands.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Research Findings

The aim of this study was to explore *whether the success factors for product launches in the FMCG industry are the same now as they were in previous literature, or have what creates success changed*. By examining seven different firms operating in the FMCG industry, within different market scopes, this study generated a deeper understanding of similarities and differences in success factors when launching NP's on the contemporary market. By examining the aim through a qualitative research approach, the study has identified both previous and current considerations influencing the success of product launches. The findings provide insights and demonstrate how firms within the FMCG industry adapt their strategies to a competitive and consumer-driven environment.

This study identified that previous success factors are still viewed as fundamental and can be associated with successful NP launches in the FMCG industry. Previous factors remain relevant and carry a significant role in the FMCG context as fundamental competitive logics of the industry is still dependent on the five previously defined factors. However, these factors have evolved due to a digitalized environment. Factors such as the implementation of marketing activities were previously highlighted features of newspapers and in-store flyers (Steenkamp & Gielens, 2003). It is still important for firms to emphasize marketing activities, but firms can not reach consumers solely by implementing these methods. Instead, the current emphasis should be focused on multi-channel marketing to reach the consumer in various aspects of their journey to purchase. Similar conclusions can be drawn about the success factors of consumer-centric perspectives and the market and environment. However, product and brand-related factors and aspects regarding distribution and execution have demonstrated a high degree of stability.

Secondly, when exploring whether current factors affect the success of NP launches, findings revealed that current factors reshape NP launches ability to succeed. Current factors function as interconnected processes, where they reinforce each other across digital and physical spaces. However, both previous and current factors differ in implementation, depending on

the firm's market scope, as access to resources varies. One of the current factors that has emerged most consistently and appeared as one of the most relevant ones from all of the interviews was digitalization. Covering aspects that contribute to faster processes, generation of buzz around new product launches and further usage of emerging technologies such as AI tools. This shows that digitalization is no longer simply supporting one function of the development of new product processes in the firm, but rather a central component that affects different functions. Furthermore, another current factor that was of higher relevance was shopper marketing. Shopper marketing was emphasized across firms as a factor for strengthening relationships and supporting success in new product launches. This reflected its growing importance, as highlighted in the literature, but was not captured as a previous success factor. However, all current factors did not appear to be equally influential. Innovation and the framework, The Phases of The New Product Process, were less supported by the empirical findings. Firms indicated that pure innovation rarely happens, since products within the FMCG industry do not require innovation to succeed. However, firms discussed the importance of renovating already existing products for them to be more attractive to consumers. Similarly, The Phases of the New Product Process were not a decisive factor for achieving launch success. Despite this, development processes are implemented across all firms, but highlighted as more operational and context-dependent activities related to differences in specific products, capacities, and resources.

Further, a shift from success being primarily execution-driven towards a broader emphasis on relationship building can be identified, where firms increasingly need to continuously manage relationships with customers and consumers, by creating an emotional connection alongside delivering the functional value. At the same time, the firm's scope of the market did not appear to fundamentally alter which success factors matter. However, it does influence how different firms operationalize them, as differences in resources and market access shape their approach.

6.3 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes by filling evident research gaps identified in the previous literature. Earlier studies' examination of success factors was conducted 10-20 years ago, only focusing

on markets such as France, the Netherlands, and the United States (e.g., Steenkamp & Gielens, 2003; Gielens & Steenkamp, 2007; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Di Benedetto, 1999). By establishing how contemporary success factors for new product launches are implemented in the Swedish market, this study provides updated perceptions in a different market context. Furthermore, prior studies were approached with quantitative lenses, how significant success factors were implemented. This study extends the methodological perspective by solely focusing on a qualitative approach of experts' knowledge and experiences. By using a qualitative methodology, this study was able to generate a more nuanced understanding of success factors applied in the Swedish context on firms operating in the FMCG industry. This methodology enabled the exploration of practitioners' perspectives and highlighted how differently the implementation of success factors may be viewed across firms varying in the market scope in Sweden. The abductive approach enabled the study's researchers to interpret the findings in relation to existing theories and refine the theoretical understanding with the help of information from the collected data.

The study demonstrates theoretical contributions to the understanding of NP launch success in the FMCG industry. While previous literature has identified established drivers of launch success, this study shows that their relevance is dependent on how they are applied in the contemporary market. This study underlines the continued relevance of previously established factors that drive success. At the same time, the study extends this understanding by illustrating how these factors have evolved in response to different shifts in the modern era. Additionally, the findings illustrate how FMCG firms in the Swedish context are leveraging their resources and relationships with retailers in order to generate initiatives that reach the consumer, enhancing successful product launches.

In contrast to previous findings that primarily showed factors related to consumers, distribution, marketing, product characteristics and the external environment, this study contributes to a nuanced understanding by showing additional contemporary considerations that have an influence on NP launches. By extending previous literature, this research captures a more complex understanding of NP launch success by highlighting that success factors are not viewed entirely similarly across firms varying in market scopes. This is illustrated further when firms express their realities and describe how they view success factors according to their specific conditions.

6.4 Practical Implications

This research provides several practical implications for practitioners and managers working in the FMCG industry, especially those with responsibility of brand management and product innovation. The findings suggest that firms should adopt a broader understanding of what drives successful NP launches. While previous success factors remain highly relevant, the findings also indicate that these factors alone are not sufficient. Instead, firms should understand how these factors interact in a more dynamic external environment, shaped by retail power, digital channels, and rapid changes or trends that influence consumer expectations. Therefore, managers and practitioners working with NP launches and considering success factors should avoid viewing launch success through isolated activities and instead implement a more holistic strategic perspective.

In addition, the study suggests that firms should align their launch strategies with their organizational capabilities. Multinational and national firms may benefit from stronger brand awareness, distribution access, and financial resources to target consumers across different channels. At the same time, local firms may rely more on agility, niche positioning, and closer relationship building with consumers. This further implies that successful launch strategies should be context-specific rather than being based on a universal approach.

6.5 Future Research

Since the study focuses on practitioners' perspectives within the FMCG firms, it creates opportunities for future research to add more perspectives from other relevant stakeholders. Future research could examine consumer's perception towards successful NP launches to better understand how managerial strategies align with actual purchase preferences and behaviours. Moreover, including retailers would provide an additional nuance inducing the whole grocery sector, where their insights could be of great significance, with further perspectives on pricing, distribution and visibility in the stores.

The research is also limited to the Swedish FMCG market. Future research could explore whether the identified success factors are relevant in their geographical contexts. By looking at different markets with other retail structures could contribute to a better understanding of

how contextual factors influence and shape success when launching NP's. This could also reveal important differences in how launch success is constructed and developed in Europe or international FMCG markets.

Lastly, the qualitative nature of this research provides depth to insights from selected firms and gives contextual understanding of the phenomenon, but limits broader generalizability to other markets outside of Sweden. Therefore, further research could adopt a quantitative research design to test and validate the identified success factors on a larger scale. Further, research could add an interesting angle with a survey-based research involving more FMCG firms, to examine the importance of different success factors, further explore their significance and if there is a difference between the firms different operationalization of different market scopes and their prioritization of these factors.

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Appendix A

Appendix A. Key Insights From Previous Literature.

Authors	Method of study	Time period of study	Market / Context	Key insight
<i>Ataman et al., (2008)</i>	Quantitative	2008	FMCG (France)	Success is not primarily driven by pricing or advertising, but rather on more fundamental decisions such as distribution (availability) and assortment.
<i>Steenkamp & Gielens (2003)</i>	Quantitative	2003	FMCG (Europe)	Success is influenced by trial probability. Described as three-dimensional, involving consumer characteristics, marketing strategy, and category or market conditions.
<i>Gielens & Steenkamp (2007)</i>	Quantitative	2007	FMCG (Europe)	The success of new product launches is driven by the product's characteristics (e.g. brand reputation) and competitors.
<i>Lemon & Verhoef (2016)</i>	Quantitative	2016	FMCG (Various industries)	Identifies customer experience as multidimensional, involving emotional, social and behavioral response. Multiple touchpoints are involved, both firm controllers and external factors that influence perceptions and behaviors.
<i>Di Benedetto (1999)</i>	Quantitative	1999	Multiple industries (Mainly The US)	Successful NP launches depend on strategic, tactical and information-related activities.

Appendix B

Appendix B. Interview Guide in Swedish.

Bakgrund

- Vad är din roll och ditt ansvarsområde på [Företag]?
- Hur skulle du beskriva [Företag] som ett företag i en eller två meningar?

Förståelse för framgång

- Vad innebär "en framgångsrik ny produktlansering" på [Företag] idag?
- Kan du guida oss genom en nyligen genomförd produktlansering? (Från idégenerering hela vägen till den slutliga utvärderingen av lanseringen)

Etablerad kunskap om framgångsfaktorer

Konsumentperspektiv

- Vilka faktorer tror du påverkar konsumenter till att prova era nya produkter idag?
- Hur gör ni för att skapa kundupplevelser (hos både befintliga och nya kunder)?

Produktperspektiv

- Vad gör en produkt framgångsrik för er, i relation till dess egenskaper, kvalitet och relevans för konsumenter?
- Hur urskiljer ni era nya produkter från konkurrenternas?

Marknadsmixen

- Hur gör ni för att nå kunderna idag, och informera kring era nya produkter?
- Hur kommunicerar ni kring kvaliteten av era nya produkter till konsumenten?
- Hur bidrar prissättningen till framgången för en ny produktlansering för ert företag?
- Hur bidrar kampanjer till framgången för en ny produktlansering för ert företag?
- Hur bidrar marknadsföring till framgången för en ny produktlansering för ert företag?

Distribution & Genomförande

- Hur påverkar distribution, timing och intern samordning framgången för en produktlansering för er?
- Var finns era produkter idag för konsumenterna?
 - Hur tillgängliga är de för konsumenterna?

Marknad & Omvärldsfaktorer

- Hur påverkar marknadsförhållanden, konkurrens och externa faktorer framgången för nya produktlanseringar idag för er?
- Vad baserar ni era nya produkter på? Trender? Tidigare kunddata? Gap på marknaden?

Samtida perspektiv på framgångsfaktorer

- Har din definition av framgång förändrats över tid? Om ja, på vilket sätt?
- Finns det faktorer som saknas och som du skulle betrakta som viktiga idag?
 - Brand Awareness?
 - Graden av innovation baserat på era nya produktlanseringar?
 - Framgång för företaget (vinst) vs framgång hos konsumenterna (positiva reaktioner)?
 - Mervärde, lojalitet, förtroende, nöjdhet? Hur genererar ni detta för era konsumenter?
- Hur har digitaliseringen påverkat era nylanseringar av produkter?
 - Sociala medier?
 - Artificiell Intelligence?

- Hur påverkar externa faktorer (till exempel ekonomiskt klimat, konkurrens, konsumentbeteende) framgång för era nylanseringar idag?

Avslutning

- Finns det några av dessa faktorer som vi har diskuterat som du anser vara viktigare än andra? Varför?
 - Finns det något vi inte har diskuterat som du anser är viktigt för att förstå hur [Företag] arbetar med nya produktlanseringar och definierar framgång?
-

Appendix B. Interview Guide in English.

Background

- What is your role and area of responsibility at [Company]?
- How would you describe [Company] as a business in one or two sentences?

Understanding Success

- What does “a successful new product launch” mean at [Company] today?
- Can you walk us through a recent product launch? (From idea generation all the way to the final evaluation of the launch)

Established knowledge of success factors

Consumer perspective

- What factors do you believe influence consumers to try your new products today?
- How do you go about creating customer experiences (for both existing and new customers)?
- Product perspective
- What makes a product successful for you, in terms of its features, quality, and relevance to consumers?
- How do you differentiate your new products from those of your competitors?

The marketing mix

- How do you reach customers today and inform them about your new products?
- How do you communicate the quality of your new products to consumers?
- How does pricing contribute to the success of a new product launch for your company?
- How do campaigns contribute to the success of a new product launch for your company? How does marketing contribute to the success of a new product launch for your company?

Distribution & Execution

- How do distribution, timing, and internal coordination affect the success of a product launch for you?
- Where are your products available to consumers today? How accessible are they to consumers?

Market & External Factors

- How do market conditions, competition, and external factors influence the success of new product launches for your company today?
 - What do you base your new products on? Trends? Past customer data? Gaps in the market?

Current Perspectives on Success Factors

- Has your definition of success changed over time? If so, in what way?
 - Are there factors that are missing and that you would consider important today?
 - Brand awareness?
 - The degree of innovation based on your new product launches?
 - Success for the company (profit) vs. success with consumers (positive reactions)?

- Added value, loyalty, trust, satisfaction? How do you generate this for your consumers?
- How has digitalization affected your new product launches?
 - Social media?
 - Artificial Intelligence?
- How do external factors (such as the economic climate, competition, consumer behavior) influence the success of your new product launches today?

Conclusion

- Are there any of the factors we've discussed that you consider more important than others? Why?
- Is there anything we haven't discussed that you think is important for understanding how [Company] approaches new product launches and defines success?

Appendix C

Appendix C. Coding Scheme

[illegible]

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

Declaration of AI Use

Artificial Intelligence has been used in a limited capacity during the research process. Specifically, the open-source tool Whisper was used on local servers to transcribe the interviews with respondents. The transcriptions were conducted locally to ensure that both the audio files and transcripts were not uploaded to external services and stored outside a controlled environment, as some of the information was confidential. To receive additional feedback on the topic guide and interview questions, ChatGPT was used to proofread and suggest improvements. Grammarly has been used to ensure correct spelling and grammar in writing. Furthermore, DeepL has been used to translate the topic guide and participants' quotes, to ensure consistency and correct sentence formulation. Finally, by enhancing clarity and coherence of our language AI has acted as a dialogical partner, which has not generated any empirical data or our analytical reasoning in our thesis.