

A case study of an intermediary in the soft furnishing trade

E-business patterns for business
networks and interfaces

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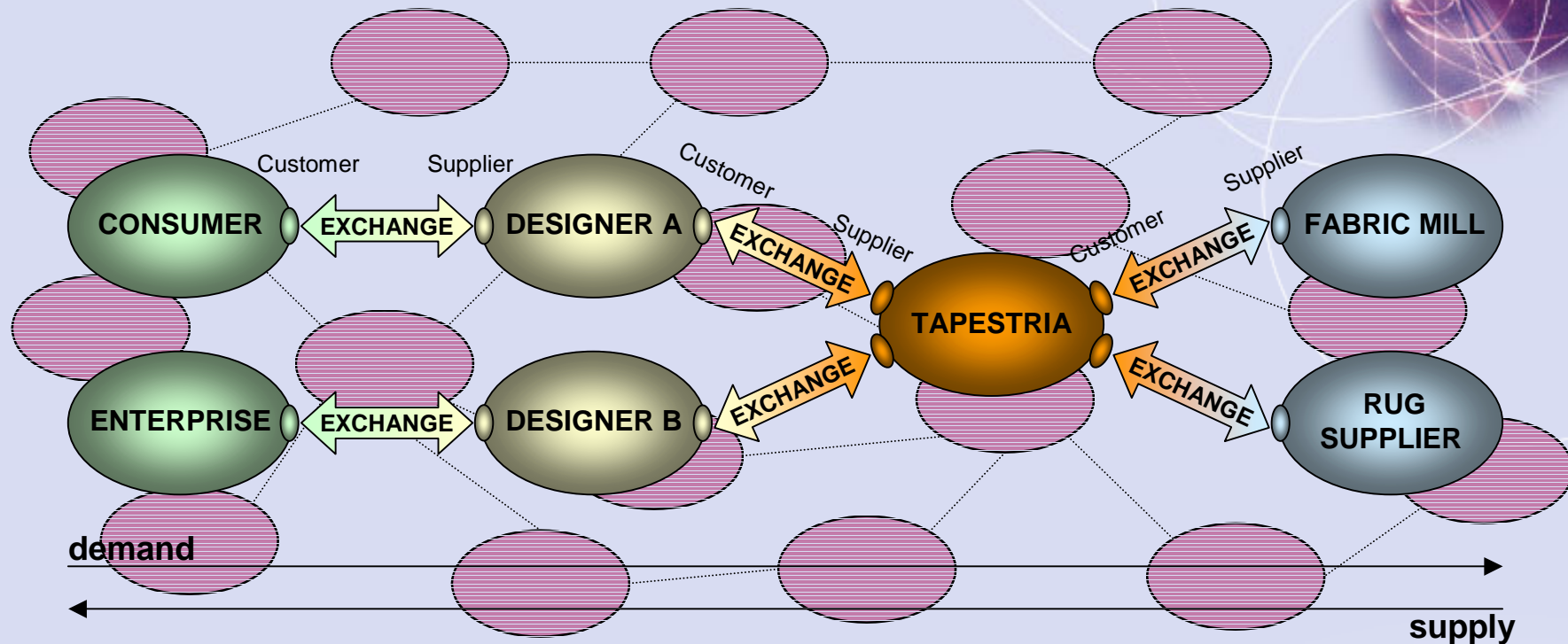


Outline

- Case introduction
- Research focus & approach
- Conceptual framework
- SoftFurnishing description
- SoftFurnishing analysis
- Conclusions, limitations, and future work

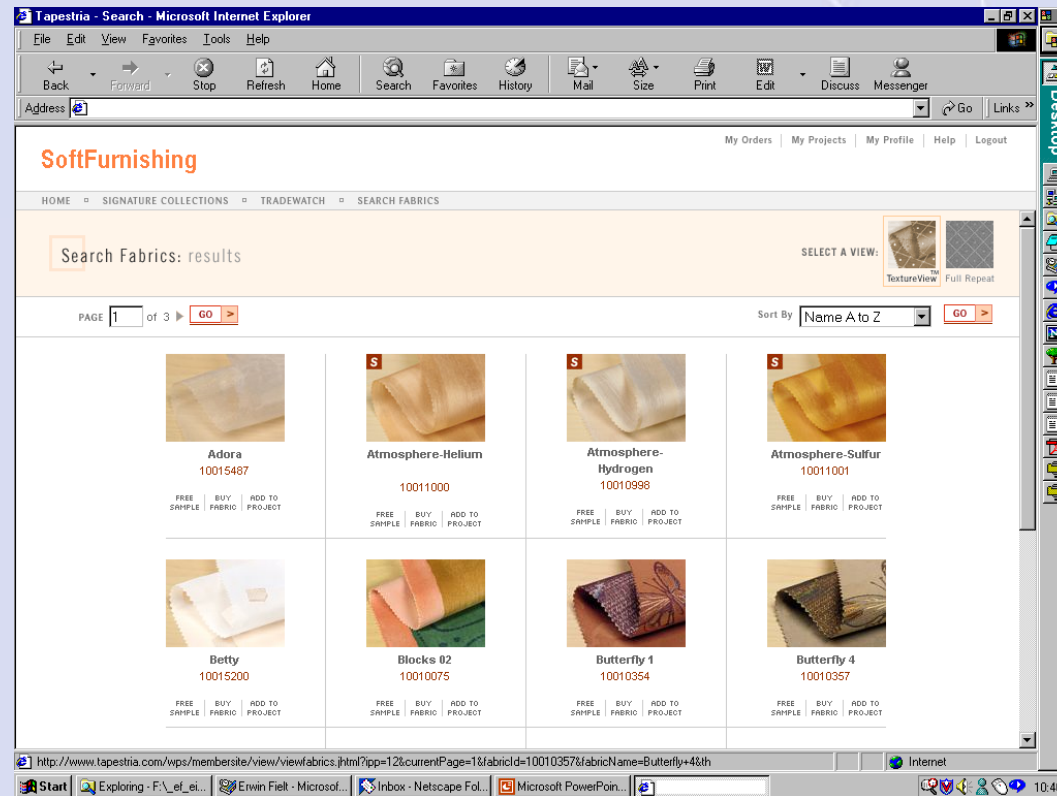


Case introduction (I)



A vertical business network in the soft furnishing industry: interior designers, managed marketplace (SoftFurnishing), and fabrics producers.

Case introduction (II)



SoftFurnishing offers a service which enables the soft furnishing trade to source decorative fabrics at competitive rates, quickly and effectively, from a global network of leading suppliers.



Research focus

- Coordination in a business network characterized by cooperation and competition
- Interface management
 - relationships, interactions and channels
- The **research problem** is “How can organisations deal with coordination in a business network, and what does this imply for the business-to-business interface?”
- The **research results** are design guidelines and principles for the interface in the form of design patterns.



Research approach

- A pilot case study to explore the conceptual framework for the case description and analyses.
- Five steps, focus on:
 - Step 2: Describing the case with the help of the conceptual framework
 - Step 3: Analysing the case to identify design choices
- Several sources of information: interviews, presentations, business and IT design documents, the website, press maps, trade articles, etc.
 - All information comes from the focal actor SoftFurnishing. This means the case description is based upon the viewpoint of SoftFurnishing.



Conceptual framework

business network



*strategic
perspective*

value network

- value proposition
- value activity

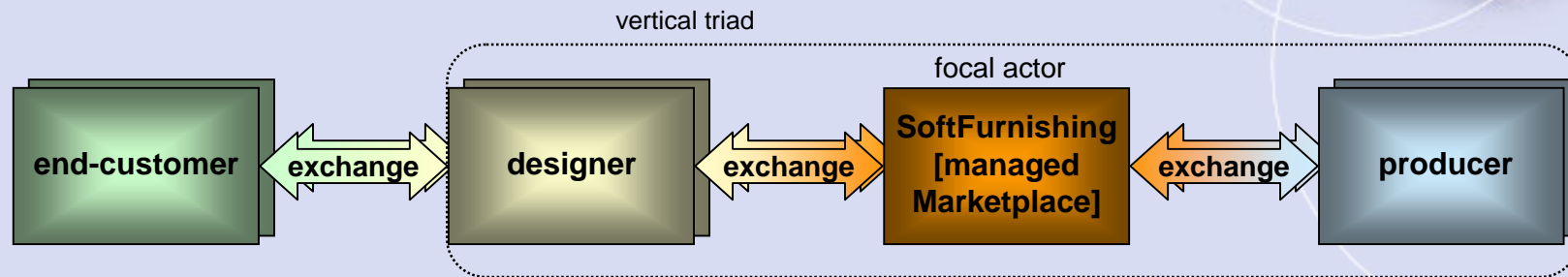
*operational
perspective*

service network

- service
- business process
 - action
 - interaction



SoftFurnishing business network



- Role of SoftFurnishing: Managed marketplace
- Position of SoftFurnishing: Central
- Multiple channels

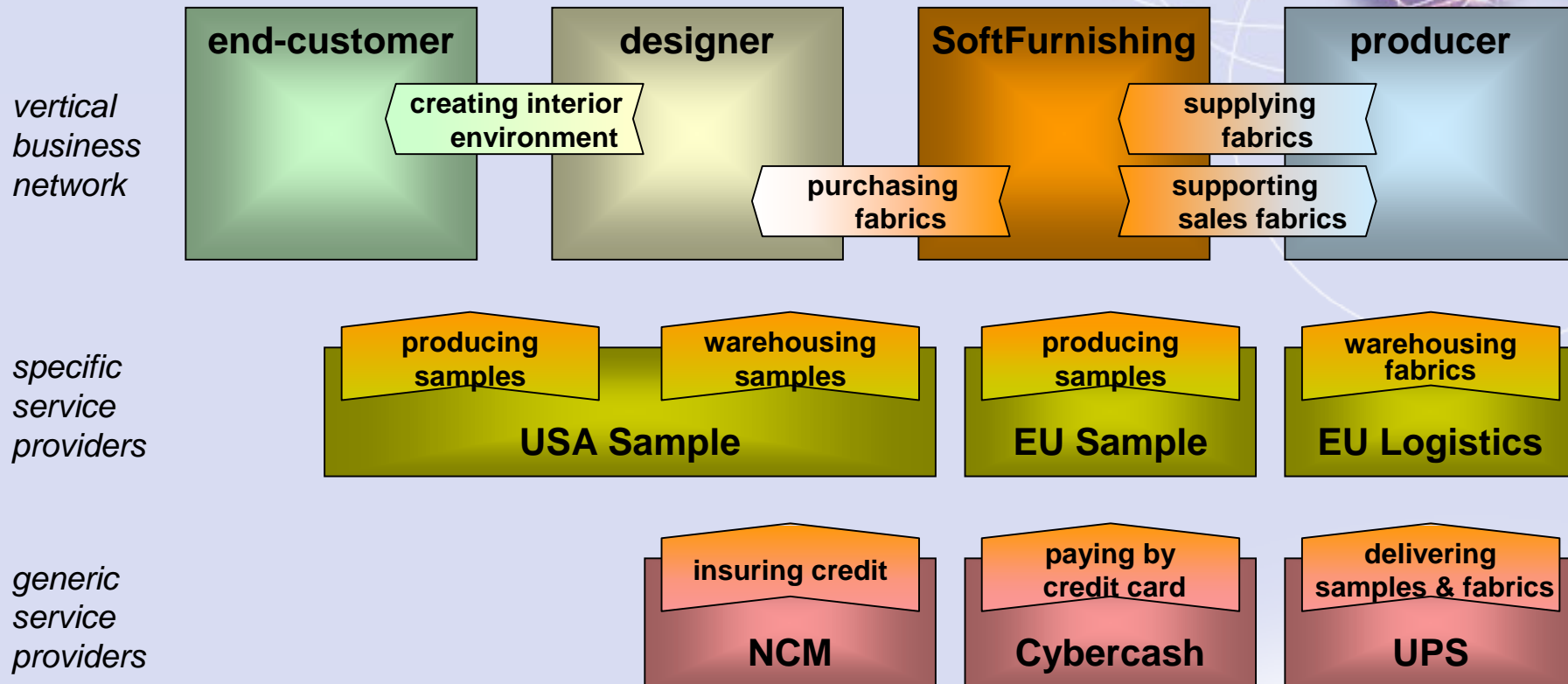
SoftFurnishing value network



- Value proposition SoftFurnishing toward designer
 - competitive price
 - wide, high-end European product range
 - latest products immediately available
 - single trusted supplier
 - smart product search logic
 - personalized product selection & market trend information
 - on-line tracking and tracing of orders
 - marketing tool towards end-customers
- The web as channel



SoftFurnishing service network



Role of SoftFurnishing: Network orchestrator



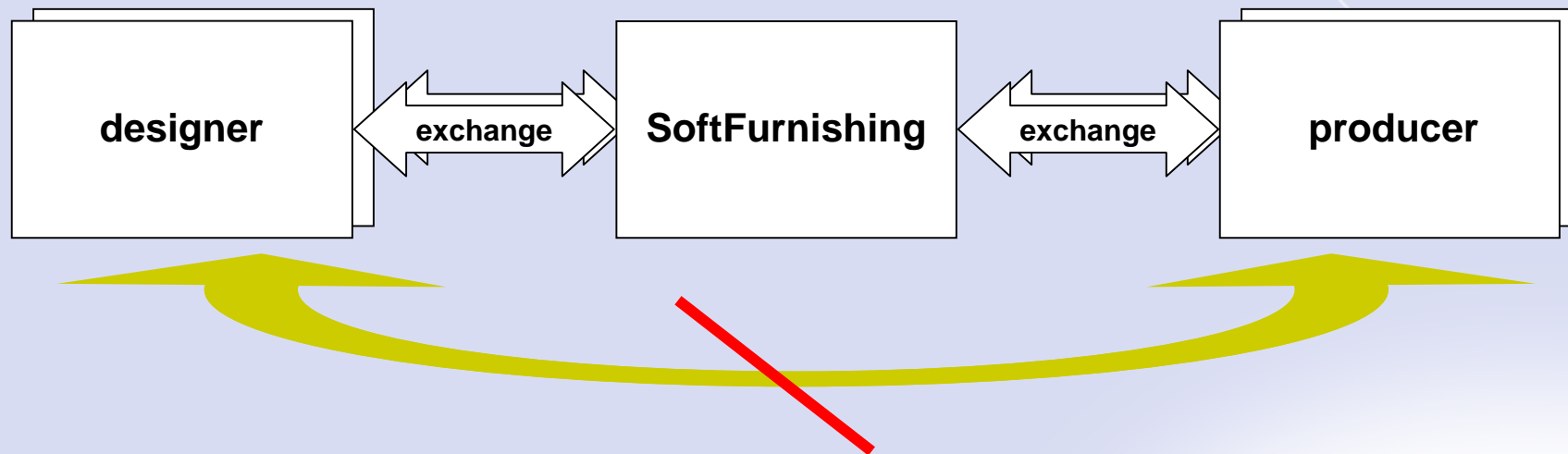
Case analysis: Design choices

- Strategic level:
 - Partial transparency
 - Transitivity of value propositions
 - Inventory-based value propositions
- Operational level:
 - Network orchestration
 - Location of inventory
 - Multichanneling



Partial transparency

- Actors are not transparent
- Prices and products are transparent



Case analysis: Alignment

- Match
 - Non-transparency of actors
 - Replacing physical item by an electronic service
- Mismatch
 - Automated business integration
 - Limited service impact



Limitations and future work

- Conceptual framework
- Research method and techniques
- Discussion of analysis results
- Alignment & fit in organization and ICT literature
- Follow-up of case study



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