CHALMERS
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Thought leadership as a substantial component for competitive advantage within project management networks – A case study on international diversification

Master's thesis in International Project Management

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PREFACE

This thesis is written under the supervision of Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenburg, Sweden and Northumbria University of Technology in Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom. The motivation for the thesis was developed in collaboration with an IT consultancy, which regards research in competitive advantage and strategic management as beneficial for its business.

This thesis aims to develop a thought leadership framework from a theoretical standpoint, which can then be applied in practice within an IT consultancy. The framework differentiates from the common perception of creating competitive advantage through the development of products or services that are then sold to customers. It rather tries to form a unique identity around the company that precedes its products and services. This identity is based on the excellence, i.e. knowledge, in the company and draws its competitive advantage from the difficulty to replicate and transfer this knowledge to competitors.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my main supervisor Prof. Christian Koch for the continuous support of my master thesis, his motivation and vast knowledge. His guidance helped me to consider different perspectives during my research and writing of this thesis. My sincere thanks also goes to my secondary supervisor Dr. Claudio Benghi for reviewing my thesis, pointing out existing misalignments of chapters and for asking accurate questions. I also would like to thank current doctorandus Veronica Carlsson for investigating every detail of my writing and providing quick and productive feedback as well as insightful comments.

STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

Background: A small German IT consultancy is looking into various options to both expand internationally and achieve competitive advantage. Thought leadership is one of these options and is considered for this thesis.

Main Aim: The purpose of this thesis is to develop a thought leadership framework that can be adopted by an IT consultancy and put into practice in its day-to-day operations. The scenarios differ in terms of centrality and risk, in order to simplify the selection process for the company and are classified as either planning oriented, adaptive, response or trend-setting.

Theory: Three different theoretical frameworks, namely the Resource based-View, Relational View and the Knowledge-based View, are used to develop an integrated thought leadership framework that is formed out of knowledge, relational and resource components. An additional section on organizational change and scenario creation provides the foundation for the discussion and application of the thought leadership framework.

Method: Systematic combining is used to continuously coordinate the framework with empirical observation, analysis and interpretation. The research is split into three parts and connected with the thought leadership framework in terms of components.

- Knowledge: An online survey about the documentation of PM software
- Relational: An analysis of public information of PM networks in Sweden
- Resource: Unstructured interviews and workshops within the IT consultancy

Results: Most project managers require the documentation of PM software for special or customized modules. Professional PM networks in Sweden consist largely of IT consultancies and provide the option to find partners. Since thought leadership is based on both knowledge and networks, these results are considered in the thought leadership framework to be applied to the company context in terms of different thought leadership scenarios.

Conclusion: Thought leadership is feasible concept for an IT consultancy that plans to expand internationally or tries to improve its competitive advantage.

Keywords: Thought leadership, competitive advantage, knowledge, networks, resources, consultancy, project management

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Term	Definition
API	Application Programming Interface
APM	Association for Project Management
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
IPMA	International Project Management Associations
ISA	Industry Structure Analysis
PM	Project Management
PMI	Project Management Institute
RBV	Resource-based View
RV	Relational View
SCM	Service Contract Management
SPF	Svenskt Projektforum (IPMA body in Sweden)
TL	Thought Leadership

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

This thesis is written in collaboration with a small IT consultancy in Germany that considers expanding to the Scandinavian market. The main reason for the expansion is the establishment of a new client base and as such decrease the dependability on a single location and market. In order to be located close to Scandinavian customers, the company has chosen a subsidiary in Sweden as a suitable choice. The company argues that due to the close location to Germany, the business culture in Sweden only shows a few differences to the German counterpart, which expedites the initial expansion in comparison to countries on other continents. Additionally, only one competitor has been identified in Sweden that offers similar services and products as one of its several business sectors. Both considerations provide a favourable environment for a business expansion. This thesis suggests possible scenarios on how the competitive advantage in the international market can be increased and sustained without providing recommendation on the subsidiary establishment process itself. The scenarios will be grounded on the expertise of the company, which can be found in training of project management (PM) and the customization of project PM enterprise software in the consultancy.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

"One of the silliest remarks in business is 'strategy is easy, implementation is difficult'. But strategy that lacks a clear path to implementation is not strategy at all, just wishful thinking."

(Kay, January 3, 2012)

The rationale of the study is to apply and combine existing frameworks within the context of a Scandinavian expansion to distil advice and implementation steps for the research problem. As the title and preface of this thesis suggests, the essence of this research is based on competitive advantage, in particular thought leadership. It will therefore focus on identifying areas and services that can be feasible for a thought leadership approach, which is largely dependent on knowledge and networks. Although thought leadership is a vague term in contemporary research and encompasses many different concepts, the thesis tries to shed some light on the essentials of thought leadership for companies, rather than for individuals or non-profit groups. Since all findings and results will have a direct impact on the direction the company takes for its expansion process, the interest of the company in this research provides an additional rationale for this thesis.

RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research is create a thought leadership framework that can be applied in a small consultancy to improve its competitive advantage. Several scenarios are provided that are founded on investigations of knowledge in PM and professional PM networks in Sweden, which are then adapted to the company context. The main research objectives are therefore as follows:

1 Understand the concept of thought leadership from a company perspective
2 Develop a thought leadership framework to be adopted by the IT consultancy

The first objective is to a large extent theoretical and covered by the literate review, while the second objective takes into account the context of the company. In order to support the second objective with primary and secondary data, two sub objectives need to be defined:

2i Explore the significance of PM software knowledge and documentation
2ii Determine the influence and spread of professional PM networks in Sweden

While there is no direct relation between thought leadership and either PM software knowledge or PM networks, both areas are part of the thought leadership framework in terms of knowledge (PM software knowledge) and network (PM networks) when the framework is applied in the context of the IT consultancy.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions are linked to the research objectives in regards to the list numbering:

1a What interpretations of thought leadership exist and how do they differentiate?
1b Which characteristics or qualities are necessary to be a thought leader?
2a How can an IT and PM consultancy develop a thought leadership approach?
2b What implications arise for the thought leadership scenarios in the organization?
2ia What is the general importance of PM software knowledge and documentation?
2ib Which medium of knowledge acquisition do project managers prefer?
2iia What characterizes companies that are part of professional PM networks?
2iib What are the benefits of being part of a professional PM network in Sweden?

RESEARCH METHOD

This thesis employs both qualitative and quantitative research methods to investigate how the thought leadership framework can be adopted in the consultancy context. The interaction within the consultancy is qualitative and based on interviews and meetings. It provides the foundation for further research that manifests in the form of two areas: Networks and Knowledge. The network research is quantitative and focuses on the Swedish market to analyse how companies are

involved in PM societies. It is based on secondary data that is openly available but exists as unconnected entities. The results of the research are used to answer how thought leadership can be developed and to understand its effects on the organization. The knowledge analysis uses a quantitative survey to acquire primary data from project managers and members to understand the importance of documentation for the application of PM software. The results provide important insight on how competitive advantage can be achieved through thought leadership.

To deal with the difficulty of interrelatedness of all elements in this thesis, systematic combining was used as method for the case study. Dubois and Gadde (2002) argue that the standardized linear approach for the research practice, i.e. the planning of consecutive phases, limits the potential of case study research. It is rather necessary to continuously go back and forth between empirical observations and theory in order to understand both. Dubois and Gadde (2014) describe it as interplay between all research activities and put it as opposition to common positivist literature. All preconceptions that are being hold at the beginning of the research are going to change over time due to empirical observation, analysis and interpretation. Theory and empirical observations from a systematic combining perspective are interconnected and can neither be divided into different phases nor conducted in a linear approach. Thus the theoretical framework needs to be expanded and changed over time. Figure 1 shows the framework for combing theory and reality in a non-linear approach.

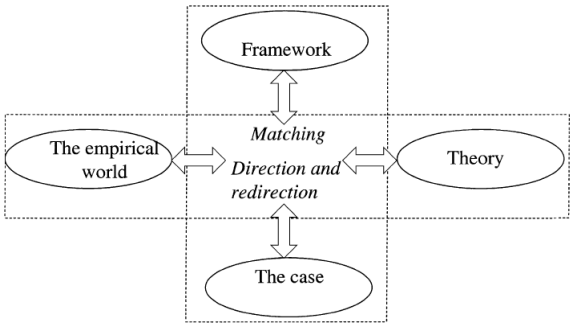

FIGURE 1: SYSTEMATIC COMBINING (DUBOIS & GADDE, 2002, P. 555)

The term matching in Figure 1 describes the continuous coordination between framework, sources and analysis. It does not follow any patterns and can lead into various directions. As such, there is no single correct way of matching but rather constant change between direction and redirection. This enables to researcher to explore new dimensions within the research (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). The direction approach was used for the search of specific facts that are in alignment with the concurrent theoretical framework, whereas the redirection complements these efforts through the discovery of new facets of the research problem. In most cases studies, this results in a combined research of both quantitative and qualitative approaches and is from that perspective optimal for the research of this thesis.

The literature review in this thesis has been analysed and coded in NVivo. Punch (2005) elaborates that the data coding can be done in the three steps: core coding, axial coding and selective coding. All of the steps were employed in the theoretical framework research. Core coding was used to locate initial conceptual categories in the data, axial coding to determine the relationship between the categories and axial coding to further understand the relationships and to develop and build a theory as Punch (2005) describes it. The coding has gone through many different stages and included enterprises, management consulting, internationalization as well as brand management at some point. It was finally refined to a very simple structure that focuses around resources, networks and knowledge. While the thesis tried to align all concepts towards thought leadership, all parts are valid within competitive advantage and can be employed independently of each other.

CONSTRAINTS

A general constraint in this thesis is the close collaboration with the company that provides the case study. While it allows for a more pragmatic approach to the research question, it also poses a problem in terms of value-free research and research direction. The interaction with a company works both ways, so an influence of the thesis by its stakeholders cannot be avoided. While the influence can be very beneficial, any thesis that is written as a case study in collaboration with a company should be understood with this constellation in mind.

Furthermore, since the results in a thesis could contradict or criticize the current way of business operations or management, the company might weaken or at least taint the analysis and discussion part in order to save its reputation. Three possibilities exist to approach this issue:

1. Signing a non-disclosure agreement.
2. Removal of any confidential data from the thesis.
3. Leaving the thesis as it stands.

The first possibility protects both reputation and anonymity of the company but works against the idea of a university to give back to the research community. Furthermore, the company data in a thesis is in many cases only seen as confidential from the perspective of the company, but offers insignificant value in comparison to the practices of similar companies or competitors. The second possibility allows the company to have a certain influence on the thesis, without affecting its direction disproportionately. It is also easier for a company to agree with the publication if the company name is not mentioned. Leaving the thesis as it stands is only possible in some contexts but is certainly commended by the research community.

A mixture between the first and second possibility has been chosen for this thesis: A non-disclosure agreement has been signed as part of a working contract with the company that also

extends to the confidential data within the thesis. In order to publish the thesis in the public domain, all confidential data has been removed from the thesis under the supervision of the company. Further constraints of the thesis include the small context of the research and the insufficient external validity of the research results due to characteristics of the case study. The research results provide necessary information for this case study but might not be adequate as secondary data for further research. The data however can be used as a foundation to conduct a more extensive research on the topic of thought leadership.

STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION

The thesis is structured in seven primary chapters. The **introduction** defines the background and rationale of the thesis and provides short definitions and explanation on the direction of the research in later chapters. The chapter is followed by the l**iterature review**, which looks at different frameworks in strategic management and thought leadership itself. The latter is then taken to create a thought leadership framework in the **research framework** chapter and connected with organizational change and the creation of scenarios. Before the thought leadership concepts are applied practice, a chapter on **research methodology** defines how the research is conducted, what kind of approaches and standpoints are used and how ethics and consents are relevant and considered. The **results and data analysis** of the research in the following chapter describes the results of the research, which is underlined with illustrations and tables. The interpretation of the results is continued in the **discussion** chapter and connected to the context of the consultancy to develop four different thought leadership scenarios. The thesis is summarized by providing explanations to the research objectives and questions in the **conclusion** chapter and by proposing examples for future studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Thought leadership appeared first in the business context in 1994 (Kurtzman & Goldsmith, 2009), but the term has been part of the US dictionary since 1951 (Young, 2013). An increase in the application of the word in newspaper articles or research papers can be detected since the start of the 21th century (Young, 2013). In order to describe the ambiguous term from a research perspective, two frameworks are employed. These consist of the Knowledge-based View (Grant, 1996; Spender, 1994) and the Relational View (Dyer & Singh, 1998; Lavie, 2006). Both form the foundation of the theoretical framework and are based on two other underlying frameworks, the Resource-based View (Nelson & Winter, 1982; Rumelt, 1984; Wernerfelt, 1984) and the Industry Structure Analysis (Porter, 1980), which have been around for several decades.

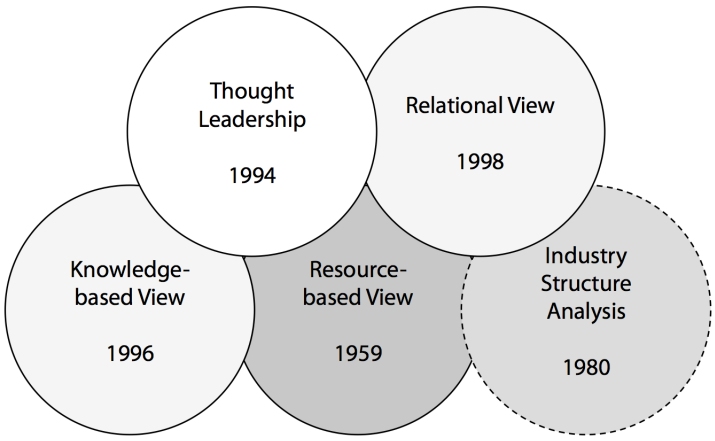

FIGURE 2: OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW (OWN ELABORATION)

Overlapping circles in the adapted Penn-diagram in Figure 2 show the relationship between the concepts: The Relational View for instance is based on both the Resource-based View as well as the industry structure analysis because it overlaps both, but it also provides the foundation for thought leadership, as it is overlapped by it.

It is important to note that thought leadership is an exception in this diagram, and the author has drawn its connection with the Knowledge-based View, Relational View or the Resource-based view. In this relationship, knowledge, i.e. excellence, forms the backbone for thought leadership while networks need to be exploited in order to market the excellence. The Resource-based View finally provides the understanding of competitive thinking in this case.

Although the Industry Structure Analysis, abbreviated as ISA, is a big influence for the Relational View and has coexisted with the Resource-based View for a long time, its influence on thought leadership will not be considered in this thesis due to its significantly different perspective: The Industry Structure Analysis is based on a single book by Porter (1980) in which he argues that in any industry, the rules of competition are found in five competitive forces, namely existing and new competitors, the ability of the buyers as well as suppliers to negotiate and the substitutes of products and services. The relationship between these forces is shown in Figure 3.

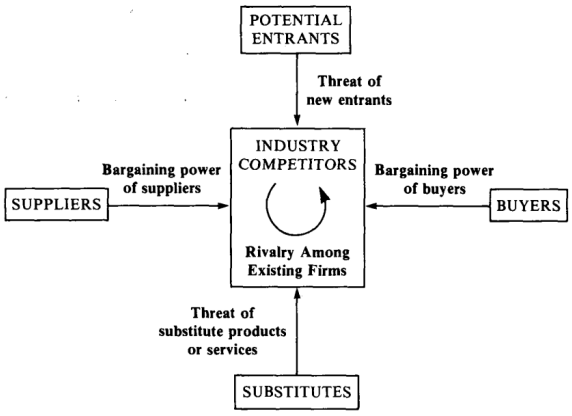

FIGURE 3: FORCE DRIVING INDUSTRY COMPETITION (PORTER, 1980, P. 30)

While competitive advantage can certainly be achieved through the recognition and integration of the forces, the author claims that their concept cannot be properly aligned with thought leadership. Future work will be necessary to clarify the relationship between the two concepts.

RESOURCE-BASED VIEW

Different authors have coined the term of the Resource-Based View (RBV) in the beginning of 1980 (Nelson & Winter, 1982; Rumelt, 1984; Wernerfelt, 1984) but the idea ranges back 20 years earlier to the book by Penrose (1959). The RBV defines the competitive advantage of a company through its resources and their application. Wernerfelt (1984) defines resources as assets that are tangible and intangible and which are tied semi-permanently to a firm. The RBV is therefore relying on both tangible assets, i.e. physical resources, like land, machinery and buildings as well as intangible assets, i.e. non-physical resources like reputation or intellectual property. Barney (1991) states that the resources have to be heterogeneous and immobile in order to provide a competitive advantage. Additionally Barney (1991) argues that competitive advantages can only be achieved if the strategic resources between all competitors are unevenly distributed and that they cannot be easily changed or moved around. The relationship between heterogeneity and immobility with sustained competitive advantage is shown in Figure 4:

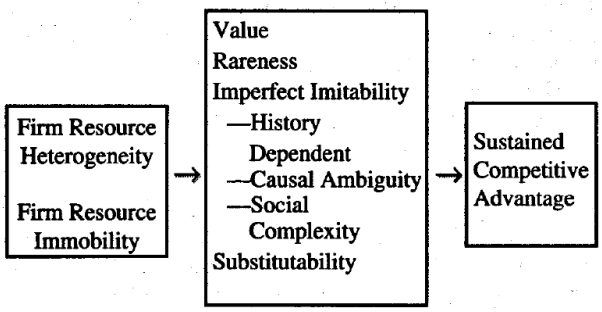

FIGURE 4: RESOURCE HETEROGENEITY AND IMMOBILITY (BARNEY, 1991, P. 112)

This model assumes that all controlled resources within a firm are to some degree heterogeneous and that they are not mobile across firms so that their heterogeneity cannot be resolved. If this is the case and the companies start their strategic game with different pieces, i.e. resources, a sustained competitive advantage can be drawn from their value, rareness, imperfect imitability and substitutability. Valuable resources are defined by Barney (1991) as resources that are able to improve both the efficiency and effectiveness of a firm in a strategic way. He argues that resources that cannot be simultaneously used or produced in other firms provide a competitive advantage by being rare. If the other firm tries to replicate the resources but does so with a lower quality or certain defects, sustained competitive advantage is achieved by imperfect imitability. Different reasons exist why it is hard to replicate certain resources. According to Barney (1991), causal ambiguity can for instance be existent if the competition does not properly understand why a certain firm is making a profit with their product. Substitutability means that a competitor cannot create the exact same resource, but a similar one that can implement the overall strategy. As a result, there would be no sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991).

Wernerfelt (1984) explains that one of the advantages of the RBV in beginning of its creation was the ability to have a different insight into the firm than the view the product perspective offered. Focusing on resources enables firms to exploit the valuable or rare resources while selling the ones that are not adding to the overall profit. According to Wernerfelt (1984), this focus does not render the product perspective useless but rather adds a different way of looking at the competitive advantage of a company.

The RBV has been criticized by some researchers for not fulfilling the conditions for a theory of the firm (Toms, 2010) and for being self-verifying (Priem & Butler, 2001a, 2001b). Sillince (2006) criticizes the RBV both for not taking into account how actors acquire their point of view on resources and for a lacking perspective or plan on how a firm can uphold their competitive advantage in the long term.

It is also arguable if an idea that has been developed more than half a century ago still applies to contemporary business, especially in regards to modern service approaches like Business Process as a Service. To investigate this argument, Crook, Ketchen, Combs, and Todd (2008) meta-analysed 125 studies of RBV and with an empirical base of 29,561 firms. They share a strong believe that the performance of their firms is directly improved by the focus on their strategic resources. While their research shows a tendency for the contemporary use of the RBV, it is important to note that the 29,561 firms were collected from 125 studies ranging back to 1991 that Crook et al. (2008) collected by searching databases for the keywords resource, resource-based and performance. This casts doubt on whether the research still applies today and if the companies are actually employing the RBV rather than just being referenced.

Relational View

The Relational View, which is abbreviated as RV in this thesis, has been defined by Dyer and Singh (1998). In short, both authors pay their tribute to the contributions of ISA and RBV to strategic management, but point out that both lack the broader picture and the understanding that the advantages or disadvantages of one firm is directly linked to the networks and relationships the firm is embedded in. This network and interdependence approach is also identified as missing in the ISA by Grundy (2006) and Nalebuff and Brandenburger (1997). Lavie (2006) expresses the need for model that differentiates between shared and non-shared resources and explains how relations and partnerships contribute to the different kind of rents that are created within an alliance.

Dyer and Singh (1998) argue that the critical resources of a firm extend beyond the firm boundaries as the resources are often supplemented by suppliers or are combined in unique ways with other companies. These interfirm linkages are in their opinion one of the sources of competitive advantage and relational rent. Lavie (2006) extends this view and explains that a simple right to utilize and employ resources suffices in many cases. The services that resources provide are more important to the generation of rents than the resources themselves as the success of joint ventures and alliances demonstrates. Both Dyer and Singh (1998) and Lavie (2006) therefore disagree with the common notion in the RBV that firms must either own or completely control the resources, which are necessary for competitive advantage.

This notion can be seen already in 1998, before the emergence of social networks, with an explosion in alliances that renders the pairs or networks of firms increasingly important. All types of partnerships, alliances or collaborations can be divided into four different categories:

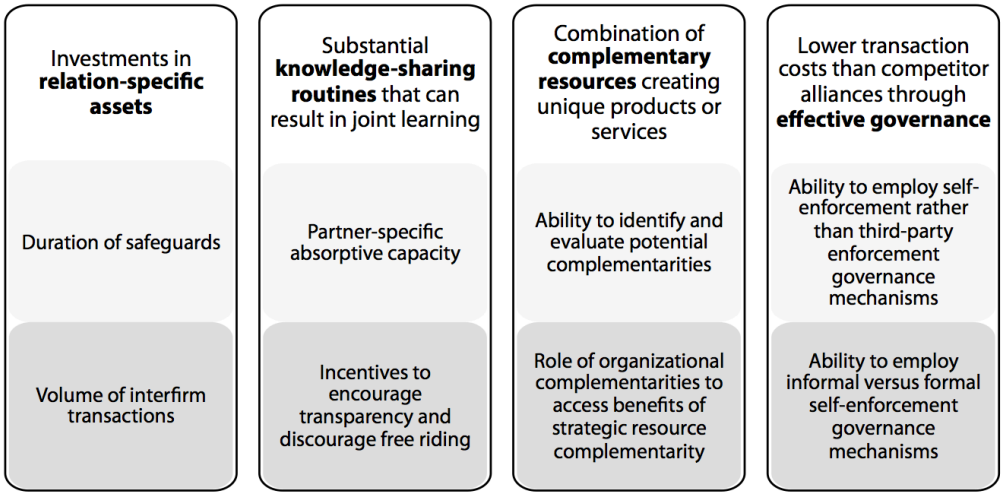

FIGURE 5: TYPES OF ALLIANCES. ADAPTED FROM DYER AND SINGH (1998, PP. 662-663)

If the collaboration is based on investments in relation-specific assets, the duration of governance arrangement is dependent on the duration of the safeguards that have been set in place to prevent any kind of opportunism from either party. The stronger these safeguards, the more companies are willing to share the assets. Additionally, the scale (volume) and breadth (scope) of the agreed transactions affects the ability to substitute assets for special purposes with more general assets. The greater the scale and scope are, the higher are the relational rents for the relation-specific assets. Dyer and Singh (1998) describe relational rent as one key concept of competitive advantage, because it generates profit through the transactions with other firms that would not be possible with detached approaches but only through the joint effort of all alliance partners.

Within interfirm knowledge sharing the relational rent is dependent on the ability to utilize knowledge outside the firm. The latter is called absorptive capacity and defines how well a firm is able to recognize the value in new knowledge and how well they are able to integrate and apply it for a positive return on investment. In the best case this capacity allows all allies to engage in inter-organizational joint learning. If partners are encouraged through incentives to share their knowledge transparently the joint learning has the highest potential to generate relational rents.

Combining complementary resources is another possibility to increase relational rents, especially if the alliance partners offer distinctive resources. Dyer and Singh (1998) call these complementary resource endowments and describe them as a means for all alliance partners to achieve a larger profit in collaboration that is larger than the sum of all isolated profits. According to them, these relational rents can however only be realized if the partners have systems and cultures in place that coordinates the efforts. Even if the resources are strategically complementary, an incompatible culture can mitigate any relational rents.

These cultures can be improved through effective governance. It plays a major role in the reduction of transactional cost and therefore increases the margin for relational rents. Governance by legal contracts on the one hand, i.e. third-party enforcements of agreements, work without the safeguards but require legitimate authority to overview the transactions. On the other hand, in a governance model that is based on self-enforcing agreements, the safeguards are crucial and can be divided in formal, e.g. financial hostages, and informal, e.g. goodwill and trust, safeguards. Both enforcements are established to prevent opportunism from either partner (Dyer & Singh, 1998).

Lavie (2006) differentiates between four different kinds of rents that occur within an alliance. These rents are based on the assumption that within an alliance, every partner shares a fragment of their resources to generate benefits for everyone involved.

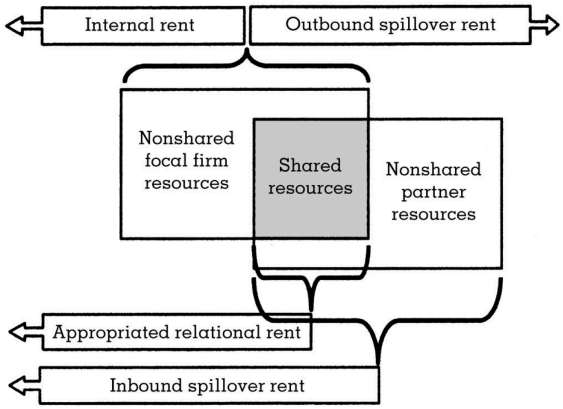

FIGURE 6: COMPOSITION OF RENTS EXTRACTED BY THE FOCAL FIRM (LAVIE, 2006, P. 644)

Internal rents are a combination of differential rents, i.e. rents that a generated as a result of resource scarcity, and quasi-rents, which generate their value through the degree of exploitation of resources. While these rents are already part of the RBV, (Lavie, 2006) states that the RV also needs to take into account interfirm resource complementarities. These can be both positive and negative, depending on the reputation and resources of the alliance partners.

Appropriated relational rents are based on the relational rents concept by (Dyer & Singh, 1998), but appropriated to each alliance partner. While all firms within an alliance can generate relational rents, they are in many cases not equally distributed (Lavie, 2006) and depend on several factors:

- Relative absorptive capacity
- Relative scale and scope of resources
- Contractual agreement
- Relative opportunistic behaviour
- Relative bargaining power

Adapted from (Lavie, 2006, pp. 645-647)

According to Lavie (2006), the relative absorptive capacity describes a firms learning capability to identify and exploit external knowledge. The difference of absorptive capacity between alliance partners determines the extent of relational rents: A larger difference results in more generated rents for the firms with a good absorptive capacity. Relative scale and scope of resources are linked to the complementarity of resources, i.e. the ability between alliance partners to share non-similar types of resources. The relational rents are higher if the shared resources of a firm have a smaller scale and scope than the resources shared by the alliance partners. It is therefore advised to employ contractual agreements that define the payment structure, the rights on information and the clauses for auditing, mediation and contract termination for the entire alliance (Lavie, 2006).

It is possible to generate relational rents through the formation of a contract that benefits one firm by protecting the internal resources and forcing a one-sided approach to the scope of resources sharing. While the contracts are mostly used as safeguards (Dyer & Singh, 1998), there also exist relative opportunistic behaviours that exploit the incompletes of contracts. (Lavie, 2006)

Lavie (2006) argues, that the higher this opportunistic behaviour, the lower the relational rents will be in the long run since all partners will limit their scale of collaboration. An establishment of trust is therefore more beneficial to the generation of relational rents than the pure focus on contracts. Relative bargaining power also aims at the incompleteness of contracts, but has a different relation with relational rents. The higher the bargaining power of one firm before and after signing the contract, the higher the relational rents will be for that particular firm. Lavie (2006) differentiates between the time before and after the alliance formation in Figure 7 and Figure 8.

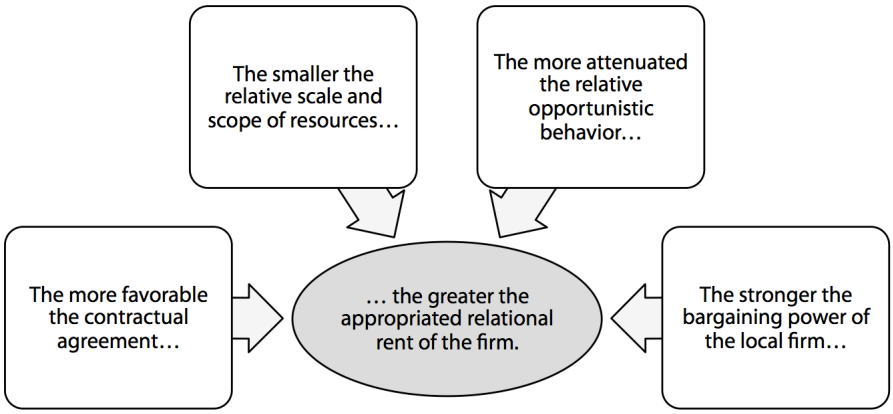

FIGURE 7: BEFORE ALLIANCE FORMATION. ADAPTED FROM LAVIE (2006, PP. 646-647)

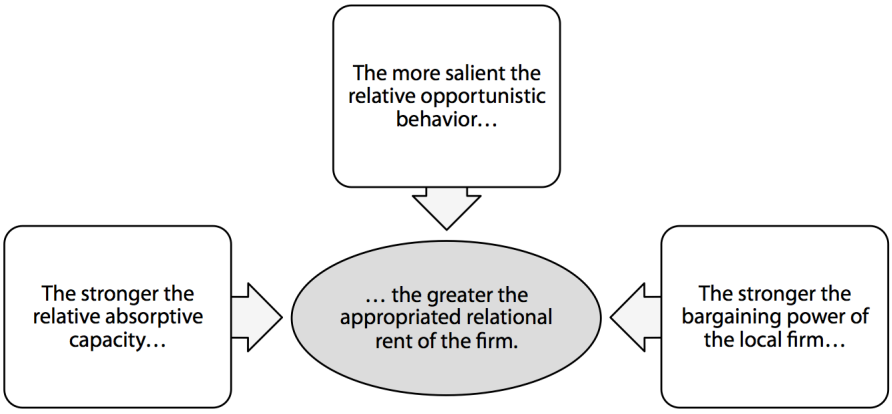

FIGURE 8: AFTER ALLIANCE FORMATION. ADAPTED FROM LAVIE (2006, PP. 646-647)

Besides internal and appropriated rents, (Lavie, 2006) introduces the concept of spillover rents, both inbound and outbound. It is the rent that is generated by resources of the partner through absorptive capacity, internalization and knowledge leakage. Inbound on the one hand refers to the rent that is derived from the partners of a focal firm. Outbound on the other hand describes the benefits partners receive through leakage of internal knowledge. The competitive advantage of a firm within an alliance is therefore dependent on limiting the outbound spillover rents while increasing the inbound spillover rents. Nonetheless, the overall relational rent should be a primary reason for firms to form an alliance, rather than trying to exploit the partnerships (Lavie, 2006).

Persevering relational rent is dependent on preserving the competitive advantage that is created by non-imitable resources and firm behaviour. The isolation of these assets can be achieved by various mechanisms. Two mechanisms from the RBV also apply for preserving relational rents: Causal ambiguity and time compressions diseconomies. Causal ambiguity is achieved through complex and context specific processes and methods. Dyer and Singh (1998) give the example of the development of goodwill trust, which highly depends on the relationship of the partners and their differences in culture and processes. The trust cannot be clearly defined, extracted or transferred to another alliance, therefore rendering it ambiguous. Nonetheless, it provides the crucial foundation for relational rents. Goodwill trust is a good example for the time compression diseconomies. The trust can neither be established quickly nor can it be treated as a product that is bought or sold (Dyer & Singh, 1998). A competitor would therefore experience and economic disadvantage while trying to establish the same kind of trust (Dyer & Singh, 1998). Besides the two mentioned methods an additional four methods are defined in the RV:

Inter-organizational Asset Interconnectedness

According to Dyer and Singh (1998), a contribution in a relation-specific investment can result in more specialized investments in the future and thereby lead to asset interconnectedness. If two partners decide to build a joint plant as a first step, customized assets that are influenced and owned by both parties can be the result. In the best case, this ends up in a snowball effect, driving the interconnectedness between the partners even further. A type of a customized asset is bundles that are funded by all partners.

Partner Scarcity

Firms that move late into new markets are commonly subject to partner scarcity. Their potential partners are either already in alliances with other firms or do not possess the relational capability to join a new alliance due to ineffective government processes within the firm or the unwillingness to invest in relation specific assets (Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1996; Larson, 1992). Furthermore, partners that carry matching complementary resources are often rare by its very nature. It is therefore advisable for firms that focus on competitive advantage through networks to move into new markets as soon as possible (Dyer & Singh, 1998).

Resource Indivisibility

As soon as the complementary resources between two or more partners are combined, the resulting resources become more and more indivisible over time. Dyer and Singh (1998) provide the example of the VISA organization and the 23,000 alliance banks that developed indivisible assets for all partners. The new assets can no longer be divided into individual parts and the banks can only use the assets through the VISA brand name and network. Indivisible assets are according to Dyer and Singh (1998) therefore collectively owned and result in a potential loss of flexibility for the involved partners.

Institutional Environment

Similar to governance and third-party enforcements, institutional environment can secure and foster alliances in region or countries (North, 1990). Usually institutional rules and controls are put into place to lower transaction cost and thereby increase the relational rents. These rules and controls are difficult to replicate, as they are highly dependent on the context of the business environment. If they are used as safeguards to control opportunism between the partners, their issuing body is referred to as extrahybrid institutions (Borys & Jemison, 1989).

KNOWLEDGE-BASED VIEW

The knowledge-based View (KBV) can be either seen as a specialization of the RBV or even as an opposition to the RBV that considers knowledge the most important resource within a firm. Grant (1996) states that the expectation of generating profits through knowledge specialization and acquisition is fundamental to all theories of the firm. Hence, without a specialization, it would be unimportant for individuals to start collaborations with others and thereby form a firm. The KBV focuses on the task of how to coordinate the expertise and efforts of individuals within an organization. While this issue has been addressed by other research according to Grant (1996), he argues that the KBV is different in the regard that it provides an integrated and extensively accepted coordination theory and that the interference between different actors is an element of organizational design rather than a managerial choice. The main issue the KBV tries to solve is the integration of specialized knowledge, both by formal and explicit as well as informal and implicit coordination mechanisms. This specialized knowledge is divided into four different types:

	Individual	**Social**
Explicit	Conscious	Objectified
Implicit	Automatic	Collective

FIGURE 9: SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE. ADAPTED FROM SPENDER (1994, P. 12)

The individual knowledge can either be conscious, which means it can be explained to others, or automatic, which cannot be explained explicitly (Spender, 1994). While both add value to the creation of a practice, the implicit knowledge is difficult to share with others. Social knowledge is knowledge that is not formed by an individual but rather shared by a group of people. It can be divided in objectified knowledge, e.g. company rules, guidelines or collective knowledge, which is according to Spender (1994) emergent and highly dependent on the history and development of the organization. Collective knowledge forms the foundation of competitive advantage rather than the acquired resources, according to Spender (1994). Collective knowledge or organizational learning from a process perspective, allows firms to achieve more with the same or fewer non-knowledge resources. Grant (1996) describes several mechanisms of how both explicit and implicit social knowledge can be developed and shared. These include:

- Rules and directives
- Sequencing
- Routines
- Group problem solving and decision making

(Grant, 1996, pp. 114,115)

Rules and directives are common mechanisms of the objectified knowledge that standardize the interaction between individuals. By minimizing communication these rules are very efficient and provide the means for converting implicit knowledge into comprehensible explicit knowledge (Grant, 1996). Sequencing further eliminates the communication between different parties and their coordination through the integration of specialist knowledge in a time sequence. This kind of mechanism is highly depended on the product or service that is offered and is preferred for products or services that are composed out of many components (Grant, 1996).

On the side of collective knowledge, routines provide the ability to assist difficult interactions between individuals if there are no clearly defined rules or instructions. Grant (1996) describes the coordination of knowledge therefore as an implicit kind of mutual adjustment that provides both high simultaneity and diverse arrangements of interaction. Similar to rules and directives and sequencing, routines reduce the amount of communication in order to be effective. The group problem solving and decision making takes a different approach and relies on high-interaction to tackle non-standardized tasks that have a high level of complexity and uncertainty. The KBV according to Grant (1996) therefore tries to reduce high costs of interaction and knowledge transfer through maximizing the use of tacit knowledge and minimizing group problem solving activities.

In order to apply the KBV in practice, there is a crossover to knowledge management and information systems. The latter are then referred to as knowledge management systems which are used to enable the generation, transfer and use of knowledge within the firm (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). Three main characteristics of knowledge need to be considered in these systems:

1. There is a difference between data, information and knowledge and it is crucial to known the implications of this difference.
2. Knowledge is personalized and must be expressed in a manner that is interpretable by the receivers in order to be useful.
3. The amount of information is irrelevant if it is not actively processed in the mind of an individual through learning and reflection.

Adapted from (Alavi & Leidner, 2001, p. 110)

A common perception about the difference between data, information and knowledge is a hierarchy, that perceives data as unstructured facts and the foundation for information, which is then turned into knowledge through the application in a specific context (Tuomi, 1999). According to Tuomi (1999), the described hierarchy needs to be inversed, as raw data as isolated pieces of facts can only be created through knowledge and as such emerge last. For knowledge management systems, this makes it necessary to remove the context out of knowledge and arrange it with pre-defined semantics for the storage in an isolated form.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

The appearance of thought leadership, which is abbreviated as TL in this thesis, did not evolve through academic research, but rather appeared first in the business context in 1994 as name for an interview slot in the Strategy and Business magazine (Kellaway, December 2, 2007; Kurtzman & Goldsmith, 2009). In more recent years the term was mostly spread by business magazines, consultancies and entrepreneurs according to Stern (September 25, 2014).

Sestili (July 27, 2012) published 21 definitions of TL, with different ideas about what the term describes. Prince and Rogers (March 16, 2012) discusses a definition of thought leader that either can be an individual or a firm and is recognized by third parties, e.g. clients or competitors, as the preeminent entity within an area of specialization. Other authors like Kellaway (December 2, 2007) disagree with the use of the term and see it as entirely redundant. She argues that thought can be manipulated in various ways, but cannot be led within free societies. Furthermore, most of the self-proclaimed thought leaders in her opinion lack an original thought in addition to the ability to influence others with it and are as clueless what the term means as everybody else (Kellaway, December 2, 2007)

In 2007, a company called Ledbury Group published a “Thought Leader Index 2007” (Ledbury, December 2, 2007) in the Financial Times. According to the group, the index ranks both individuals and companies that have strongly displayed leadership in terms of stakeholder influence and brand perception. It is important to note that the website of the Ledbury Group is no longer available and there has not been a “Thought Leader Index “ in the consecutive years after 2007. Kellaway (December 2, 2007) describes the concept of the index to boil down to being successful and has no relation with either thought or leadership.

In regards to newer publications (Rampton, October 10, 2014), there is an increasing demand for charisma, achievements, name recognition and company success for being a thought leader. This kind of advice is futile to any company that likes to adopt TL to create a competitive advantage. From a process perspective, it is circular reasoning: In order to become a thought leader, i.e. successful, you have to start by being successful. Rausch and McCrimmon (2005) argue that innovation is the foundation of TL, but the two are not identical. TL can take many different forms and can be shown through examples, demonstration as well as argumentation (Rausch & McCrimmon, 2005).

Similar to innovation, TL can be powered by ideas that change the way we perceive the world. In that case these ideas are so convincing that there is little effort to sell the concept. Further adaptations of TL include the silent innovators, that are able to generate many ideas but do not have the ability or audience to share them or the less creative individuals that are very open to

change and belong to the early adopters of new ideas. As such it is difficult to define TL in terms of risk, as application can range from small adaptation to the redefinition of culture (Rausch & McCrimmon, 2005).

While Rausch and McCrimmon (2005) describe TL from an employee perspective within management structures, Rasmus (December 12, 2012) argues that TL is a start into a relationship where none exist and is not limited to individuals. He emphasizes that for thought leaders, buyers purchase products if the ideas behind them are valuable. Any effort to convince potential customers that your product is the best solution for their needs destroys the concept behind TL. Ideas should be the only thing that is sold and even they should be given away for free. Furthermore, it is discouraged to link TL with any kind of financial methods or data like a revenue stream. Similar to networking, the positive effects cannot be quantified in number, but rather in understanding how the sales relationship changes over time: If potential customers become interested in the product, without any sales relationship beforehand, the company should be on the right track according to Rasmus (December 12, 2012).

The connection of TL with competitive advantage becomes clear with the concentration on a few perspectives, issues, audiences or market areas (Grant, 1996). According to Rasmus (December 12, 2012) these audiences and market areas in TL can mainly be built through active involvement and being part of networks and conferences. The participation should then not be limited to sponsorships but also include presentations and workshops or the leadership of local chapters. For Rasmus (December 12, 2012), the idea behind TL is to actively pursue possibilities and share the excitement and eagerness of it with everyone involved.

According to Kurtzman and Goldsmith (2009), an organization needs to be able to question everything and be open enough to share ideas and information in order to become a thought leader. The authors argue that while many companies have used the term of TL, only very few take advantage of it and accept its implications. It cannot be seen as an addition to a service or product but needs to be integrated within the firms strategy and included the working environment on every level (Kurtzman & Goldsmith, 2009).

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

This chapter is separated from the literature review, as the author needs to provide own definitions and elaborations on TL and organizational change. Both need to be defined before the research analysis and discussion, because the latter depend on concepts that are defined here.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

In this thesis it is crucial to define what TL means for a company rather than the individual because there is no academic consensus on what the term implies. The following table summarizes the strongest arguments of the considered TL definitions in the literate review:

TABLE 1: DEFINITION OF THOUGHT LEADERSHIP (OWN ELABORATION)

Thought leadership is	Thought leadership is not
• Active participation in networks • Giving away ideas for free • Bound to the company organization • A mixture of passive/active marketing • Creating personal value for others • Holding a unique point of view • A journey into the unknown	• A direct sales methodology • Just being an excellent company • Making early bets on possibilities • A title to give to oneself or others • A synonym for strategy/innovation • Limited to managers or individuals • A fixed position a firm can hold

These definitions boil down to three important company ingredients (Own elaboration):

1. Expertise in a distinctive business area
2. Open and public information sharing
3. Entrepreneurial spirit

Expertise is commonly defined as knowledge in a particular field. Here the KBV should provide valuable insight on how this knowledge as a resource can be developed and applied. Public information sharing can be achieved through various ways, e.g. marketing, advertising, public relations, but is in most cases limited by the possible audience and formed relationships. A good match to explain the networks between the different actors is the RV. Both the KBV as well as the RV could therefore support the TL approach.

It is important to note that ingredient three is entrepreneurial spirit rather than entrepreneurship. The latter is focused on starting one or more businesses from the ground while TL depends on an existing business and its reputation. While there is the possibility for a new company to become a thought leader, their networks are usually too limited to reach a critical mass that enables the

expertise to be spread. However, the same kind of spirit that can be found in risk taking business developers is necessary to walk into the unknown and spread the supposed new knowledge. Conservative businesses will not be able to become thought leaders as giving away knowledge for free would contradict both substantial concepts of the RBV, namely resource heterogeneity and immobility. Additionally, the firm might be seen as giving up the organizational identity in that expertise. Sillince (2006) argues that a firm should focus on representing knowledge as an essential part of the general competences within a company rather than seeing it as specialized and portable. This stands in contrast to the identified ingredients of TL and is addressed in the discussion part of this thesis.

Another aspect of the entrepreneurial spirit can be the willingness to be ignorant. Although the term usually has a negative connotation, it can be simply defined as a lack of information. In some areas where the collective knowledge is based on wisdom from years or decades ago, this lack of information has the power to change whole industries. A contemporary example is the transportation company Uber that ignored the common knowledge that non-licensed people cannot freelance by driving other people (Manjoo, January 28, 2015). Challenging this notion not only changed the public transportation industry but also might influence other areas. According to Manjoo (January 28, 2015) the change in the taxi industry by Uber can have a large impact on traditional jobs that are formed around discrete assignments. People might only be delegated and employed to do these tasks when they are required, rather than keeping them employed full-time.

Ignorance should however not be seen as the primary element of TL but rather the embracement of risk (Rasmus, December 12, 2012). Collective knowledge or advice is in many cases reliable, as it has been established through both experiments and the interaction between human beings and its ignorance can have disastrous results.

Collective knowledge, or rather its perception, creates a conflict between the RBV and TL: While the RBV treats knowledge as a resource, which should therefore be rare, inimitable and non-substitutable, TL believes in giving away ideas and knowledge for free. In this state, both seem to have an opposing concept about competitive advantage. The author however believes that the concepts can be connected and the described dilemma is rooted in two areas within the RBV:

1. A lack of network and alliance theory
2. The perception of knowledge as a undifferentiated resource

First, TL does not give away ideas and knowledge for free because it is an altruistic concept, but because it relies on the growth of its networks and the ensuing generated relational rent. Networks and alliances can only be grown if every participant invests in them. In terms of TL, this alliance can be seen on a broader scale, e.g. an entire industry. Ideas are shared without expecting a

direct one-to-one favour in return, but with the trust that the overall improvement of the industry also profits the company. Potential customers might be entirely different parties than the ones the ideas were meant for. The company therefore builds its identity and reputation as part of a major contributor within the network.

Second, many frameworks see knowledge in a more differentiated manner than the RBV, even though they consider it as resource. The KBV differentiates for instance between explicit and implicit and individual and social knowledge. According to Spender (1994), the social implicit knowledge is crucial foundation of competitive advantage in a firm. If the concept is transferred to TL, the free distribution of ideas and knowledge can only be in an explicit form and is either individual or social. The receivers of the knowledge are not able to build a competitive advantage out of the explicit knowledge without applying it in their context first. In the process of internalizing the knowledge, they might seek professional help from the sources provided the explicit knowledge, which in turn generates profit for the TL approach.

The author proposes an integrated TL framework rather than a combination of different parallel frameworks. It encompasses many aspects of the RBV, the RV and the KBV in order to form a new perspective on TL.

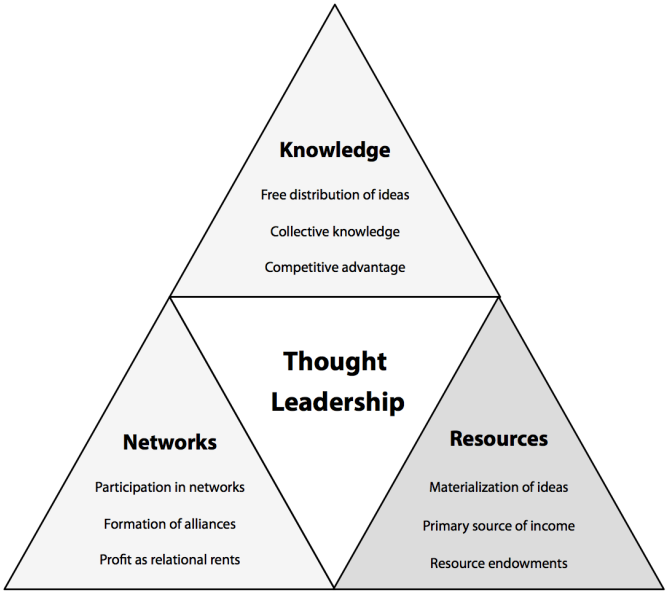

FIGURE 10: INTEGRATED THOUGHT LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK (OWN ELABORATION)

In terms of knowledge, the collective knowledge builds the forefront of competitive advantage in TL. Without it, there is no internal expertise in the company and as such no influential ideas that can be shared. The knowledge is not shared directly but made explicit and distributed in the networks or alliance of the company for free. In order to have this audience, the company needs to be active in networks or a partner in alliances with complementary companies. Relational rents

play a major role, as the ideas might make it possible for partners to sell their services or products which reflects back on the thought leader, either in a monetary way, reputation or a future favour. To be able to generate profits the company cannot neglect the non-knowledge resources that form the materialization of the ideas in terms of services and products. There would be no reason for a company to become a thought leader if it would not generate a financial benefit. The resources are therefore the primary source of income, even for a consultancy that sells its expertise and advice, since the expertise is stored in employees, which are considered as resources. Furthermore, the resources can also be seen as endowments, i.e. the contributions of the firm that are necessary to form an alliance. Depending on the characteristics of these endowments, they can also serve as safeguards.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND SCENARIO CREATION

Since an application of a TL framework is dependent on the change of the strategy of a company, which applies makes fundamental alterations to either business model or the organizational system (Wit & Meyer, 2014), it is beneficial to investigate the relation between the TL framework and organizational change. Wit and Meyer (2014) describe the result of any strategic change as far-reaching but the necessary steps to get there to be different, ranging from a few big steps to several very small changes. The magnitude of these steps depends upon four major factors:

- Scope of change
- Amplitude of change
- Timing of change
- Speed of change

Adapted from Wit and Meyer (2014)

The scope of change defines which and how many parts of the company are changed at the same time and can include the revision of an entire business model, i.e. the business structure, culture, processes and people. The degree of departure from the existing structures and process is defined as the amplitude of change. While the revision of a business model has a very high scope, the new structure might be only an evolution of the old structure, resulting in small amplitudes of change. The timing of change tries to either find the perfect moment to implement an initiative or a reasonable distribution of the changes over time, depending on the characteristics of the changes. It is closely linked with the speed of change, that defines the how long an alteration can take in regards to its scope and amplitude (Wit & Meyer, 2014).

Buchanan and Boddy (1992) transfer the factors into a four-quadrant model that employs the perceived centrality of a change and its perceived scale as the main dimensions while disregarding the pace of change.

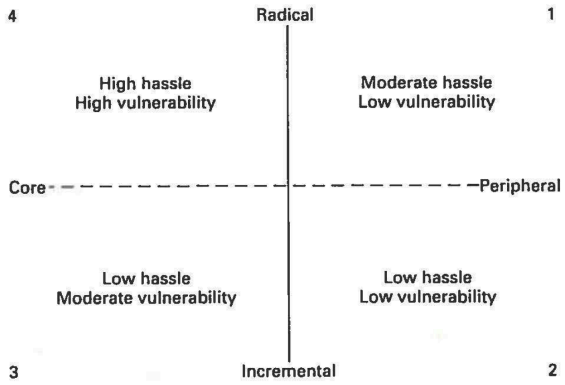

FIGURE 11: FOUR-QUADRANT MODEL OF CHANGE (BUCHANAN & BODDY, 1992, P. 41)

The centrality of change is linked closely to the scope of change while the scale of change can be compared with the amplitude of change. A core change for instance has a very high scope, as it affects many other areas. Further, the radical departure of a business model can be linked to high amplitude of change. Each of the quadrants has hassle factor, i.e. the effort of work that has to be put into the change, and a vulnerability factor, i.e. the affect on the company if something goes wrong (Buchanan & Boddy, 1992).

In order to deal with the factors of change and find the most feasible configuration, it is common to develop different scenarios and check them for the feasibility and implications. In the scenario creation process, Kloss (1999) puts a high focus on the identification of stakeholders, basics trends and uncertain outcomes, i.e. potential risk, that is necessary to construct the initial scenario. It can then be checked for its consistency and plausibility in regards to the defined frame and scope of the changes. Wang and Lan (2007) also consider external forces and drivers, but stresses the importance of focus and key decision factors as well as forecasting. A combined process of both perspectives for the creation of change scenarios can be defined as:

1. Define the focus and decisions of the scenarios
2. Identify key decisions factors and major stakeholders
3. Analyse external forces and events with uncertain outcomes
4. Identify basic trends and create a forecast of market shares
5. Construct and select possible change scenarios
6. Check for consistency, plausibility and implications

Adapted from Kloss (1999); Wang and Lan (2007)

The selection process of scenarios can be simplified by distributing the possible change in the four-quadrant model of Buchanan and Boddy (1992).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The following sections describe the design of research, the collection and analysis of data, its reliability and validity as well as ethical consideration. While the wide-ranging research method of this research is systematic combining, which continuously coordinates the four dimensions of the research, a more case focused method has been chosen for the data analysis.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research in this thesis was conducted from a social constructivist perspective. Crotty (1998) explains constructivism as a view, which sees all knowledge and meaningful reality as being constructed by the interaction between human beings and their world. Therefore, knowledge is developed within a social context and subject to human practices. Furthermore, according to Crotty (1998), meaning is not created but constructed and is both objective and subjective at the same time. Material objects in our world are meaningless until human beings construct a meaning around them. Meaningful reality is a constant process of humans of interpreting and reinterpreting our world.

The constructivist approach is suitable for the analysis of constructed values, concepts and their meaning, like knowledge and networks. Especially the latter has to be analysed with a social constructivist approach, as networks are formed out of the interaction between human beings. The thesis uses an interpretivist design as philosophical foundation, which according to Hart (2005) looks at both the individuals and their relations to understand an underlying meaning. It rather guides than leads the investigation and is both creative and reflexive. Bryman (2012) asserts that the interpretivist design also supports the researcher to keep the structure to a minimum and allows people to better express themselves. The interpretation therefore allows taking aspects of the social world and their meanings into account.

RESEARCH METHOD

The dialectical method was used during the data analysis and discussion to address the subjective perception of an interpretivist design. The dialectical method employs to main concepts: expression and differentiation. According to Ball (1979), the expression concept abandons the causal analysis and looks at the relationships from a holistic perspective whereas the differentiation concept defines advancement as being multilinear and unorganized. The dialectical method can as such be well applied to social issues because it is pre-eminently sociological. Bloch (1983) describes the dialectic concept according to the philosopher Hegel with three levels:

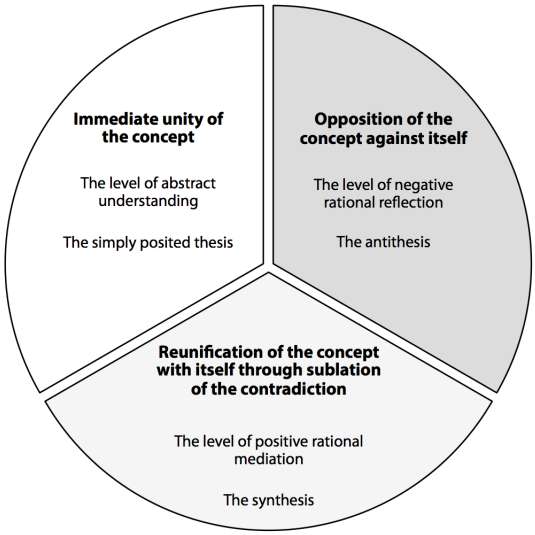

FIGURE 12: THE DIALECTIC CONCEPT. ADAPTED FROM BLOCH (1983, P. 285)

It is crucial that none of these concepts should be considered isolated or as separate parts but rather as interconnected and continuous determinations (Bloch, 1983). While the concepts are commonly referred to as thesis-antithesis-synthesis, Ball (1979) states that Hegel repeatedly criticized this schema for being too formal and that it lacks to mediate between potentials and empirical observations.

DATA COLLECTION

The data collection in this thesis was formed around unstructured interviews and meetings with employees from the case study company. A repository of all interviews and meetings can be found in appendix C. Bryman (2012) describes unstructured interviews as a list of topics or issues that are covered with an informal questioning style and a varying sequence of questions from interview to interview. The advantages of unstructured interviews include a detailed examination of the thoughts of the interviewee and the exploration of the unknown that allows for a thorough investigation of potential research issues. In the realm of competitive advantage, the unstructured approach can be useful for the identification of areas of improvement and opportunity, which itself can already decide on the effectiveness of any action that is taken at a later point. This is expressed in common knowledge as “doing the right things” rather than “doing things right”. A downside of unstructured interviews is the difficulty to put them into structure through categorization and coding and that they require an interpretation. Due to the interpretive approach, these issues do not pose a real problem: All meetings and interviews with the company were documented with both results, e.g. whiteboard pictures or meeting summaries and the interpretations of the author.

Due to the systematic combining approach, two further areas of research have been identified during the research of the thesis, both of them quantitative:

1. Project management networks

The first analysis focused on networks, in particular the spread of PM networks in Sweden through the involvement of PM companies. There are two main PM networks in Sweden, namely Svenskt Projektforum, the representing body for IPMA in Sweden, and PMI Sweden, who both provide information about their members and partners. However, neither network provides any background on the type of companies that are involved in the network, nor on the areas of influence. The research aimed to give a better understanding of how the networks are formed and what benefits it provides for its members.

2. Software knowledge in project management

The other analysis focused on the investigation of expertise or knowledge in project and portfolio management software for enterprises. The importance of knowledge was linked to the importance and the type of documentation for the mentioned software. The research investigated what kind of documentation was preferred, where it was applied and how often it was used. The results shed some light on the necessity of knowledge for the use and application of PM software or tools.

The networks were analysed with a quantitative approach that combines publicly available information from websites, newspapers and event flyers. While this secondary data could be easily accessed, it had to be put in context with the embodied firms and the country specifics. This interpretation was also necessary for the choice of matching categories. Many of the categories have been changed during the research to better fit the distinct characteristics of the network. To collect the data, a survey about PM knowledge has been created. While it is considered quantitative research, the majority of the answers are based on the experience and perceptions of the participants.

SAMPLE SIZE AND SELECTION CRITERIA

The selection of the interviews in the consultancy was based on judgment of the author, in order to identify the missing pieces of the case study. The population for the selection consisted of company employees that are specific to the case study and were conveniently chosen. Since the meetings were part of the company agenda, the author had a limited influence on the participants or discussed topics. The judgment of the managers within the company therefore decided the selection of the population for the interviews.

Purposive sampling, also known as judgemental sampling, was employed for all firms in Sweden that are part of a professional PM network. It is described by Whittaker (2009) as a sampling

method that is based on the judgment of the author to choose participants that are likely to possess knowledge that is of value for the research question. The approach is interpretive and the criteria for quality based on relevance and confidence as Hart (2005) describes it. For the network research, no limitation to company size or sector was selected, as long as there was clear evidence of an involvement in either PM network.

Snowball sampling was used for the knowledge survey to receive as many replies as possible and thereby increase the sample size. According to Whittaker (2009), this sampling method focuses on the selection of a small number of participants, in this case project managers, and builds the sample size through their recommendation of further participants. This approach was necessary, since the questions in the survey are very specific to PM and can only be answered by a small part of the population, i.e. those that use PM software as part of their work. The initial participants were found through LinkedIn groups in PM and contacts from the author and the case study company.

RESEARCH RELIABILITY, REPLICABILITY AND VALIDITY

Any scientific research has to be recognized in terms of reliability, replicability and validity in order to define its value and applicability. Reliability is defined by Bryman (2012) in three different factors: Stability, internal reliability and inter-observer consistency. Stability analyses the effects of time on the research results and examines how the results are altered by variation or fluctuation over time. Internal reliability looks at the variables of the research and investigates how the results from one variable are related to the results of another variable. Finally, inter-observer consistency deals with objectivism during the data collection and analysis, which can be affected by the subjective judgment of the researcher (Bryman, 2012).

A connection is made between reliability and replicability in regards to external reliability. While internal reliability is connected with the inter-observer consistency and is mostly limited to the research itself, external reliability describes the extent of result replicability outside of the research. According to Bryman (2012), external replicability is very difficult to achieve for social research as the participants and circumstances change over time. As such, this thesis only aims for internal validity and neglects the stability factor.

Similar to the internal and external reliability, validity, i.e. the degree of consensus between theoretical ideas and empirical observations, can be divided in internal and external as well. Hart (2005) furthermore adds the dimension of construct validity and describes it as the clarification of all the variables within the research to make sure that they are not inferred by either systematic errors or other constructs. As such it should be possible to understand all variables or indicators as an intellectual whole. Internal validity affects the empirical observation and how the experiment is conducted. Similar to inference in the construct validity, the internal validity tries to limit the

confounding variables as much as possible to distinctly describe the observation. Finally, external validity according to Hart (2005) describes the relationship of the observation in different situations and a more general setting.

As a case study, this research aims for internal reliability but does not insist on external validity outside of the scope. While the results of the thesis might be used as a guideline for other subsidiaries in the future, the results are not likely to be applicable to another company in a different sector or country. In regards to TL, the thesis tries to provide internal validity for the concept, but avoids external validity due to the widespread confusion of what the term means.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In order to approach ethical considerations, it is important to look at four different areas according to Hart (2005): The researcher, the research, the participants and the sponsor. All of the interviews and meetings in this thesis are conducted with the sponsor, i.e. the consultancy. While there is no formal ethics sheet for this thesis with the company, a non-disclosure agreement has been signed in advance on the basis of employment and the sponsor will have full control over what is published in the final thesis. The constraints chapter in the introduction furthermore describes the issues that can arise from such an arrangement and how they affect the researcher and the research.

Since the research contains an online survey about PM knowledge, ethics for the participants needs to be taken into account. In order protect their privacy, three precautions have been chosen: First, the survey does not ask for any private information and can be filled out by anyone without signing up for it. Second, all questions are multiple choice and don't require any written statements. Finally, the survey included a short description on how the collected data is used and that the participants consent to the usage by filling out the survey.

DATA ANALYSIS AND CODING

Both the data analysis for the knowledge survey and network analysis where performed in SPSS and can be found in appendix A and appendix B. The categories were chosen before the research was conducted and later modified to better fit the results and make the interpretation easier, acknowledging the systematic combining approach. Although no coding was used for the research data, the literature review is based on a coding structure as described in the introduction.

RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The following sections investigate the different components of TL that have been defined in the integrated TL leadership framework, i.e. knowledge, relational and resource. No area should be considered as a separate concept but rather as an integrated component of TL.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP - KNOWLEDGE COMPONENT

Within the PM field it is not only necessary to understand PM in general or company specific methods and workflows, but also how to use PM tools and software. For larger companies and enterprises, the complexity of PM software often surmounts the understanding of most people, even project managers. Modules that are only used now and then require the users to learn the software every time again are especially difficult. For a TL approach, this opens the opportunity to provide ideas on how the learning of software can be improved and made more effective on a long-term perspective.

A common approach to tackle these issues is to provide documentation or Q&A sheets that help employees to work with the software. In order to understand how important these documentations are for project managers and team members, a survey with 30 participants, mainly project managers, was conducted. As Figure 13 and Figure 14 show, the survey participants were distributed between different company sizes and industries. While the industry question contained an “other” response, no explanation field had been provided. In hindsight it would have been interesting to see in which industries the 12 “other” responses were working. Besides these responses, the technology, transportation and construction industries make up the largest part of the distribution.

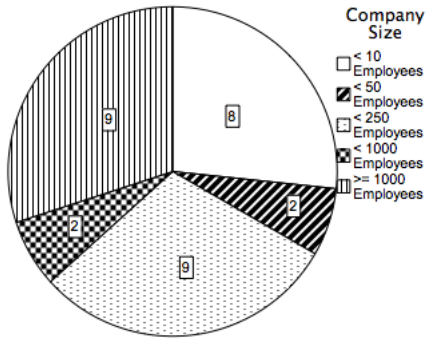

FIGURE 13: COMPANY SIZE IN THE SURVEY

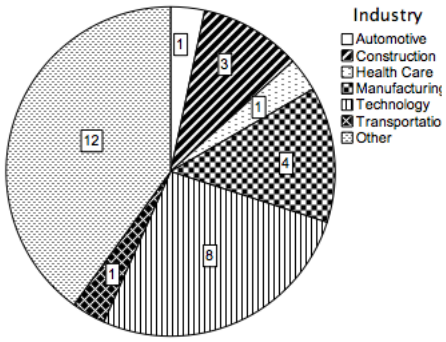

FIGURE 14: COMPANY INDUSTRY IN THE SURVEY

The expectation in regards to the answers for PM software where not met in Figure 15. While the author hoped for a high level of enterprise PM software like Primavera or Planisware, the majority of the responses were either MS Project or “other”. Since Excel was not listed, there is a high chance that at least a few responses in the “other” category were not PM specific software. The problems with the MS Project answers are twofold: First, the software is not customizable and therefore does not include any customer specific modules. Second, there are already enough documentation and tutorials available online.

Although the use of PM software was not the direction in the survey, it shows that many businesses rather use out of the box software then investing in specialized software. Even in large companies and enterprises. Figure 16 shows that more than 60% of the participants use their software at least once a day. Assuming that the answers where given honestly, this result gives the other questions a higher credibility: The people answering the survey were using their PM software on a regular basis and therefore were able to answer the other question from personal experience, rather than using best guesses.

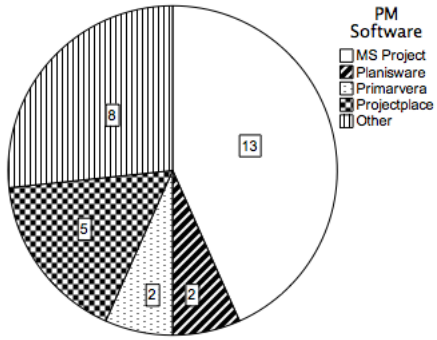

FIGURE 15: EMPLOYED PM SOFTWARE IN THE SURVEY

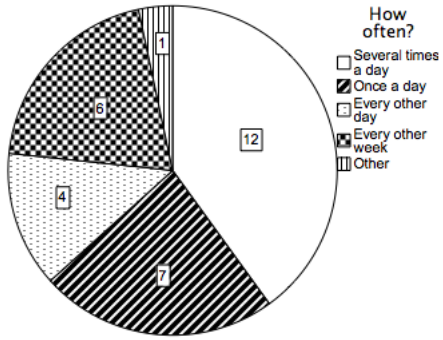

FIGURE 16: USAGE REGULARITY OF THE PM SOFTWARE IN THE SURVEY

The importance in Figure 17 provides a clear picture: More than half of the participants consider tutorials very important and most of the rest has at least a use for it. The preferred language in Figure 18 is only to a small extend the native language. The vast majority prefers pure English documentation. One reason might be the fact, that language translation in complex software seldom works at a satisfying level and makes the search for solutions much more difficult: If the language of the software is English, the text of the error message can just be put into a search engine. This rarely works for translated messages, as most search engines work with keywords.

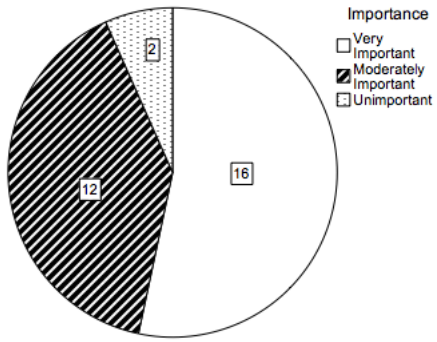

FIGURE 17: IMPORTANCE OF SOFTWARE DOCUMENTATION IN THE SURVEY

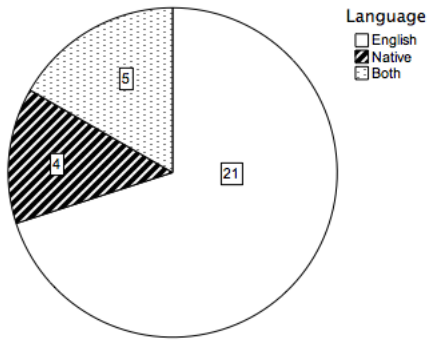

FIGURE 18: PREFERRED DOCUMENTATION LANGUAGE IN THE SURVEY

In terms of preferred medium, more than half of the participants answered with video tutorials in Figure 19, while white papers and Q&A website both ranked on second place. With the small sample size at hand, no exact conclusion about the preferred mediums can be made, but neither social media nor mobile apps seem to be relevant. Both Figure 19 and Figure 20 are multiple-choice questions, with the value 30 representing a positive answer by all survey participants. Figure 20 shows that about half of the sample size is interested in documentation for special functionalizes and customized modules. Taking into account the high answers for out-of-the-box answers like MS Project, the latter is surprising and casts doubt on the answers for this questions.

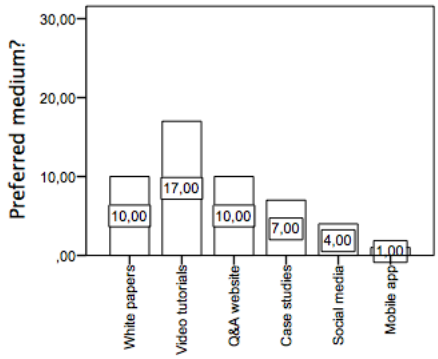

FIGURE 19: PREFERRED MEDIUM OF DOCUMENTATION IN THE SURVEY

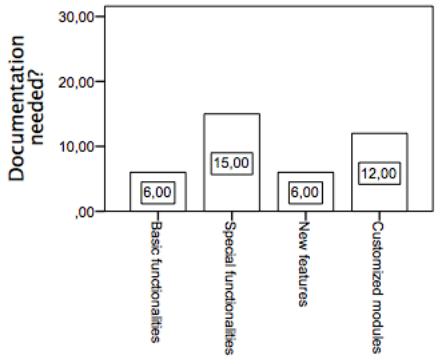

FIGURE 20: TYPE OF NECESSARY SOFTWARE DOCUMENTATION IN THE SURVEY

No reliable correlations could be found in this survey. The highest Pearson correlation with 0.473 is found between the used PM Software and the need for documentation with special functionalities. It is likely influenced by the high number of MS Project answers and the need for special documentation and can therefore be at most considered a weak correlation.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP - RELATIONAL COMPONENT

As a thought leader, it is necessary to be active in professional networks to build and influence an audience. For the PM sector, it is common knowledge that three major networks and certification associations exist. These are:

- International Project Management Association (IPMA)
- Project Management Institute (PMI)
- Association for Project Management (APM)

The Association for Project Management is usually only found in the United Kingdom and certifications are quite rare in Sweden. IPMA does not exist as an association on a national level, but rather has a special body in each country that provides the IPMA certification with their own national body of knowledge. The Svenskt Projektforum (SPF) represents this position in Sweden. PMI is an American association that can be found all over the world. The notion of the author is that both association are very common in Europe and do not stand in a conflict towards each other. It is not unusual in Sweden to see SPF members at PMI conferences and the other way around.

Since Rasmus (December 12, 2012) defined “Get involved“ as one of the golden rules of TL and states that PM companies need to be involved in PM networks. The author believes that it is crucial to investigate how far the PM associations reach in Sweden and what involvements companies have in both IPMA and PMI.

The data for their involvement has been taken from the websites of the associations (SPF, 2014a, 2015), from Conference papers (PMI, 2011, 2013) and newspapers that are published by the organizations (SPF, 2014b, 2014c). All data about employees and turnover has been taken either from company information websites (Ratsit, 2015; UC, 2015) or, if unavailable, from financial statements on the website of the company. 2013 is the fiscal year that has been chosen for the statements. In some cases, the numbers for employees and turnover are taken from a chapter not from the whole company. This is usually the case for large companies. The research does not claim to provide a complete picture of the association’s landscape in Sweden, but rather tries to develop an idea of relationships with the associations are carried out in Sweden. The sample size includes 70 different companies and a detailed explanation of all variables can be found in appendix B.

Some variables already have interesting distributions, without combining them or finding correlations. Almost 60% of the companies are found in the Consulting or Information Technology area. Many of them provide either PM consulting or a PM solution. If training is taken into account, this makes up 70% of the companies. As a conclusion, the networks of the associations are made

up by large percentages of companies that help others to conduct PM, rather than using PM themselves. It is furthermore crucial to note, that the building and construction or pharmaceutical industry is almost non-existent. The former is part of the “Industrial / production”, the latter part of the “other” slice in Figure 21. About 45% of the companies are younger than 25 years old. The percentage rises to 56% if only consulting and IT firms are taken into account.

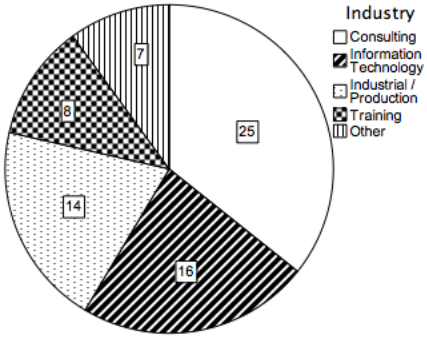

FIGURE 21: COMPANY INDUSTRY DISTRIBUTION IN THE SAMPLE

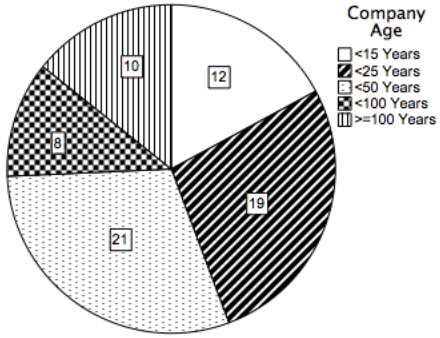

FIGURE 22: COMPANY AGE DISTRIBUTION IN THE SAMPLE.

The distribution of company sizes within the sample of 70 companies shows a discrepancy to the overall distribution in Sweden. While the micro companies, i.e. companies with less than 10 employees, make up more than 85% of the Swedish market, it is a fourth of that in the sample. The medium and large companies are represented in a much higher quantity in the sample and the enterprises make up almost a fourth of the sample in comparison to less than 1% in the entire Swedish market. One explanation might be, that enterprises in the sample are not represented in the overall distribution, because they are seen as international firms. However, due to extensive difference, it can be stated that larger enterprises rather than micro firms prefer PM networks.

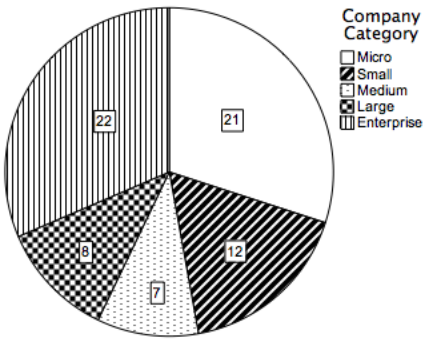

FIGURE 23: COMPANY SIZE DISTRIBUTION IN THE SAMPLE

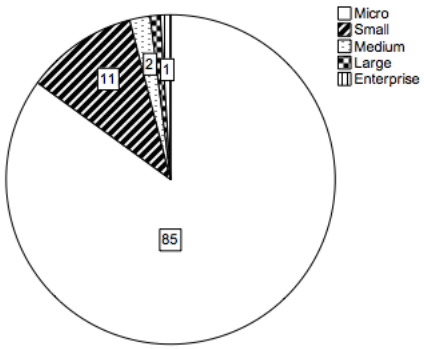

FIGURE 24: COMPANY SIZE DISTRIBUTION IN SWEDEN IN PERCENT (SCB, 2014).

The amount of companies located in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö is much higher than the population of the cities would suggest. While the three biggest cities make up only about a quarter of the overall population in Sweden, not counting suburbs, it is more than three quarters in the researched companies. However, the distribution between Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö seems to be close to the location distribution in entire Sweden. In summary, the location of the header quarters focuses on the big cities and offers no surprise for the research.

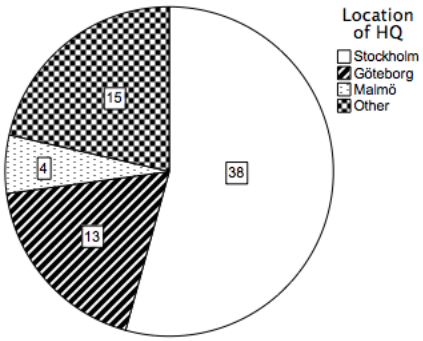

FIGURE 25: COMPANY LOCATION DISTRIBUTION IN THE SAMPLE.

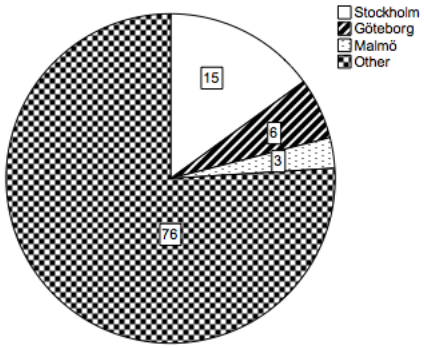

FIGURE 26: POPULATION DISTRIBUTION IN SWEDEN IN PERCENT (SCB, 2010).

Within the sample size, less than one fifth of the companies have no involvement in either IPMA or PMI. Since no companies were added to the sample that have neither an involvement in IPMA nor in PMI, this demonstrates the interconnectedness between IPMA and PMI: If the company is part of one network, there is a high chance that it is somehow connected to the other network as well. While the user base is slightly higher for IPMA than for PMI, it cannot be assumed that more IPMA certifications are taken. The research has been conducted for companies, not individuals and is therefore unreliable in terms of individual certifications. IPMA has a larger partner and member base than PMI for this research, while the PMI network has more sponsors. A reason might be the characteristics of the networks themselves: IPMA on the one hand does not exist as a monolithic organization that has the same rules all over the world, but instead depends on national organization that represent the network. As such, the involvement for companies as partners and members is more likely than as sponsors. PMI on the other hand is exactly the opposite and uses the same body of knowledge independently of the country.

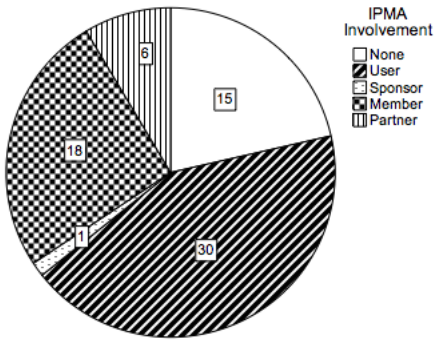

FIGURE 27: IPMA INVOLVEMENT IN THE SAMPLE.

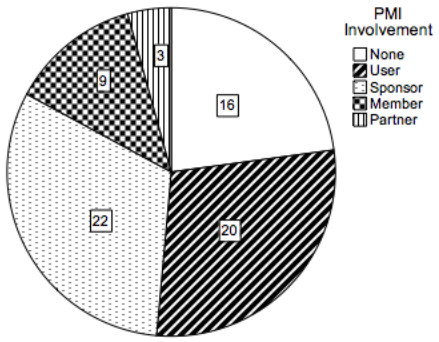

FIGURE 28: PMI INVOLVEMENT IN THE SAMPLE.

Figure 29 and Figure 30 show the involvement of the companies in one network that are partners of the other network, e.g. Figure 30 shows the PMI involvement for partners of the IPMA network. The results show that both networks are closely aligned and that the biggest contributors of in each network also tend to invest in the other. Although the sample for both results is rather small, it seems that PMI partners are rather involved in the local IPMA networks than the other way around. This interpretation can however not be stated with certainty.

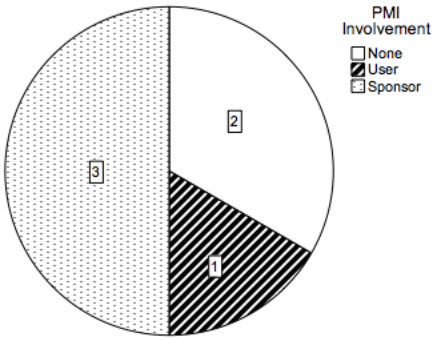

FIGURE 29: PMI INVOLVEMENT FOR IPMA PARTNERS IN THE SAMPLE.

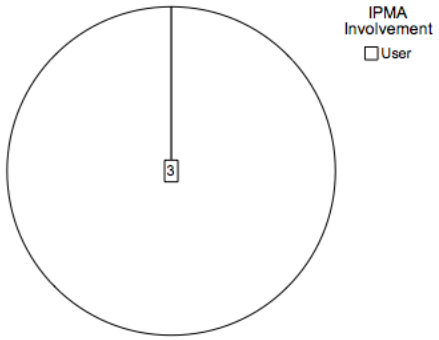

FIGURE 30: IPMA INVOLVEMENT FOR PMI PARTNERS IN THE SAMPLE.

The analysis shows that both IPMA and PMI have a high influence in Sweden in regards to PM in the IT and consulting area. Most members can be found on the service provider side, rather than on the customer side that uses PM for operation or production. This limits the possibility to find new customers in the network from a consulting perspective. A membership in the network is thus mostly useful from a reputation or prestige perspective, to show the PM excellence of the company. The low amount of construction and production companies also raises question in regards to the reach of the networks. The production companies are commonly known to employ a very high amount of project managers that seem to be mostly missing in the described networks.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP - RESOURCE COMPONENT

In the TL framework, the resource component decides on the possibilities on how the reputation as thought leader could be materialized into products and services, in order to make a profit. While TL does not put a large effort on establishing new resources besides knowledge, the selection of existing resources limit or enable the company to be successful. This section will look at the services that a provided by the company, in order to identify its main business area and mandatory resources.

The workshops and interviews with the case study company shed some light on their main issues, mainly the lack of a unique selling point and an oversaturated German market. Both are reflected in the fact that 62% of the revenue of the consultancy in 2014 has been earned from one German customer, making it vulnerable in a declining economy. Hence, the company strategy is focused on both competitive advantage as well as internationalization. In expansion into different markets can diversify the financial risks over several countries and is part of the priorities of the company that can be found in appendix C.

Figure 31 and Figure 32 show the distribution of the company profit by company department and customers in percent. Almost half of the profit is earned through either PM or PM training, whereas only quarter of the profit has been generated through software customization and development. The company tries to aim for a 40-40-20 approach, meaning 40 percent of resource and effort got to PM, 40 percent to software development and customization and 20 percent to other in order to reduce the risk by diversification.

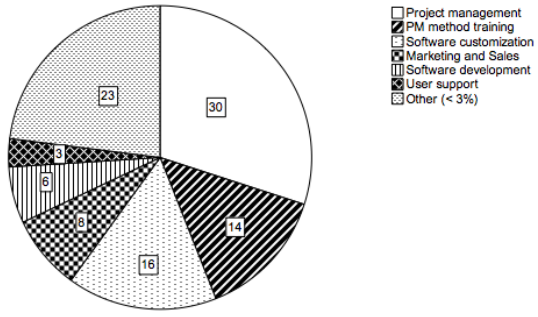

FIGURE 31: PROFIT BY COMPANY DEPARTMENT IN PERCENT

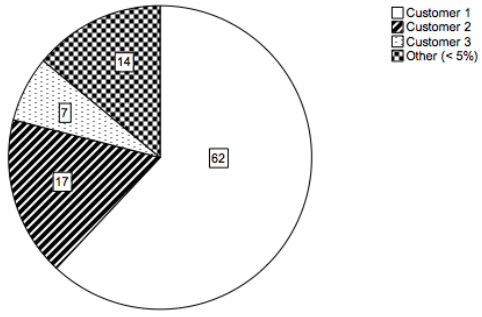

FIGURE 32: PROFIT BY CUSTOMER IN PERCENT

During the workshop and interview, several areas were identified that would have to improve in 2015. These are: marketing, business travel, communication, information technology, sales and human resources. From those areas, three are especially interesting for this thesis: marketing, information technology and sales. All identified issues can be found in appendix C.

Since the provided services of the company reflect the key resources in the company, it is important to analyse what the case study company exactly offers and how the services are integrated. During the time of the first workshop the provided services were divided in seven different areas.

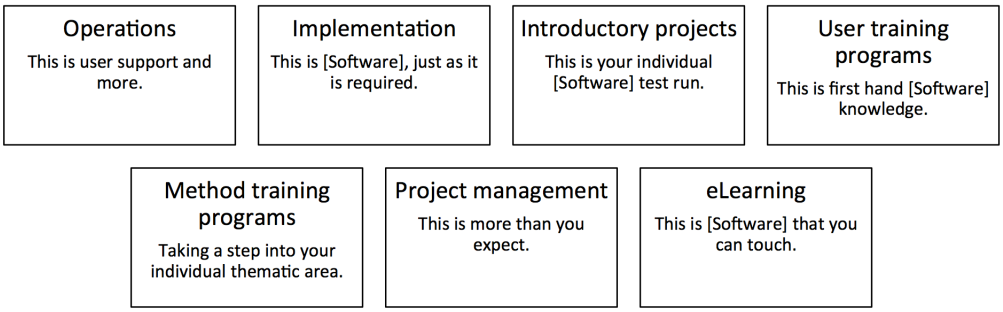

FIGURE 33: OLD COMPANY SERVICE OVERVIEW

From an outside perspective, this non-integrated approach raises the question about what the company exactly does. After some consideration on the sales perspective, i.e. what customer are mostly buying, the following service overview draft was developed:

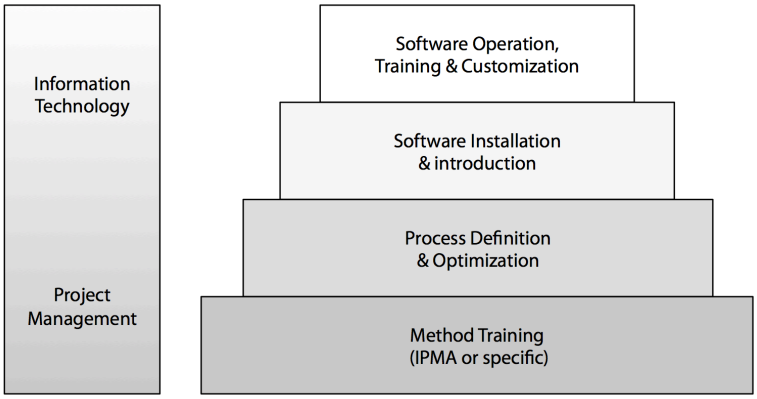

FIGURE 34: NEW COMPANY SERVICE OVERVIEW

The services are now based on a 4-tier system, which is dependent on the maturity model of the customer. Most contracts are made on the first level, since the customer needs to develop and train project managers in their company. This is mostly done on a customer-specific PM methodology but is often based on IPMA where the tools and methods fit the company. A pure IPMA training is unlikely, as other companies have chosen this training as their only area of business and are therefore more qualified to provide the training. On the second level, the company helps in the definition and optimization of PM processes. On a timescale, this usually occurs after the initial training of project managers with a delay of a few weeks or months. Some companies decide to stop at this level and choose their own tools to fulfil their process requirements.

The company provides their IT-solutions on the third level with project and portfolio software. While it is the only software the company uses and recommends, it is optional for all customer to proceed to the third level. A business model where trainings and optimizations are just offered to get customers hooked on a certain software is bound to fail in this business sector, since many competitors offer PM trainings as well. Moreover, the software is in most cases adapted to the processes of the customers, not the other way around. Hence, there is no software specific guidance for any subject area in PM. The last level in the service model is usually not optional if the customer decides to introduce the software on the third level. The software does not work out of the box but needs to be customized. Since the customization is highly dependent on the requirements of the customer, a customization project can span several months or even years. Again, the customer can choose to work with another company that provides matching software customization or training services.

While the model reflects the way the company is doing business it also shows the weaknesses or threats in the company: None of the offered services form a unique selling point. To get both the management training and IT-Solution from one single provider is not a competitive advantage per se. Additionally, there are many competitors on the market that specialize on a single service from this service bundle.

DISCUSSION

The following sections provide an overall investigation on how TL can be applied in the case study. It deals with all three components that have been defined as an integrated TL framework, i.e. knowledge, relational and resource. No component should be considered as a separate concept.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP - KNOWLEDGE COMPONENT

The knowledge component in TL is necessary to identify areas of expertise that can be shared with an audience. The PM field itself is a mediocre choice for expertise since it has not seen any major changes in the last decades. Although this is arguable, the recent changes could only be called a focus shift between different methodologies and tools. With the development of agile PM since the start of the 21th century, there has been a shift to softer, more people than data oriented, PM approaches. This trend might now be adjusted back to hard data with the emergence of big data methodologies. Knowledge in the latter area can turn out to be useful in PM in the next years. Furthermore, complementary PM areas like product lifecycle management are nowadays connected to PM in order to construct integrated management processes and thereby creating interesting expertise areas in themselves.

The generation of knowledge can be achieved through both experts in the field as well as graduate or postgraduate students. While the former can provide a better reach of audience and expertise, i.e. have more impact on TL, it is considerably difficult and expensive to find individuals that match the business of the company and are willing to work as external writers. Therefore, the expertise could be generated within the firm and spread by ghostwriters or provided as input for students. Several online portals exist that focus on the distribution of academic papers that would allow the case study company to pay for the publication right of matching articles, while leaving the intellectual property with the student. This approach would create a win-win situation for both parties: The students would get paid for work they need to create regardless of the funding and the company increases their reputation in both academia and industry with a small investment. A risk in this endeavour is the careful selection of potential students that show good writing skills and fit the idea of the company.

Another area of expertise can be virtual learning that has been investigated in the findings of this thesis. A popular way of learning seem to video tutorials nowadays that show step by step on how to use a PM software. The company has already started this approach but on very specific topics without connections between modules. All approaches in the knowledge component need to be in line with a marketing plan that takes care of the distribution of the generated context.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP - RELATIONAL COMPONENT

The relational component in TL deals with possibilities for both networks and alliances. Project management can be found in more sectors than the case study company currently focuses on. These include logistics, the defence industry and governmental contracts. While logistics can be considered more adverse to changes than other industries, PM has found its way into sectors like third-party logistics during the last years (Langley & Terry, 2013). In the defence industry most outsourceable projects are either in the IT or logistics sector, making the logistics an interesting sector for winning future customers. The same holds valid for governmental contracts, which are easier to attain than military contracts since they do not require security clearances and a matching reputation.

In order to advance in these markets, a partnership with one or more local Swedish partner can be beneficial. A good match would be a company that sells complementary software to PM, e.g. an enterprise logistics or CRM (customer relationship management) solution, in order to share a customer base and work on similar contracts. Furthermore, services that support PM software like cloud hosting is favourable for a partnership. The combined services could be connected or integrated to form service packages. Safeguard would have to be put into place to prevent the members of the partnership or alliance to seize shared clients and contracts.

Professional networks like IPMA (SPF) and PMI offer way the build a reputation in Sweden as an active contributor to conferences and the overall network. They are however built on providers of PM services rather than customers as the findings show and are therefore not the best way to identify and approach new customers. Industry specific conferences, e.g. defence or logistics conferences, could be better suited to generate leads due to the lower the number of companies that offer similar services, i.e. PM and higher quantity of potential customers.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP - RESOURCE COMPONENT

The resource component of TL focuses on the capabilities of the firm in terms of products and services. Since the enterprise software for project and portfolio management forms the foundation of the case study company, the new products and services could be formed around it. A current trend in PM is the emergence of APIs (application programming interface) for enterprise software (Pratt, November 18, 2014) in order to connect different systems with each other. While it is common to connect PM software with ERP systems to transfer data, interfaces to CRM und SCM (service contract management) tools are not common on at present.

Besides the interfaces between systems, the necessity to have reports and statistics on mobile devices is increasing (Pratt, November 18, 2014). This opens the possibilities for the development of two kinds of apps: Those that work out of the box and are able to communicate with less-

customized systems and those that need to be developed or customized in coordination with a customer. Because many enterprise solutions are customized to fit the specific business needs, the second option could be more feasible. It would have to be based on a foundation or framework that enables the fast development of the app to prevent its reinvention with every new customer.

Another area is the development or improvement of industry specific modules for the PM software that are not part of the standard package but are demanded by customers or could yield profits. While this approach is more conservative than the others, it could be framed within TL and provided as a service bundle. For instance, both a PM software module and specific scientific articles could support the importance of knowledge management in a certain industry.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The author argues that the primary expertise in the company should be generated internally and that it should be focused on both industry specific and complementary expertise towards PM rather than PM itself. All the three offered industries, i.e. logistics, defence and governmental are recommended for a marketing strategy. It should however be limited to one area that has to be chosen in advance. Regarding virtual learning, the author proposes an entire PM course about the enterprise software, with different connected parts, that is provided for free to the audience and marketed as the only necessary tutorial to understand the basics of the software. Furthermore, big data, interfaces and cloud computing are recommended areas to improve in terms of complementary expertise and to address in the video tutorial.

For an internal expansion, a partnership with one or more local Swedish companies is highly recommended. The partner company would for instance open up the Swedish market while getting an introduction in the German market in return. Necessary safeguards would need to be chosen very carefully. In terms of networks, the author considers professional PM networks like IPMA and PMI as a good way the build a reputation in a country but recommends the industry networks and conferences as more valuable if the network question is an “either-or” for the company. Finally, the publications of scientific articles on the company website can be prerequisites for a TL approach and is common practice for all three major management consultancies (Bain, 2015; BCG, 2015; McKinsey, 2015).

POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

Since TL is an integrated approach, the components need to be combined to develop usable scenarios for the company. For the scenarios, the four-quadrant model by (Buchanan & Boddy, 1992) is employed, with additional categorizations that are taken from Gassmann and Schweitzer (2013) who propose that uncertain conditions should rather be addresses by a number of scenarios that trying to fit them all into one model. Every proposed scenario can lead to success

and is dependent on the overall strategy of the firm. It is important to mention that all scenarios are based on both empirical observations and the elaboration of the author. Four different scenarios are provided as options for the consultancy to consider a TL approach.

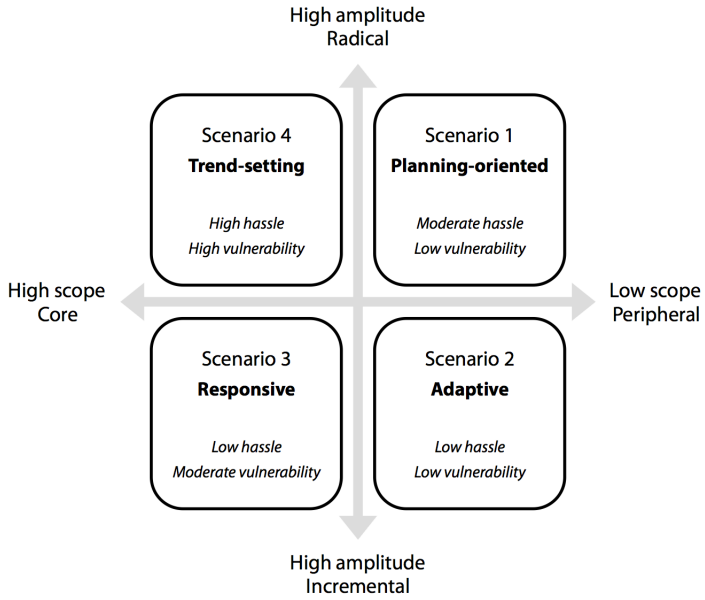

FIGURE 35: POSSIBLE SCENARIOS. ADAPTED FROM (BUCHANAN & BODDY, 1992, P. 41)

Scenario 1: Planning-oriented

This scenario considers a slow and steady growth of the company as most likely. The company is improved through a planned participation in the PM networks and the focus on social media websites. This implies, that the company creates profiles on all commonly used business websites and shares information of others in regards to PM and matching industries. Additionally, small software that surrounds the main PM solution, e.g. a reporting app, should be developed gradually through contracts with customers. The same applies to virtual learning, which can be considered in the form of interactive video tutorials. As a result, the effort or hassle for this scenario is moderate, while the vulnerability or risk for the company is low.

Scenario 2: Adaptive

Similar to the first scenario, the adaptive scenario considers possibilities as soon as they occur in regular business. This could be either a partnership or participation in networks, as long as there is a direct operational need in the company. This scenario focuses very little on the future and is therefore not that interested in the generation of knowledge that cannot be applied in the day-to-day operations. The advantages of the scenario are a low hassle and low vulnerability for the company. Consequently, this scenario cannot be called TL, even though it is a feasible option for the company and can lead to success.

Scenario 3: Responsive

A responsive scenario is more risk taking and yields higher opportunities. The backbone of the scenario is formed on the collaboration with other tool provider in the CRM, SCM or similar area and on developing APIs and interfaces between the solutions. It can also be focused on industry specific modules that are currently missing in PM software or forming an alliance with a company that offers complementary services. Since following trends is crucial in this scenario, topics like big data might be a good choice for developing internal expertise within the company. The vulnerability of this scenario is therefore considerably higher than the planning or adaptive scenario, as many factors depend on relational rents in formed alliances. It has arguably a lower hassle than the planning-oriented scenario, since it relies on the acquisition of knowledge through partners rather than the creation of new knowledge.

Scenario 3: Trend-setting

Trend-setting comes the closest to an innovative TL approach and consequently carries the highest vulnerability and opportunities for the company. The scenario aims at areas that are unusual for the company and lead it outside its comfort zone. A foundation is build by difficult customers or alliances in the logistics or defence industry. Governmental contracts in both areas are desirable as they can yield a higher volume of orders. Strong partnership will be necessary to achieve contracts in the international market. This path is supported by papers from expert observers or mentors that act as ghostwriters. These papers would published on the company website and aimed at the needs of the customers in logistics or defence.

The scenarios show that the case study company is able to improve in all three perspectives of TL. The author argues that TL works excellent in the consulting sector, since it has a very strong focus on the generation of knowledge and can be addressed by service packages that are provided to customers. Some parts of the package can be offered for free but without any constraints that force the potential client to be bound to the company.

CONCLUSION

In order to conclude the thesis, it is beneficial to look back at the research objectives as well as research questions. The research objectives are therefore listed here again together with an explanation on how and where they were addressed in the thesis.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1 Understand the concept of thought leadership from a company perspective

The concept of TL was addressed in the literature review, which looked through many different interpretation of TL from both an individual as well as company perspective. The company perspective was then mostly addressed in the research framework chapter.

2 Develop a thought leadership framework to be adopted by the IT consultancy

The section on the TL framework defined the characteristics and components of TL and how they can be applied in a company perspective. The actual application was conducted in the discussion of the thesis and supported by company interviews and meetings. Possible implications of TL were addressed through company recommendations and four different scenarios.

2i Explore the significance of PM software knowledge and documentation

The documentation and knowledge of PM software was analysed through an anonymous online survey, which showed that many project manager preferred video tutorials of PM software for the explanation of customized or special software modules. The results of this analysis were used during the application of the TL framework to the consultancy context.

2ii Determine the influence and spread of professional PM networks in Sweden

The analysis of two professional PM networks in Sweden revealed that the major participating companies are consultancies or IT companies. The benefit of being part of a network is therefore foremost the discovery of feasible business partners rather than customers. The results of this analysis were employed in the discussion chapter.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

From the theoretical point of view, several areas can be interesting for future research: One area that has been identified as compelling during this research is the relationship between TL and innovation. While the literature review draws a distinct line between TL and entrepreneurship, the relation with innovation seems to be more entangled. A future study could investigate TL in larger corporations that have departments for innovation or a strong focus on new product development.

Additionally, the relationship between TL and the ISA has been defined as incompatible in this thesis. Further research could challenge this declaration and show that an integration of both concepts is possible. This also applies to any other concept that can be used to further expand or refine the integrated TL framework. The research should then include an empirical elaboration of the TL framework, to analyse its completeness and whether or not it can be used in practice.

While this thesis defines TL through the collection of sources that mention the term, further research could take into account sources that do not mention the exact term but discuss a similar idea or concept. The author strongly believes that TL is a rebranding and combination of concepts that have been around for a long time, rather than an evolution of business strategy. It should therefore be possible to find other sources that revolve around free expertise sharing.

In terms of professional networks, it would be valuable to look at construction and production companies in Sweden to figure out why their contribution to the mentioned PM networks is so low. This finding is surprising to the author, due to countless construction companies in Sweden that all employ project managers. A feasible research method for this research would be unstructured interviews of department managers in construction companies.

Further research could be conducted for professional PM networks outside of Europe or the USA to investigate the purpose of the mentioned PM networks in a particular country and whether or not other PM networks exist. Interviews with IPMA or PMI partners could also reveal what the benefits of a network sponsorship are besides the obvious reputation that is attained by being mentioned on websites and at PM events of the network.

The research of software documentation could be repeated with a larger sample size of at least a 100 participants and could focus on enterprise PM software rather than PM software like MS Project, which is also used and sold in the consumer market. To extend this research, knowledge transfer in regards to different mediums could be investigated. It can be beneficial for companies to see how their best practices and guidelines in regards to software can be best internalized.

Finally, the exact relationship between TL and competitive advantage in this thesis has only been dealt with from theoretical point of view rather than through empirical research. The reason lies in the focus of the thesis, which concentrates on future possibilities rather than looking back on a company that has tried to implement a TL framework. It would be compelling to evaluate a TL approach of a large enterprise that has an abundance of resources.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - KNOWLEDGE

TABLE 2: ONLINE SURVEY ON PM SOFTWARE DOCUMENTATION

Company Size	**Industry**
• < 10 Employees • < 50 Employees • < 250 Employees • < 1000 Employees • >= 1000 Employees	• Automotive • Construction • Defence • Energy • Health Care • Manufacturing • Technology • Transportation • Other
PM Software	**How often do you work with your PM software?**
• Compuware • Instantis • MS Project • Planisware • Planview • PowerSteering • Primavera • Projectplace • Sciforma • Other	• Several times a day • Once a day • Every other day • Every other week • Other:
Which parts of your PM software are difficult to understand or use?	**How important are tutorials for your PM software for you?**
• Basic functionalities (Day-to-day usage) • Special functionalities (Used once in a while) • New features (After software update etc.) • Customized modules (Company specific) • None • Other	• Very Important • Moderately Important • Unimportant

What is your preferred medium of for software tutorials?	What is your preferred language for software tutorials?
• White papers • Video tutorials • Q&A website • Case studies • Social media • Mobile app • Other:	• English • Native (Company location) • Both

APPENDIX B - RELATIONAL

TABLE 3: VARIABLE DEFINITIONS OF THE ANALYSIS

Variable	Description	Values
COMNAME	The name of the company.	String
FOUNDED	The founding year of the company.	Number
COMAGE	A categorization of the FOUNDED variable.	• <15 Years • <25 Years • <50 Years • <100 Years • >=100” Years
INDUSTRY	A categorization of industries.	• Consulting • Information Technology • Industrial / Production • Training • Other
COMTYPE	The type of the company.	• Aktiebolag • Other
COMSWED	Has the company been founded in Sweden?	• Yes • No
LOCATION	The location of the Headquarter.	• Stockholm • Göteborg • Malmö • Other
CLIENTBAS	The nationality of the clients.	• Swedish • International

TURNOVER	The turnover of the company in 2013.	Number
TURCAT	A categorization of the TURNOVER variable.	Table 4
EMPLOYEE	The employee count of the company in 2013.	Number
EMPCAT	A categorization of the EMPLOYEE variable.	Table 5
COMCAT	A connection for TURNCAT and EMPCAT.	Lower value from TURNCAT or EMPCAT applies.
IPMAINV	The involvement of the company with IPMA.	Table 6
PMIINV	The involvement of the company with PMI.	Table 6

TABLE 4: BUSINESS SIZE DEFINITION – TURNOVER (OWN ELABORATION)

Business Size	***Turnover***
Micro	*< 20 million SEK*
Small	*< 80 million SEK*
Medium	*< 400 million SEK*
Large	*< 2000 million SEK*
Enterprise	*>= 2000 million SEK*

TABLE 5: BUSINESS SIZE DEFINITION – EMPLOYEES (BWALYA, MNJAMA, & SEBINA, 2014, P. 215)

	Australia	United States	EU
Minute/Micro	1–2	1–6	<10
Small	<15	<250	<50
Medium	<200	<500	<250
Large	<500	<1000	<1000
Enterprise	>500	>1000	>1000

TABLE 6: PROJECT MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION INVOLVEMENT (OWN ELABORATION)

Involvement	Description
None	No visible involvement with the network
User	At least one person in the company is certified in the network **or** The company has been an exhibitor at an event of the network **or** The company is funding advertising in the network
Sponsor	The company has funded an event of the network at least once
Member	The company itself is an official member of the network
Partner	The company is an official partner of the network

TABLE 7: COMPANY SIZE DISTRIBUTION IN SWEDEN (SCB, 2014)

Company Size	Number of Companies	Percentage
1-4 employees	219,515	71,8
5-9 employees	42,786	14
10-19 employees	22,844	7,5
20-49 employees	13,079	4,3
50-99 employees	3,935	1,3
100-199 employees	1,788	0,6
200-499 employees	1,012	0,3
500+ employees	920	0,3

TABLE 8: FIVE LARGEST CITIES IN SWEDEN BY POPULATION SIZE (SCB, 2010)

City	Population	Percentage*
Stockholm	1,372,565	14,7
Gothenburg	549,839	5,9
Malmö	280,415	3
Uppsala	140,454	1,5
Västerås	110,877	1,2

*) In comparison to the global population size of 9,348,000 as of 2010

APPENDIX C - RESOURCE

TABLE 9: INTERVIEW REPOSITORY

Date	Type	Topics	Participants	Duration
2015-01-02	Skype interview	Brainstorming Thesis considerations	CEO	2 h
2015-01-06	Onsite meeting	Competitive advantage Outlook for 2015	IT Depart.	4 h
2015-02-04	Skype call	Internationalization PM Networks	CEO	0,5 h
2015-02-14	Skype meeting	Knowledge management Thought leadership	IT Depart.	1 h
2015-03-29	Skype call	First thesis results Feedback from CEO	CEO	0,5 h
2015-04-08	Skype call	Confidentiality Adaptations	CEO	0,5 h

TABLE 10: SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE COMPANY

Strengths	Weaknesses
• On-site development and customer support • Existing international customers and partners • Integrated services (PM, training, software)	• Similar products / services as competition • No unique selling proposition • Limited resources (small firm) • Oversaturated German market • Inefficient internal communication
Opportunities	**Threats**
• International expansion: USA, UAE, Scandinavia • Development of apps for complex business software • Offering of 24/7 remote support with partners	• 62% of the revenue in 2014 from one customer • Price wars with competition in declining economy • Waste of effort in call for bids

TABLE 11: COMPANY PRIORITIES 2015

Reporting app	International	Marketing
• Develop software in collaboration with customer • Finish first prototype version in first quart of 2015 • Hold presentation at US conference in April	• Take offer for operations contract in Saudi Arabia • Prepare a subsidiary in a foreign market by 2016 • Work with USA company on a framework contract	• Improve external image through social media • Provide news and scientific articles on company website • Optimize advertising with regards to offered services

TABLE 12: AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT IN THE COMPANY

Website	Sales process
• Continuous updates in terms of articles and news • Advertising based on services and products • International focus: More than two languages • Graphical display of subsidiaries and customers locations	• New criteria: Location, size, language, sector of companies • Focus on companies that are new or interesting • Focus on industries that do not use the software at the moment • Focus on a few companies that match the to be defined criteria • Develop a sales process that identifies these companies
Social Networks	**Services & products**
• Up-to-date profiles in all relevant social networks • Sharing of industry related articles	• Description of how the service complement each other