

Development of International Strategies and Processes from an External Consultancy Perspective

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Abstract



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<p>The main goal of this thesis is to provide useful information regarding internationalization and simultaneously provide evidence on the accelerating effect of enlisting an external consultancy services help. In many fields there is a high potential to expand to foreign markets from Finland and the objective is to find what these activities are. Defining successful factors and discussion among effective methods were used to provide deeper insight on the topic.</p> <p>The theoretical background includes strategy, process development, consultancy and internationalization. This focuses mostly on strategy process development and consultancy to provide a working knowledge of options and opportunities. In the consultancy topic there is specified information on management consultancy, consultancy as a service and negotiation.</p> <p>The empirical research was conducted using qualitative research methods in the form of content analysis of seven case studies. Qualitative research methods were chosen as an alternative to traditional interviewing method providing a review on successful and effective practices leading to internationalization. Each case was broken down into frameworks of cases, practices and analyzed using interpretation groups.</p> <p>Results were provided utilizing analysis of cases and theoretical background uncovering that strategy, process development, innovative solutions and networking were key aspects to focus on as a company trying to internationalize its offerings. These are attributes companies can benefit from by enlisting a consultant to help develop companies' direction.</p> <p>In conclusion the study introduces more effective practices and effective methods that companies should focus on when internationalizing. Recommendations for future research and reflecting on the process can be found after conclusions of research. Not only did the companies benefit from expertise provided by consultants but they were able to develop competencies and preparation for growth.</p>	
Keywords Strategy, Process Development, Consultancy, Management and Networking	

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1 Introduction

It is interesting how consultants manage to help companies achieve their goals profitably in this day and age of highly educated CEOs, easily accessible information and lean management. When a company is able to operate successfully in international markets, strategy and strong processes are very important. This thesis will cover how consultants develop strong and successful strategies and processes for companies entering or operating in international markets. In Finland consultants that provide these services have extensive knowledge of business but how does one apply this knowledge to a company with the goal of globalizing their business and become more lucrative? Internationalization, or on a larger scale globalization, is often a direction companies take to build profitability. By scaling up operations to offer services or products outside of the home countries markets, profits and growth can be accelerated.

This thesis is a qualitative research that will start by covering theoretical background, (strategy, process development, consultancy, and internationalization), research methods then empirical research, (content analysis on company success stories), finally ending in results and conclusion. I believe by being able to establish critical points of advantage in using external consultancy services while internationalizing a business, answers can be found to the research problem of;

What are the key elements external consultancy services provide that influence growth effectively.

I chose this topic out of personal interest without an outside contractor to have more objectivity towards the topic. If the research problem can be clearly defined, co-operation between consultants and companies could be affected by analysis and findings provided at the end of this thesis, resulting in positive future possibilities for myself and others. To prove this research problem, companies that have been successful in internationalizing their business through consultancy services of Export Finland, will be exhausted till the point of saturation where findings on common and innovative practices occurs in addition to extensive research on the mentioned topics.

Valuable skills such as deep analytical thinking, project planning and unique insight, I have developed throughout my studies in Porvoo Haaga-Helia and Utrecht University of applied Sciences. These skills will assist in creating a compelling research not to be ignored. If one thing is certain, it is that these skills will help employment possibilities to desirable positions in the consultancy, business operations and business development field.

Each topic has significant impact on how one views business and the sources of this research will be a collaboration of book, video and website sources from recognized theorists, companies and industry professionals to prove reliability and validity of this thesis. Some of the most frequently used references were Export Finland's online success stories, Business in action book, and The Strategy Process book, because they provide clear and diverse information from various fields which is important when discussing such complex topics as consultancy, strategy and process development. Attachments found at the end of this thesis are structures and frameworks for empirical research and the timetable of thesis completion after changed empirical research method because they provide core information about the process of doing this extensive research.

2 Theoretical Background of Strategy and Process Development

Uncertainty is on the rise in today's business environment due to disruptive technology and management practice like lean management. This being said lean-thinking and fade-fast practices are becoming more and more common. To understand how consultants create value for companies, particularly regarding strategy and process development, the core theoretical background which builds on each previous chapter will give a thorough understanding of what is important to know and do to achieve an applicable knowledge base of the different topics. To be able to enter new markets in a global context, it is imperative to comprehend what is needed to be successful in each area of your business. Therefor the order of theoretical exploration is strategy, process development, consultancy after which internationalization is briefly summarized by discussing SME's, small and medium sized enterprises reflecting on difference to MNE's, multinational enterprises. The reason for this particular order is that a basic understanding of strategy is needed in all the topics, process development follows decided strategy and consultancy is the umbrella that brings all the above to a possible-to-purchase service. Internationalization will only be briefly summarized as it appears throughout the theoretical background. The angle of discussing SME's and MNE's was chosen to emphasize similarities and differences. This can be deemed logical like building a house from ground up.

The theoretical background presented in this chapter has been comprised of sources from business influencers with timeless approaches to common business issues and further developed insights on topics that relate to all types of companies. Other theory used to bring depth and elevate relevancy with more up to date knowledge has been used as well from internet sources and by books about business related topics published after 1999.

2.1 Strategy

"The most basic idea of strategy is application of strength against weakness. Or, if you prefer, strength applied to the most promising opportunity" (Rumelt 2011, 9). Strategy is a vague concept that has to do with intent, planning and action. To form a complex strategy so your competitors don't know your next move may feel like a good plan but it can mislead your customers away from you. Strategy integrates companies major goals, policies and action sequences with its pattern's or plan's into a cohesive whole (Minzberg, Quinn & Ghoshal 1999, 5).

2.1.1 Fundamental strategic aspects

Strategy is about making clear choices such as deciding what is to do and what not to do which creates clarity. Strategy is the ultimate job of leadership which is about choosing, communicating and enforcing strategy. (UNC-Chapel Hill 2013.) When a strategy is well formulated and worthy of implementation, it will be much easier to set policies and allocate resources. To formulate a strategy, company must set milestones and break them down into goals which will be used to assign tasks or actions. This seems to be a common denominator for every successful strategy. Goals or objectives are check-points to keep company on track and moving towards achieving milestones as well as help with deciding what needs to be achieved and when. This however does not constrict company to certain ways to achieve goals which is what policies aim to do. Policies express limits for rules or guidelines within which action occurs or should occur (Minzberg etc. 1999, 5).

The fore mentioned is basic knowledge to keep in mind while planning and formulating a strategy but breaking it into a more specific path, Michael Porters value chain provides insight that companies use to this day. Michael Porter is a world renowned business guru and also a University Professor at Harvard Business School. His books are based on sophisticated research making him a sought after advisor and speaker. This topic will be further examined in process development. "The value chain is a helpful way to consider all the elements and processes that add value as input materials are transformed into the final products made available to the ultimate customer" (Bovee & Thill 2017, 248). This of course is for a product based business. Service based business will be introduced under the consultancy topic.

Another product based strategic analysis has to do with supply chain, which is much like the value chain. The supply chain can vary in each company much more than the value chain because of various influencers. It will also be further explained in process development. Planning a strategy targeting each part of the supply chain in depth will help eliminating or at least minimizing risk. As earlier mentioned, by breaking down milestones into goals and actions, strategizing to do so using the supply chain, each operation and responsible department/organization can be clearly defined to strategy.

Some other strategic tools worth recognition are SWOT-analysis, 5 forces and marketing mix. However it is important to keep in mind these tools being introduced are just that, not the complete strategy itself. As an example the marketing department may have a marketing mix based strategy but it is not the company's strategy just a tool to reach the ultimate goal of the company as planned in the core strategy. SWOT-analysis can be applied to all

aspects of analysis as it provides information on strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats (Bovee & Thill 2017, 197).

Marketing mix applies its 4P's, which later has been developed to 7P's, to help the company in making strategic decisions that are required for the organization to run smoothly. The P's stand for product, place, price, promotion and additional P's are people, physical environment and process. An alternative point-of view for the 4P's are the 4C's which are customer value, cost, convenience and communication. (Marketingmix 2013.) Marketing mix example of taking a further look at let's say physical environment, recognizes what type of market you are dealing with which is a crucial point to prepare for. Different types of markets are for instance mass market, fragmented market, segmented market, thin market, geographic market, emerging market, established market, eroding market, and erupting market (Minzberg etc. 1999, 74-75).

2.1.2 Strategic management

The ultimate goal of these tools is to supply decision makers with information to form strategic decisions. Information behind strategic decisions also help minimizing risk and have the ability to eliminate rash decisions.

"Strategic decisions are those that determine the overall direction of an enterprise and its ultimate viability in light of the predictable, the unpredictable and the unknowable changes that may occur in its most important surrounding environments. They intimately shape the true goals of the enterprise." (Minzberg etc. 1999, 5.)

Decisions form a stream of planned actions from strategic management to the company/organization. Strategic management indicates the company's purpose and its plans and actions to achieve that purpose (Lynch 2012, 7). Another way to summarize the important task of strategic management is that it is finding market opportunities, experimenting and developing competitive advantage over time. (Lynch 2012, 8). Ultimately a strategy company operates under must achieve a fit between its internal capability (strengths and weakness) and the external situation (opportunities and threats) (Minzberg etc. 1999, 48). If strategic management is such a prominent part of business, one could argue that strategic analysis, strategy development and implementation would be the three main tasks management has to do and marshal. An example of this in an organization is well put from a general manager's point-of-view. "The field of strategic management deals with the major intended and emergent initiatives taken by general managers on behalf of owners, involving utilization of resources, to enhance the performance of firms in their external environments" (Lynch 2012, 8).

"Porter's framework of industry and competitive analysis argues that five basic forces define the structure and attractiveness of an industry – the bargaining power of existing suppliers and buyers, the threat of substitutes and new entrants, and the intensity of competitive rivalry (Minzberg etc. 1999, 50).

Five forces are a globally applicable and outstanding framework to go deeper into weighing factors that have effect on business such as how bargaining power of existing buyers relates to opportunity or how the attractiveness of the industry will reflect on a chosen market development strategy. Nothing is guaranteed when you have decided on penetration strategy but could the threat of your chosen strategy disrupt the market and create desired advantage would be valuable intelligence gained from this example.

A somewhat new and disruptive approach to competitive strategy is Blue ocean strategy. Why compete in a market when you can create a new one. Blue ocean strategies are all about creating new markets where all types of companies in all types of industries through systematic patterns co-exist, which is distinguished by market-creating moves instead of market-competing strategies. It's about value innovation so that when value is created costs are driven down. Tools used to accomplish this are strategy canvas, value innovation, four action frameworks, six paths and three tiers of noncustomers. Distinctive attributes of blue ocean strategy as a theory are captured in eight key points. The authors of Blue Ocean Strategy W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne address these and other questions in the following way: (Blueoceanstrategy 2016.)

- "It's grounded in data
- It pursues differentiation and low cost
- It creates uncontested market space
- It empowers you through tools and frameworks
- It provides a step-by-step process
- It maximizes opportunity while minimizing risk
- It builds execution into strategy
- It shows you how to create a win-win" (Blueoceanstrategy 2016.)

Corporate strategy can differ from SME strategy, but the similarities such as patterns, processes and objectives are still visible in their activities and products/services. However the structure is often different and based on company size flexibility and agile positioning may prove more challenging. This issue is very prominent nowadays as large corporations aim to adapt techniques to create agility and flexibility through entrepreneurial departments within the corporation which act under their own leadership and management structure as well as incorporating lean management. Having less factors influencing decisions, a fade-fast test-develop approach, can be applied.

Strategic positions can be achieved through segmentation, commodities, customization and niche recognition. The position of company or corporation can be planned for and will have effect on implementation. Some companies use a balanced scorecard system to evaluate the effectiveness of strategy implementation. (Lynch 2012.)

“Balanced scorecard uses strategic and financial measures to access the outcome of a chosen strategy. It acknowledges the different expectations of the various stakeholders and attempts to use a ‘scorecard’ based on four prime areas of business activity to measure the results of the selected strategy” (Lynch 2012, 822.)

2.1.3 Strategy Implementation

Effective implementation is a continuous process that requires strategic decisions, organizing effective organization/company structure, organizing the work force, and managing the process of implementation. These all are management related activities that apply to companies no matter the size. Especially regarding internationalization efforts it is important to have a functioning structure and strategy for implementation to be possible. (Bovee & Thill 2017.)

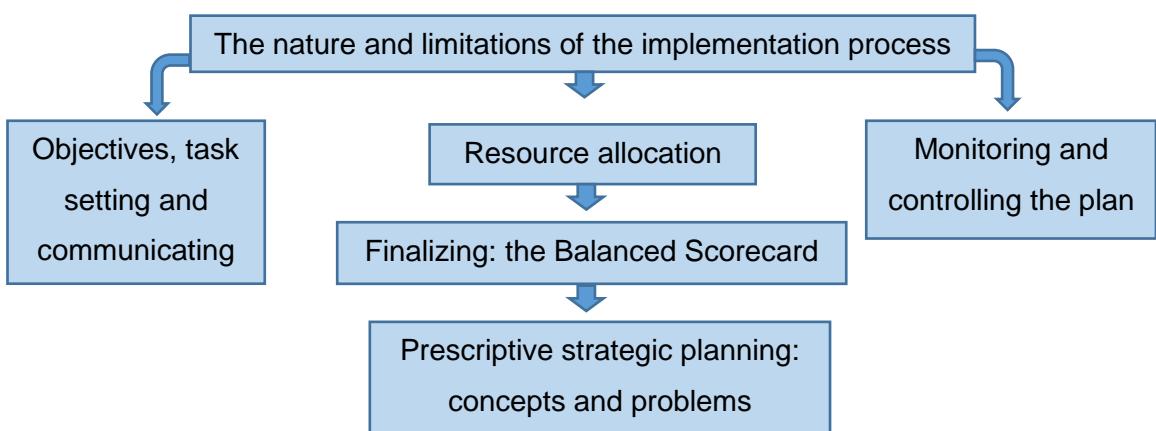


Figure 1. Implementation process (Lynch 2012, 494).

The elements of the implementation process is visualized in Figure 1. The takeaway of key activities is identification of general strategic objectives, formulation of specific plans, resource allocation and budgeting, monitoring and control procedures. Identification of general strategic objectives is specifying strategy initiative's general expected results, formulation of specific plans is turning general objectives into specific assignments and deadlines, resource allocation and budgeting consists of indicating how financing the plans will pan out, and monitoring as well as controlling procedures ensure that the objectives are met by the agreed resources as well as budgets. (Lynch 2012, 494-497.)

Implementing strategy is difficult but it all starts with a strong core business strategy. The problem is how to apply the core strategy to desired countries. This problem can be combated with outsourcing development to consultant who has experience and/or connections in desired new market. The goal is to find a strategy that works in new market and apply it with minor changes to the next country and so forth. This is a generic international implementation strategy that can be found in Figure 2.

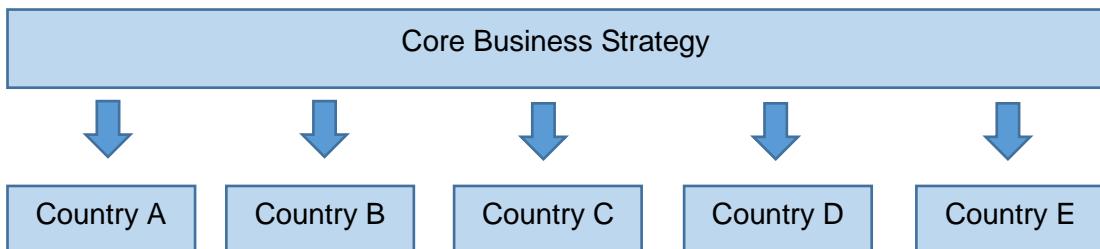


Figure 2. Application of generic internationalization strategy

To sum up the strategy portion is that good strategy has a clear business model, it is unexpected, well-formed and analyzed. “Bad strategy is not simply the absence of good strategy. It grows out of specific misconceptions and leadership dysfunctions.” (Rumelt 2011, 32.) Something to understand is that these misconceptions and dysfunctions are difficult to recognize but they are not invisible. Having bad objectives and mistaking goals for strategy for instance are correctable through correctional actions that can be discovered through further analysis. Experience in this area can combat problematic areas and thus once again turning company’s attention to consultants who provide required expertise.

2.2 Process development

A stream of actions by definition is a process. When these actions are agreed upon, regulated and structured, it is called standardization or a standardized process helping the company monitor operations and ensure the quality is the same of services or products. Business processes are streams of actions aiming to produce desired outcomes from financials to operations. Standardization is predetermines and co-ordinates what people do based on a framework of agreements to ensure that all processes that are a part of the creation of a good or service are done according to guidelines ensuring quality (Minzberg etc. 1999, 336).

Companies’ strategy relates directly to process and therefore for process development understanding. The manor of operations is key for planning and standardization of each action that is being carried out within processes. Process development is always concerned

with how processes risks are minimized, efficiency elevated and how they are tied to strategy. This brings us to the term end-to-end business.

"End to end is a term used in many business arenas referring to the beginning and end points of a method or service, and end-to-end theory embraces the philosophy that eliminating as many middle layers or steps as possible will optimize performance and efficiency in any process" (Investopedia 2016a).

In the planning stage companies break down operations to internal and external. Internal being everything that happens 'in-house' or on company grounds and external everything happening outside the company. Analyzing what creates value is as important as analyzing what is unnecessary. Internal processes such as product development can be monitored with value chain's, which purpose is to determine businesses interrelated operating activities of converting raw materials into finished products while trying to find ways to add value on each part of the process at the lowest possible cost (Bovee & Thill 2017, 248-249.)

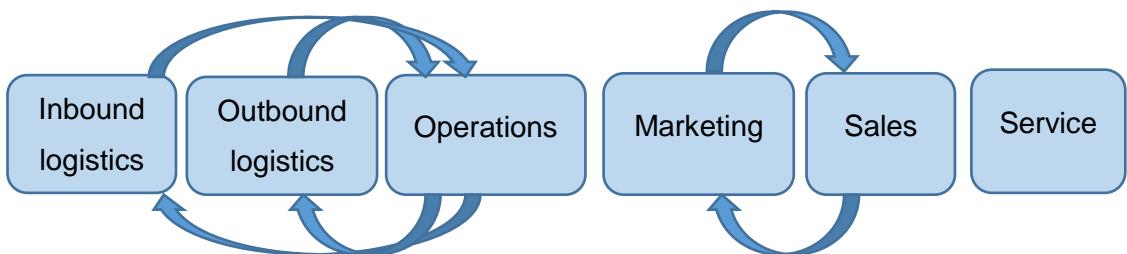


Figure 3. Interrelated business departments (Investopedia 2016b).

Connecting lines between each block, (Figure 3.), are there to provide a simplified picture of which areas are in direct contact during various processes. For instance inbound logistics brings raw material to operations where product is assembled or finalized after which it is sent to the customers. Marketing and sales work in co-operation to achieve interaction and sale to customers, and service is aftersales related ex. warranty and installation. External processes from a product based business for instance applying for CE marking to declare product is up to EU requirements is a process that involves steps of fulfillment outside the company. Both internal and external processes regarding service will be further introduced in the consultancy section.

To analyze internal and external process there are a lot of factors and all weigh their own risk. Strategy builds the outlines for process and process development refines each step of process to a lean operating method but what risks arise along the way can also be

planned for by analyzing the factors which create risks. Negative exposure can be reduced by identification of the internal and external risks and creating solutions for them. Internal risks are created by human factors, technological factors and physical factors while external risks cannot be controlled by one company as they arise from economic events that are difficult to forecast like natural factors such as climate based disasters, and political factors for example changes in political environment. (Investopedia 2016c.)

The business model of the company must set clear areas which all have set processes for a well-functioning company. SCM, supply chain management, is the business' active streamlining of supply-side activities. Supply chains manage risks and relationships, promote sustainability, and monitors processes based on each company's specific needs. (Bovee & Thill 2017, 252-253.) Regardless of chosen business model, different processes in companies can be categorized. Procurement processes, production processes and fulfillment processes are the main topic processes fall under. Procurement processes involve every step taken to acquire necessary tangibles and intangibles for production, production processes are every step taken to finalize provided service or product and fulfillment processes are finally every step taken in selling and delivering products or services to customers. Other processes within the company are lifecycle data management process, material planning process, inventory and warehouse management process, asset management processes, human capital management processes and project management processes. Each of these processes may include even large quantities of sub-processes. (Magal & Word 2012, 5-7.)

With digitalization revolutionizing business, companies have found great use of ERP-systems. ERP stands for enterprise resource planning and ES, enterprise systems, application has been a game changer to say the least. Instead of hauling around papers around the company information can be accessed wherever whenever, also making internationalization related information transfer streamlined, accessible and faster.

"These applications consist of three components, or layers: (1) how you interact with the application (using menus, typing, and selecting): (2) what the application allows you to do (create formulas or charts, compose an essay): (3) where the application stores your work (on your hard drive or flash drive)." (Magal & Word 2012, 24.)

Based on the business model, company may also opt to outsource different operations and thus some processes as well. For instance if using a business model like business model canvas to plan allocation and relations, a company can easily organize what operations will stay in house what will be outsourced visible in Figure 4.

Key Partners	Key activities	Value Proposition	Customer Relationships	Customer Segment
			Channels	
Cost Structure		Revenue Streams		

Figure 4. Business canvas model (Osterwalder 2012).

A key partner may be an outsourced process such as transportation or for example customer service. Outsourcing processes helps minimize risk and allows company to focus resources and training to other matters.

When strategy and business plan are aligned, allocating resources and implementing processes becomes easier. Systematic thinking requires managers to understand processes and elements to be able to convert inputs into desired outputs. When implementing well analyzed processes, systematic thinking will give insight to managers on how sub-processes within processes co-operate to reach goals and later milestones. Managing these process have also been made easier to access due to technological advancement in ERP systems especially regarding international processes. (Bovee & Thill 2017, 245.)

Understanding process relativity to business operations, how environment can affect them, and how to implement standardized processes, lead to a desired outcome. Lean-thinking and digitalization are drivers in today's business and cannot be overlooked in creating and running an efficient business. Implementing chosen strategies require well thought out processes. Once this is acknowledged by company employees, operations regarding all matters will run efficiently.

2.3 Consultancy

Consultancy covers a vast area of services and expertise. To simplify what consultants do, imagine you have built a successful company that has grown to the point that you are considering going abroad but have no idea where to start, where to get connections and information you need. Consultants provide managers with tools to get started, who to contact and possibly how to contact them with a package of necessary information to understand the new market. Consultancy and management work towards developing opportunities, and to achieve successful consultancy relationships, one must understand management and implementation. This requires an understanding in managing change and innovation as well as dealing with resistance.

The topic of consultancy entails management consultancy theoretical background, consultancy as a service theoretical background and finally negotiation. This order aims to clarify why consultants are needed, how their services work and the crucial skill of negotiation as it is a key element for being successful. Theory discussed in this topic is chosen from reliable and valid sources of leading influencers as well as globally accepted theories.

2.3.1 Management consultancy

To cope with the ever changing digitalized world, management may face obstacles at a faster pace than it has ever had to before and therefore the need for consultants still exists, regardless of the access of knowledge available, especially now that companies are born globally or they are simply looking to expand into new markets. Sometimes company resources are just not enough especially if company is an SME. What can management consultancy offer is a question that many leaders ponder when seeking solutions to new opportunities or threats. Management consultants have a very diverse skill set that helps them to identify analyze and provide solutions. Developing methodology for process and restructuring unclear strategy are common services companies hire consultants for.

Consultants can be categorized into two types: internal consultants, who work internally within the company, and external consultants, hired for professional service. Whether internal or external, consultants must bring a fresh set of eyes to assess a company's processes. The role of a consultant is based on their expertise. External consultants apply their experience working in different industries and knowledge of competitors. Internal consultants apply their in-depth understanding of the company's industry and the history of the company allowing them to skip the initial processes such as getting to know the company and its resources, fast-forwarding them to bring solutions to the table. (Dumon 2016.)

An innovative approach which managers and consultants use to add value and lead change in an organization or company is John Kotter's eight steps. These eight steps offer a solution on how to create change, and cope with resistance that may be damaging to change efforts, for example a company's internationalization goal.

“1. Create a Sense of Urgency

- Craft and use a significant opportunity as a means for exciting people to sign up to change their organization.

2. Build a Guiding Coalition

- Assemble a group with the power and energy to lead and support a collaborative change effort.

3. Form a Strategic Vision and Initiatives

- Shape a vision to help steer the change effort and develop strategic initiatives to achieve that vision.

4. Enlist a Volunteer Army

- Raise a large force of people who are ready, willing and urgent to drive change.

5. Enable Action by Removing Barriers

- Remove obstacles to change, change systems or structures that pose threats to the achievement of the vision.

6. Generate Short-Term Wins

- Consistently produce, track, evaluate and celebrate volumes of small and large accomplishments – and correlate them to results

7. Sustain Acceleration

- Use increasing credibility to change systems, structures and policies that don't align with the vision; hire, promote and develop employees who can implement the vision; reinvigorate the process with new projects, themes and volunteers.

8. Institute Change

- Articulate the connections between the new behaviors and organizational success, and develop the means to ensure leadership development and succession.” (Kotter 2016.)

These eight steps give a framework on how to instigate change, which internationalization is, however there will most likely be resistance which can be prepared for. Dealing with resistance is part of great leadership but knowing how to prepare for the unknown is tricky. Empowering others and planning short-term wins will have sway on many employees effected, but if someone is not on board with the vision you have to find out why they disagree, do they have feasible ideas to implement instead, can disagreeing opinions be converted, is it important for person in question to be a part of the new vision or could they be

relocated into another task/division. The value of knowledge accumulated from these eight steps can have a tremendous impact on a company from top executives to ground level employees which is why it is a very practical tool for consultants and managers.

Management consultants who internationalize SME's, service SME's particularly, have to take into consideration firm-specific influences such as characteristics of firm and service output characteristics as well as external environment to detect what are the features that drive internationalization (Fai & Morgan 2006, 106). SME internationalization and development does not have decades of research with lots of proven points yet, but some useful practices that consultants provide, have proven successful for SME's and MNE's both in the private and public sector. These practices are based on shared information that may not otherwise be available, provided specialist resources, expert opinions, sophisticated tools for diagnostic analysis, development of practical action plans, improvement of processes based on wider knowledge than what resides within client company, management coaching, training and development, implementation of difficult or unpopular decisions, ability to apply information based on tested approaches, undertake work which requires objectivity, and take pressure of client as the role of scapegoat if project fails. (Burton-shaw-Gunn 2010.)

What does management consultancy really entail? Like earlier stated in this thesis, management consultants provide information and expertise especially about the external environment. To supply informative knowledge required for internationalization about external influencers, competitor analysis and market analysis allow consultants to deliver useful insights utilizing different types of specified analysis' regarding these topics. Once basic overview of market or competitors is understood, creating a strategy utilizing more specific information from specified analysis such as competitive moves, identifying emerging markets, trends, potential buyers and suppliers, consultants have supplied applicable knowledge for implementation thus delivering value to client in the form of potential sales and new networks. These are merely examples based on previously discovered knowledge earlier in the thesis yet the points discussed are topics that reappear throughout while researching management consultancy.

2.3.2 Consultancy as a service

Consultancy offers management services provided by experts of industries, so to be clear on what consultancy services are, the following topic will be explored by discovering how services are structured and what they entail, what strategy and process development has to do with consultancy services, and finally what value it brings to parties involved.

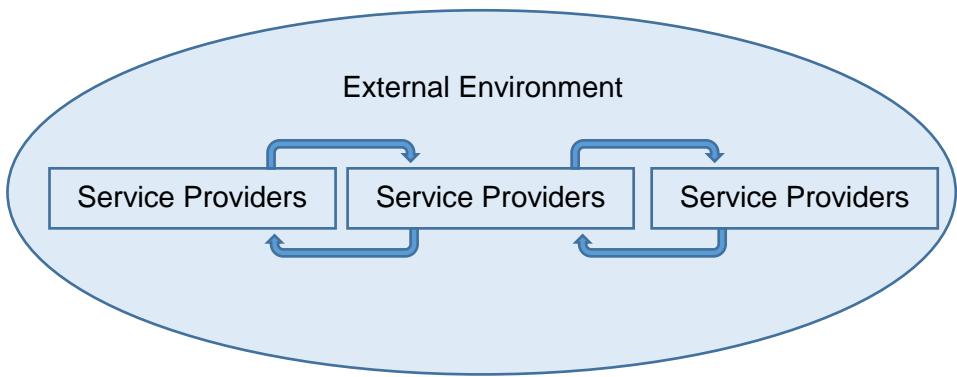


Figure 5. Service features (Field 2012, 10).

The raw breakdown of a service has physical and information flow between suppliers, service providers and customers which all are influenced by the external environment see Figure 5. Technology disrupts many processes of services bringing innovative solutions to create value however some solutions end up costing more than they turnover. Processes that have impact on service processes are customer self-service related, software analytics and super-service were functions are done on behalf of customer based on customer's preferences. (Field 2012, 10-30.)

The physical and information flow between service providers, for example consultants and customers, is the structure of said service. Most of consultant's services are based on information flow such as creating a strategy or developing international processes placing the emphasis on information flow. The structure of these services can be categorized as information transfer between service provider's information processing and customer's information processing, or customer to service provider information transfer and service provider to customer information transfer. Designing these services involves determining what information processes to do and who will do them. Determining cost of information flow is key to create successful one-time services or reoccurring services. (Field 2012, 82-97.)

A service has inputs and outputs which form the service and these can be monitored utilizing technology in the form of ERP systems which were briefly introduced under process development. ERP systems are instrumental in adding value to both internal and out-bound functions. For instance monitoring and analyzing cost of service functions as well as functions in current business being offered by consultancy service help define where unnecessary efforts are and what inputs and outputs bring in most profit. Other value adding attributes such as including free additional services, gifts and comparison tools are great for closing end-customers who are on the verge of making a purchase decision.

SOA service oriented architecture is an adaptation of ERP that emerged in early 2000s which was created to help integrate three-tier systems so users could access systems through web browsers. This is of great value for the service industry as its focus is on creating easy to use services linked to existing background ERP system. By using SOA companies are able to link their three-tier systems with a new level, web services, saving technology investment funds and not changing existing applications. (Magal & Word 2012, 25.)

Now to further inspect the consultancy process, the most relevant question to answer first is how these are structured. These services vary a lot based on service rendered and parties involved, but to clarify basic attributes some generalization will be used to provide backbone of service. First step is entry and contacting during which preliminary problem is diagnosed, assignment planning performed with proposal delivered to client resulting, hopefully, in contract. Second step is discovery and dialogue where problem is further analyzed. Third step is feedback and decision to act during which solutions are developed, alternatives are evaluated and client receives proposal of implementation planning. Fourth is engagement and implementation where implementation is assisted, proposals are adjusted and training is offered if necessary. Fifth and final step is extension or termination during which final report is submitted, evaluation rendered, commitments are settled, follow-up plans are made and consultants withdraw themselves from company or continue. (Johnson 2012.) Consultancy project responsibility is depicted in Figure 6.

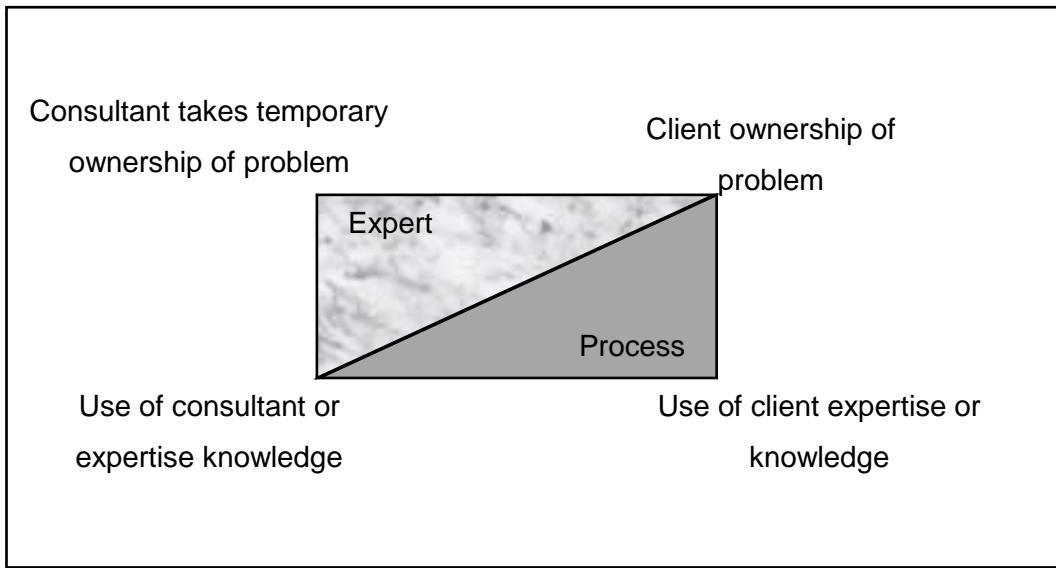


Figure 6. Consultancy project responsibility (Burtonshaw-Gunn 2010).

Consultancy services are available for a myriad of company needs and they are tailored to fit said needs creating value for both parties involved. These services are provided by either internal or external consultants. Internal consultants are hired by company to stay as a management aid in the company and external consultant are hired for specific project or projects eventually exiting the company. Consultancy services are related to improvement of services and offerings, company operations or strategies just to name few most commonly used. There is a lot be said of these services but as this thesis focuses on internationalization, emphasis will be set on these operations. Operations regarding internationalization are market entry, value chain or strategy related as they are complex matters companies need information on. Problems arise in many different stages and being able to cope with them can be instrumental for creating a successful company and this in particular can be characterized as on fundamental activity consultants can help with during the process.

2.3.3 Negotiation

Negotiation may seem a bit separate of the general research of theoretical background, however a consultant is unable to reach closing points in deals, get networking opportunities or even begin consulting companies without being able to negotiate. Therefore negotiation will be briefly explored and the skill of being a successful negotiator.

To generalize negotiation it can be explained by four steps. These four steps are preparation, sharing, bargaining/haggling, and closing and commitment. Preparation is very important establishing a framework for the negotiations. To discover standard industry practices, competitor prices as well as everything you can find out about your opponent are

part of preparation. To satisfy possible stakeholders concerns find out what is to be achieved through negotiations. The sharing step is face to face negotiations with opponent beginning with sharing each other's frameworks for negotiations. This is often skipped by leaping directly into offers and counter offers leading to failure or undesired outcomes. Another key aspect gained from sharing is building a long-term respectful business relationship. After relationship has been founded bargaining and haggling follows, in other words offers and counter offers. For a long-term relationship it is important to leave negotiations in a place where neither opponent feels they have lost which is the goal of closing & commitment. This will make the deal you close stick. (Peeling 2008, 5-6.)

It is useful to see negotiations as an exchange of information and services instead of an adversarial competition Increasing effectiveness to achieve goals. Problem solving approach works well for this. During preparation it is important to clarify three things for yourself. What is your reservation price (the price you are willing to be instead of saying no), what is your aspiration (this is the optimistic assessment on what can be achieved) and what are your alternatives if understanding is not reached. When preparation and assessment is done, entering the negotiation process with packaged topics will help achieve more of your goals instead of negotiating each topic separately. Returning to the problem solving approach, for instance communal problem solving is an effective method. In this method you ask questions in a way like can you help me get to a position that most benefits you. (Stanford Graduate School of Business 2013)

Although negotiations are a lively process, there are certain rules which can help develop fruitful situations, therefore resulting in success. These rules start with only accepting creative outcomes, understanding cultures, adjusting as well as exploiting cultural differences, gathering intelligence and designing information flow. These rules prepare for achieving set goals. Other rules are investing in personal relationships, using questions to persuade, leaving connection making to the end, using creativity driven techniques, and continuing delivery of creativity after negotiations. (Requejo & Graham 2008, 9.)

Negotiating with other nationalities during internationalization, the cultural differences and length of negotiation process, for instance relationship building, are important to factor into how to adjust behavior and leverage differences. Strategic thinking during preparation will help maximize the benefit. Information such as how consultants know when there is a need to negotiate instead of push forward is an intangible asset, which is based on intuition on experience that makes the profession relevant for companies in need of more knowledge. There is not always a right time to negotiate but it is certain that consultants

need to negotiate with clients, potential partners, and in some cases government officials to create opportunity for growth.

2.4 Internationalization

Growing a MNE business can be done in multiple ways that has been covered by literature for decades but specified to SME's is studied much less. The answer to why it is studied much less is that this information is a commodity being sold as an expertise service. Consultants provide this knowledge packaged into their services with guidance and implementation. The difference between internationalization an SME and MNE is significant as MNE's have usually more resources, experience and options.

As a Finnish SME, networking is one of the most important steps providing opportunity to finding an interested party abroad or investor who will link your company to correct decision makers. This point can be best understood based on geographical position of Finland making transport for instance a large factor and expertise in the growing technology sector. Increasing level of interest in starting an SME is driven by potential earnings which also drives internationalization efforts from the Finnish government. More people bringing in a higher earning will bring more money to Finland through company taxation thus elevating GDP and Finnish economy. (Dana 2006.)

For smaller companies being able to understand what resources they have and what will be needed are a prerequisite to forming a functional internationalization strategy which is also a key for MNE's. MNE Organizations require more policies for operations than SME's which creates a more agile and adjustable operating mechanism. (Down 2010) There is a leverage factor in being agile in today's markets as they are increasingly unstable and prone to disruptions. Being able to find alternative monetary streams such as international licensing, international strategic alliances and joint ventures, and foreign direct investment provide more opportunity to traditional import export mentality of international business. (Bovee & Thill 2017, 109-111.)

Internationalizing a business requires organizational/company knowledge, understanding of macro environment and being prepared to take risks. Internationalizing often means your organization/company is doing something new or in a different way requiring applied skills, knowledge and courage. The macro environment can be analyzed in a clear way using PESTEL analysis. PESTEL analyzes political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal factors which can be weighed applying SWOT analysis to findings which separates strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

3 Research methods

Qualitative research is the type of study that was conducted having focus set on content analysis of successful internationalization of Finnish SME's. Research methods will be delivered by describing research approach first, content analysis second and data analysis third continuing the logic path of building from ground up. Approach is the starting point leading to the actual content analysis of research and ending in the data analysis out of which findings are interpreted and the path to achieve goals is structured.

3.1 Research approach

Approach to the research analysis of cases pursues to qualify content in terms of predetermined categories and in a systematic and replicable manner (Bryman & Bell 2011, 289). The analysis conducted is a content analysis chosen on the fact of in-depth inspection, providing triangulation by applying network research based on a structured framework making it replicable and systematic. The approach aims to answer questions such as what, when, why and how. In other words this is an interpretive case study based empirical research analyzing the content and networks involvement of the successful outcome. Below you will find my framework for case analysis in Figure 7.

Topic	Answer
What company is trying to export service or product and where?	
How was the product or service exported?	
Why was the case successful?	
When did they start the project and when was it finalized?	

Figure 7. Framework for case overview

A case study can be conducted with two or more cases as a comparison and it can be applied in all types of research and development where the target can be categorized (physical research target separated), functionalized (operational entity separated such as process or event) or situation based (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2009, 53). A case study is a research based on a single company's or multiple companies' operations and/or management. As before mentioned the approach is a combination of case study and network research. The goal of developing networks has everything to do with establishing a competitive advantage in the current and future situations.

Some key questions used to research networks are:

- With what companies networking will provide most benefit and what are the benefits?
- What type of network is needed and what type of companies/entities did company network themselves with?
- How can the company enhance its position in its current network?

(Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2009, 88-89.)

I used this type of approach because it aims to reveal most impactful and interesting practices by utilizing a framework of analysis and theory displayed in the previous chapter.

The goal is to answer what external consultants do that brings value and how their work impacts internationalization. The cases content analysis is the basis on how subjects are approached and triangulating the information from a different perspective such as networking will enhance reliability factor of findings.

3.2 Content analysis

Conceptual framework of content analysis is structured to answer questions such as what is going on with the settings, issues, or people that are planned to be studied. What beliefs, theories, and prior research findings will inform or guide planned research, and what theory, personal experiences and preliminary studies can be drawn from for understanding the issues or people being studied? (Maxwell 2005, 4.) Companies' success stories content is an embellished way to bring up how well they have proceeded to evolve and grow so to comb through the story and raise the actual facts that helped the company internationalize their offerings, I used a framework of questions aiming to connect with the research paradigm.

"One of the critical decisions that you will need to make in designing your study is the paradigm (or paradigms) within which you will situate your work. This use of the term "paradigm," which derives from the work of the historian of science Thomas Kuhn, refers to a set of very general philosophical assumptions about the nature of the word (ontology) and how we can understand it (epistemology), assumptions that tend to be shared by researchers working in a specific field or tradition." (Maxwell 2005, 36)

This connection with the research paradigm is to clarify how consultants operate in internationalization projects and to understand how this is such an effective practice companies can apply with minor investment. My framework of questions to analyze the content can be found below in figure 8.

Topic	Answer
What were the company's value adding and growth oriented activities?	
How did company's network affect success?	
How did the external consultancy service help? What activities were provided?	
Why was the combination of company's activities in co-operation with consultants successful?	
What are the next steps?	

Figure 8. Framework for content analysis

For document/content analysis the material will be gathered and prepared for generalization, after which repeated structures in the content will be recognized and critically examined using the framework of what, why, when, and how. The outcome will be interpreted from different angles, in this case how the companies' network affected success and how the consultants and companies actions, which were documented in cases, affected them as well. (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2009, 121.)

Disadvantages of content analysis are that analysis is contingent on good content of documents (authenticity, credibility, representativeness of all possible documents), it's very difficult to code without some interpretation leaving each analysis subjected to knowledge of researcher, and it's difficult to assure answers of good quality to questions such as why, based on that fact of speculation. (Bryman & Bell 2011, 308.)

However, advantages are that it is a very transparent method, it can allow a level of longitudinal analysis, it is a highly flexible method applicable to a wide variety of types of unstructured information, and it can allow information about social groups that are difficult to gain access to. (Bryman & Bell 2011, 305.) For these reasons I deemed content analysis worthy of continuing.

3.3 Data analysis

Ethnographic content analysis (ECA), semiotics and hermeneutics, are most commonly used ways for analyzing data in content analysis. Between concept development sampling-data, and analysis-interpretation, ECA works as a reflexive and recursive movement. The purpose is not to be rigid and over controlled, instead the aim of ECA is to be systematic and analytic while flexible at the same time. The study is initially guided by categories and variables yet they are allowed and expected to emerge during the study encouraging constant discovery and comparison of relevant settings, images, styles, situations, meanings, and nuances. Semiotics are known by the science of signs and inspects the signifier and signified as well as the quality of signs also known as polysemy. Polysemy means that signs can be interpreted in many ways and they have focus on the way that messages communicated as systems of cultural meaning interact. Hermeneutics refers to an approach created originally in relation to the understanding or interpretation of texts, and particularly theological texts. (Bryman & Bell 2011, 560-565.)

Data analysis technique I used for the empirical research part in the next chapter is the ethnographic content analysis method which is document interpretation utilizing my own framework of questions, see Figure 9. The goal is to answer, what do external consultancy services provide that influences growth effectively or is the added value an empty promise. The external consultancy service inspected is Export Finland which has a large network of success stories to bring a diverse reflection on multiple industries. The ECA is based on 7 cases from different fields and different needs.

Topic	Answer
Value adding activities (Negotiations, operations etc.)	
Effect of Network (Connection with decision makers, new partners etc.)	
Co-operation	
Growth of company (single or multiple new markets)	
Next steps	

Figure 9. Interpretation groups

The reason I chose ECA data analysis was because it is one of the most in-depth ways to analyze qualitative research and it provides insight outside the narrow point-of-view. It also provides insight of single cultural backgrounds and socially inherent ethnocentrism. This is a great way to obtain information in business as it immerses the person and study in deep understanding of other people and cultures. (Myers 2009, 92-93.)

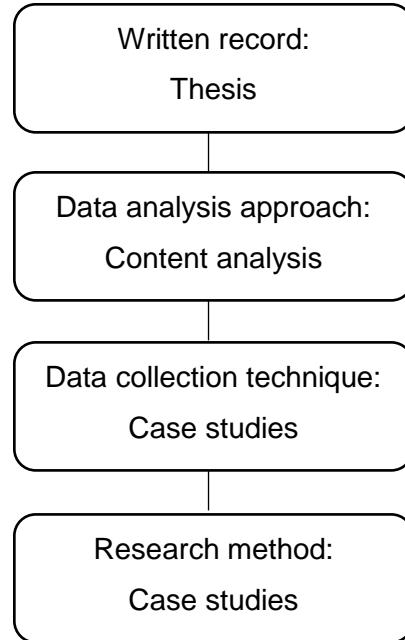


Figure 10. Empirical research framework

The philosophical assumption used in this empirical research is interpretive and the structure in its entirety can be found above in Figure 10. Interpretation can be subjected to some criticism as interpretation depth comes from researchers level of knowledge in ability to evaluate and find correlating subjects but it works best in this type of research as not all relevant information is available. Interpretation also works efficiently for content analysis of articles.

4 Empirical research

The empirical research of the thesis consists of assessment and analysis of companies success stories on exporting their services or products to foreign markets with the assistance of Export Finland, a sub-division of Finpro a government funded consultancy service, to develop their strategies and/or processes to enter or become more prominent in a countries markets other than which their company is based in. Each success will be analyzed with the same methodology to identify informative and innovative aspects that have enabled growth and sustainability. Company cases were chosen from different fields and different sized companies and different goals to unify the understanding of strategy and process in internationalizing companies offering. Company cases will be separated by what company did, what Finpro (consultancy service) do, and what were key aspects of the successful fulfillment.

4.1 Company cases

Each case will be introduced and assessed using a structured line of questions and interpretation groups. What was the company's goal? What were the activities company took to achieve the goal? What did the company need or what influenced the companies' actions? Internationalizing is the unified goal in each case but the cases vary by service/product, actions and co-operation with various parties. Interpretation groups aim to provide a similar framework of analysis to each case.

4.1.1 Case 1. Elomatic Oy

Elomatic Oy is an engineering and consulting company that provides services for industrial investments. They specialize in biotech and pharmaceuticals, energy, machinery and equipment manufacturing, marine and offshore, oil and gas, and process industries. They have proven steady growth with the company over a few decades leading them to a new development, hospital building design. Hospital building design is a new endeavor for Elomatic Oy which is starting a pilot project with Sykehusbygg in Norway. The companies met at an event about Norway's health sector and hospital construction markets Finpro had invited Elomatic to. This led to creating a visualization tool for designing hospital pharmacies. Sykehusbygg is now testing it two Norwegian cities. (Export Finland 2016a.)

The process started with a meeting in which Elomatic quickly explained and showed what they could do. Without specialized hospital sector experience, Sykesbygghus became interested once they realized the tool is good. The decision about the pilot project came few

months after first meeting but the project kick-off had an unexpected twist. The public sector organization required Sykehusbygg to run a competitive tender on the project. After a few weeks message was received that any other participants for the tender were not found and they could move forward. Moving forward happened on a quick pace and the finalized design app was delivered to the customer at the end of March 2016. (Export Finland 2016a.)

"Elomatic's tailored hospital space design app is based on modeling technology familiar from video games. 3D technology makes it possible to perceive and explore a space from different viewpoints and a virtual reality helmet provides the feel of moving inside the model. The app is designed to boost the initial idea stage before the start of the actual design stage for the space." (Export Finland 2016a.)

Value adding activities from Elomatic's part, such as technology they offer, can allow you to test practical issues like accessibility, ex. can a hospital bed be turned round in the space. This type of expertise along with the network created by new market discovery in Norway has opened the door for future projects there. These meetings with decision makers has led to possibility of new projects and simultaneously raised awareness of Elomatic. The ability to move quickly and be agile to changes have given a competitive edge which is highly useful for new companies entering markets.

4.1.2 Kyrö Distillery Company.

Kyrö Distillery Company was established in 2014 and they specialize in rye-based alcoholic drinks. The craft distillery is located in Isokyrö, a rural area in Western Finland. High-quality and stylishly branded products they manufacture, have successfully entered Finnish and international markets. As the Finnish market is limited in size, the CEO Miika Lipiäinen had planned to export from the beginning of when the company was formed. (Export Finland 2016c.)

Kyrö Distillery Company participated in Food from Finland's joint stand in March 2015 at the Foodex trade fair in Tokyo which is the largest food and beverages exhibition in Asia. They have participated in Foodex trade fairs almost from the beginning of its conception. They had already found a distributor in Japan but through Foodex they received a substantial amount of attention that further opened the market for them. Meetings at Foodex were with restaurants and bars, the media and bloggers, shops and representatives of retail chains as well as end users not directly involved in alcohol retail or distribution. (Export Finland 2016c.)

The recognized products Juuri, Napue and Koskue won awards which boosted credibility and recognition leading Kyrö Distillery in a favorable position for foreign market expansion. In July 2015 their gin, Napue, was selected as the best in the world in the Gin and Tonic category of the International Wine and Spirit Competition. Kyrö distillery's Koskue gin won a gold medal in the same blind tasting landing it a ranking in the top six products from the 150 competing distilleries. In the single malt rye in the whisky category of the International Spirit Awards, the new alcoholic beverage Juuri won gold in May 2016. (Export Finland 2016c.) The interesting products have provided opportunity with recognition aspects and networking with new parties in exhibitions and trade fairs. These attributes have clearly been instrumental for success in this case. The activities showing a proactive approach leading growth were presenting at fairs, travelling to clients for meetings and participating in competitions.

4.1.3 Doranova

Doranova is a Finnish company with over 20 years of experience in offering solutions for remediation for sites with contamination and production of renewable energy. They have 14 employees at the moment stationed in Finland. The first major project abroad for Doranova had co-operation with Vietnamese Binh Duong Water Supply, Sewerage and Environment Company Ltd (Biwase) but their goal is to expand also further in Asia and Africa. Utilization of landfill gas for energy production in co-operation with companies have the estimated project time of 14 months. The project investment is 6 million euros and produced electrical power will be 1MW. The Biwase-Doranova project and reference facility may lead to opening a new office in Vietnam in the near future. (Export Finland 2016d.)

The set-up of reference facility and negotiating the project with Vietnamese companies were the value-adding activities of Doranova which lead to internationalization of Doranova's services and possibility to continue to offer services in Asia. After decision to internationalize, there was little resistance once right partners were found as Finnish solutions for sustainable energy production is a highly valued expertise in this particular market.

4.1.4 AirD

A family business Founded 2010 in Helsinki designs, manufactures and sells decorative and intelligent ventilation head units. The product innovation brought AirD international attention in a two-stage process. AirD's main focus initially was on improving the visual style of building ventilation grilles. Now Simo Mönkkönen and his inventor colleague Artur Glad are in the patent register for a ventilation head unit which combines many technologies,

provides users with information about air quality and makes measured data based adjustments to ventilation improving energy efficiency. Other notable partners that are part of Product development, which has been developed over a long period of time from initial inspiration in 2015, are Finnish companies Gofore and Mariachi among others. Tekes, the Finnish Funding Agency for Innovation, supplied AirD with 100,000 euros for technology development. (Export Finland 2016e.)

This innovative product has potential based on its sustainable edge and customization, both being factors companies look for. Being able to secure funding and having a stable organization before enlisting external consultancy services has proven stability of AirD operations making it a valid investment opportunity. Also having extensive development constantly ongoing the company provides new technology to an ever changing market.

4.1.5 Arffman Group

Arffman Group has been operating in Finland over 20 years providing training services. EMMA - Empowering Math product is the product subjected to internationalization which is a powerful method to teach mathematics in a visible and tangible way utilizing a number talk concept that applies learning by reasoning, convincing and proving. It has been tested by students and teachers in Finland since 2010 with excellent results. The plan of the company was to actively take advantage of internationalization services of Finpro which resulted in EMMA being on its way to Brazil and China. (Export Finland 2016f.)

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Finland is well known for its educational institutions and innovation with technology, so bringing highly coveted skills to new markets uncovers an interesting investment opportunity for foreign clients. The excellent track record of the product provides proof of concept also making the product easier to offer internationally.

4.1.6 HoviKoti

HoviKoti provides and develops care and wellbeing services, having currently six care homes in Finland and a unit serving elderly Finns in Fuengirola, Spain. The case does not mention any particular countries HoviKoti strategized to enter so they joined The Finland-Care program in 2014, when decision was made to move more actively towards internationalization. HoviKoti's objective is to have more than half of the company's turnover come from international markets in the future. The strength of HoviKoti is to offer advanced services utilizing Finnish very specific and highly developed technology that could help the aged or special needs groups. This enables leverage in the domestic and interna-

tional markets excluding the importance of network. FinlandCare's network offers good export co-operation opportunities for Finnish companies which is what HoviKoti is aiming to develop. (Export Finland 2016g.)

HoviKoti has an open internationalization mindset making it prone to influence regarding different opportunities and creating agile decision making. This is a great advantage paired with new technological service as it interests many and also creates agility regarding operations. Establishing that its service is a viable option draw's interest and makes developing relationships easier once proof of concept is shared which is the six functioning care homes in Finland. Networking with the decision makers will play an important role and having options open to various markets is a tremendous leverage for negotiations.

4.1.7 Orton

The Orton Foundation has ownership of Orton Oy which is operating in Helsinki. The Orton Foundation was previously known as the Invalid Foundation founded in 1940 to treat, rehabilitate and offer vocational training to veterans injured in Finland's Winter War. Helsinki's Orton hospital specializes in musculoskeletal disorders, pain management, ocular diseases and therapeutic services. International operations were started in the 1990's and currently it has developed new treatment practices in Finland. The innovator causing interest internationally was orthopedic spine surgeon Dietrich Schlenzka who does surgeries in St. Petersburg currently in addition to work in Finland. About 5% of the hospital's patients are currently from other countries than Finland, mainly Russia, but also Sweden, Norway, Estonia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan. (Export Finland 2016h.)

The high quality treatments are a driving factor for internationalization and Orton's CEO Juho Himberg believes increasing offering of procedures they offer will continue to bring a steady stream of foreign patients. Orton plans to bring British NHS patients to Helsinki also supplying more business opportunity. Treatment provided for musculoskeletal problems Orton offers based on agreements with the American embassies in the Baltic States as well as Poland and countries of the former Commonwealth of Independent States. This also draws staff from countries in question to Finland. Orton has been marketing services internationally recently much more, especially targeting Russia. Efforts were pushed forward with help from FinlandCare, Finnair, the City of Helsinki, Helsinki University and the Faculty of Medicine. Orton has received great patient references in Russia bringing in new clients and suggesting expansion to Russian market (Export Finland 2016h.)

This case has strong potential as internationalization has been started already in the 1990's and services offered in target country Russia with positive results. Having Finland-Care support effort has strong merit internationally and is recognized as a positive influence as well as Finland's well known health services. The strengths of this case will strengthen the company's brand as high-quality health service provider in addition to being well referenced by previous clients suggesting expanding to Russia is a wise move.

4.2 Export Finland's role

Elaborating on the case introduction and companies' roles this section will give further insight on the external consultancy company Export Finland's role on internationalization. How were the company's activities to achieve the goal of internationalization supported? Where the needs met and how? In creating new opportunity there often is co-operation with various parties of different organizations. Increasing position is strategically a great move and structuring a solid framework to grow.

4.2.1 Case 1. Elomatic Oy

Finpro provided Elomatic Oy a connection with Sykehusbygg organization, which was not on Elomatic's marketing radar, which manages hospital design and construction all over Norway. This pilot project has opened the door to the Norwegian market. Since the connection, events organized under Finpro's Digital Hospitals program are available to Elomatic, which is a good and easy way to get new contacts instead of going to look for customers in foreign markets by yourself. Through Finpro organized smart events Elomatic has made contacts with Korean, Dutch and Danish parties. Every meeting doesn't always lead to a project but they are interesting and instructive opportunities to grow. (Export Finland 2016a.)

It can be said that although consultancy is a detailed industry with knowledge being the added value to companies, sometimes the simplest things such as connecting people or companies is all that is needed. Also the possibility to continue connecting Elomatic with new opportunities through events is being provided as well as ongoing support through contacting. Recognizing potential and creating a framework of continuance drives companies forward and in this case helps with the internationalization process. The experience of international operations has helped Elomatic begin developing its own network and gather more experience internationally.

4.2.2 Kyrö Distillery Company.

The Food from Finland program has supported the rapid internationalization of the award-winning craft distillery in Japan, Korea and Germany. This was the main service offered by external consultancy. (Export Finland 2016b.)

"The Team Finland Export Program for the Food Sector aims to double Finnish food exports to around €3 billion by 2020. Food from Finland is an export program for the food industry. The program is carried out by the Team Finland organizations, The Finnish Food and Drink Industries' Federation (ETL) and private companies in the Finnish food sector.

Main target areas of the Team Finland Export Program are Scandinavia, Baltic countries, Russia, Germany, China, South Korea and Japan." (Export Finland 2016b.)

For small businesses Food from Finland provides more marketing reach compared to what many can afford to do on their own. The meetings and travelling to fairs were the actions leading to successful growth not actual direct actions of consultants however these hubs of networking were arranged by the consultants of Export Finland which is part of Team Finland's sub division.

4.2.3 Doranova

Financing received with concessional credits was a key element to make the project possible. Finnish government's support and services is an important factor in international competition as other countries effect the market with their support of sustainable activities as well. Waste-to-Energy and bioenergy growth program (W2EB) was also an important contribution. To be able to participate at joint Finland stands at bio-economy fairs will provide Doranova with visibility which would be difficult to get alone. This is a Finpro managed Team Finland growth program. Contributions such as market surveys, fact-finding, delegation trips, buyer meetings, trainings and seminars help to get visibility by saving time and expenses. The Finnish joint offering will help exploration of business possibilities in Asia and Africa. (Export Finland 2016d.)

Like stated earlier the financial contributions and support received were crucial for successful implementation of the project but clearly the entire framework development was what made the project possible. The framework of companies was formed through the growth program W2EB and proactive work of Doranova which proves once again the importance of network. Sustainable development is an important issue requiring investment

being able to have support of Export Finland's management entity Finpro will help also with future projects in Vietnam.

4.2.4 AirD

AirD was unknown outside Finland before interaction with Export Finland but now they are negotiating directly with international shipping companies and other major companies. Previous client Silja Serenade equipped the cruise liner with AirD's products in November 2015 and after participating in trade fairs, Sea trade Cruise Global trade fair with Team Finland and Finpro's Maritime and Offshore, a deal has been negotiated with MSC Cruises in France with STX shipyard. Help was received from Finpro's representative Marie-Zoé Belon-Laitinen for negotiation process generating more interest towards AirD in the market space. In the future AirD aims to enter the hotel and construction markets, and they are already in negotiations with a few parties out of which an American contact wants to bring their product into the luxury apartment market in New York. (Export Finland 2016e.)

The external consultants have been pivotal in raising awareness and developing networks for AirD. To further competencies training has also been provided through industry training days during Finpro's Maritime and Offshore trade fair. The success of the project of internationalizing AirD would not have gone taken off so quickly without the funding received as well as co-operation between parties involved. Highlighting the importance of networking during the internationalization process. The assist from Finpro's representative during negotiations was also highly beneficial in the growth to French maritime market proving that having a contact connected to the planned market can expedite the process.

4.2.5 Arffman Group

Arffman Group has an innovative product they want to offer to international clients so they decided to ask assistance from Education Export Finland which is a Team Finland growth program managed by Finpro. The Team Finland delegation visit to Brazil in April 2016 was useful support for internationalization. 28 people along with Sanni Grahn-Laasonen, Finland's Minister of Education and Culture and Markku Virri, Ambassador of Finland to Brazil, were part of the delegation visit. The visit proved to be more than a study tour offering the delegation surprisingly intensive meetings with real potential clients, seminars, and school visits ending successfully based on support and thorough background work done by Team Finland experts. Arffman Group's responsibility was to do the actual selling however Finpro and other Team Finland actors provided training and help during networking

and negotiations. Finnish companies and institutions co-operation with Chinese organizations regarding education and also clean-tech, was in Finland in August 2016 offering second market of interest opportunities. (Export Finland 2016f.)

The support provided by Finpro made internationalization happen. The experience of consultants guided Arffman Group to interested decision makers and negotiations with support of delegation provided a convincing background for buyers. The framework behind EEF was an excellent starting ground for internationalization in this case helping with all concerns that could have become obstacles leading Arffman Group in a good position for expansion.

4.2.6 HoviKoti

FinlandCare is the growth program organized by Finpro which HoviKoti participated in. FinlandCare organized trips to Russia and the program has also brought visitors from the United Arab Emirates to HoviKoti. Also other services external consultancy service provided was help in means of a delegation to Singapore HoviKoti participated in November 2014 and February 2015, which both were busy and productive trips. Minister Laura Räty also participated in one of the trips bringing more credibility and boosting market entry progress. The market in Singapore has high standards for companies' services and products which means entry would have been difficult without FinlandCare. HoviKoti has new ongoing projects thanks to provided services and they have been maintaining contacts that have flourished into three different project areas going forward in Singapore. In April, HoviKoti has an opportunity to gain visibility at the Ageing Asia Innovation Forum providing more exposure on the technological advantages HoviKoti offers. During FinlandCare supported trips, HoviKoti also had the opportunity to discuss co-operation with other Finnish export companies. Sometimes before a trip co-operation would be discussed like how can services be packaged to uncover core know-how. HoviKoti even volunteered to act as a pilot environment for different technology providers who would like to test or further develop products or services to be offered to buyers. (Export Finland 2016g.)

The level of support received was prominently visible in building up a network of different actors which improves everyone's opportunities and develops potential in this case. FinlandCare's network offers good export cooperation opportunities for Finnish companies and creates international opportunity as well as supports HoviKoti's internationalization with delegations and training. These services are very helpful and pave the way for any company trying to enter difficult markets in other words growing to the markets HoviKoti

aims for would happen much slower if at all if external consultancy services were not available.

4.2.7 Orton

As Orton has invested time and effort doing systematic long-term work in the Russian market operating with Russian speaking doctors and expertise in demanding spine surgery, which is highly valued by patients, referrals by said patients only bring growth to a certain point. Orton has reached out to Export Finland in hopes for broader co-operation with FinlandCare although the program has provided new co-operation partners like HYKS Oy and Clinic Helena. Other parties Orton wishes to have further developed relationships with are Finnair, the City of Helsinki, Helsinki University and the Faculty of Medicine to get more patients and expand. Advertising on airlines for instance could bring some of the millions of Asians and Europeans that fly through Helsinki to get treatment there. Finland has a good reputation for high quality technology and being a clean country. In international comparisons Finland and Helsinki have a high level quality of life with little corruption in the healthcare market. (Export Finland 2016h.)

FinlandCare, the external consultancy service for health care, has networking opportunities and delegations to support the needs of Orton and once co-operation is properly founded growth will be well supported. The case itself has lots of potential yet there is very little to analyze on consultants efforts. Viewing the previous case of what FinlandCare can offer it could be that interest for a strong case with already international operations may not be top on the list for Export Finland which has the goal of starting internationalization for companies rather than growing already stable situations.

4.3 Why results had developmental effect

The successful attributes of co-operation and the project in general will be analyzed concisely in this section. Each case has different factors that have impact so to build a final recommendation in the consensus the interpretation groups are value adding activities, effect of network, co-operation, growth of company and next steps are the areas of analysis.

4.3.1 Case 1. Elomatic Oy

Case success was reached through Export Finland's event and networking in combination with Elomatic's fast and agile response to action. New technology is always on compa-

nies' radars and being able to provide that was the advantage of Elomatic's service. Expanding to a new market with the right partner and the new app in development provides Elomatic with potential new partners in the market once this projects success story becomes more commonly known in the industry as well as promise for future meetings with current partner Sykehusbygg. This leads to the next step of having another meeting to map out the next endeavor. The effect of networking with Export Finland and established Norwegian partner is a great example of how important being connected and being able to negotiate a deal leads to growth and development.

4.3.2 Kyrö Distillery Company.

Recognition from awards, interesting products, great networking and a proactive approach to internationalization where the elements pushing Kyrö Distillery company forward. It was only a slight assist needed which was provided by external consultants which was the events and fair opportunities Kyrö Distillery utilized impeccably. Co-operation will continue between parties as market growth spread to 3 markets in Seoul, Tokyo and Berlin (Export Finland 2016c).

After breaking into the Korean and Spanish markets, Kyrö Distillery Company is now exporting alcoholic beverages to 19 countries. According to Lipäinen, the company's export plans are adjusted in line with the general market potential and price level of a target country and whether the craft distillery has a particular competitive advantage there thanks to Finland's country brand or an exceptionally good local partner. In the future, the aim is to focus more resources on a few selected countries." (Export Finland 2016c.)

4.3.3 Doranova

Network, negotiations and financing are the three key subjects of the successful implementation of Doranova's internationalization project. Co-operation between companies involved as well as governments and Finpro has developed a framework that makes sustainable energy development possible. The next steps are to negotiate future projects in Asia utilizing the reference facility and also grow to different markets in Africa. Efficiency is seen from the speed of development. In 14 months there is now a facility of reference on how Doranova's expertise can be spread to new markets and once the service is wider spread in Asia and possibly Africa Doranova has the possibility to turn a nice profit and develop energy production in places struggling with sustainable development.

4.3.4 AirD

This case was a success due to great exposure, innovative product, networking, and continues development of product and company competencies. Direct interaction with potential clients and companies during trade fairs had impact on knowledge gained on markets and consumers as well as getting Finnish know-how of technology incorporated into products. Co-operation with Finpro has elevated opportunity while simultaneously growing to France with sights set on US market. Considering the process AirD has managed to infiltrate a highly developed market rather quickly, where details are of great importance and proof of concept has impact on buyer's decisions. Objectively one could say that is success.

4.3.5 Arffman Group

Arffman Group managed to form great relationships in Brazil and now focusing on China. Co-operation of Finnish companies and institutions during EEF proved to be instrumental for success. Value adding activities consisted of travelling with delegation to interested buyers, training services of Finpro and co-operation with consultants. Next steps are furthering negotiations for doing business in the main land China and Hong Kong. Arffman group offers a technology and teaching method which is new and interesting thus creating value for its clients through innovative solutions. This is a common trend in various markets. By utilizing technology old, slow and complex methods can be make more efficient creating profit and awareness of Finnish know-how.

4.3.6 HoviKoti

Successful attributes of the case were the following. Network created opportunity and new technology related to service drove interest from foreign parties. The fore mentioned were core subjects drawing internationalization potential in each market entry and having the openness to all opportunities enable an agile position which was a great advantage for negotiations meaning that if one interested party was too hesitant service could be offered to competitor. The difficult market in Singapore can be characterized as buyers with high expectations which HoviKoti received support for market entry from Finpro. The support received at trade fair and network development by sharing a stand were important to enable HoviKoti to pursue this goal thus being key value adding activities from the external consultancy service. Other market entry to Russia was also supported through delegation and minister attendance to raise credibility and awareness. Interested buyers from the UAE were also found and next steps are to pursue all three market entry opportunities further and continue co-operation with Finpro, attend EEF and develop international relationships.

4.3.7 Orton

Orton has great potential and existing networks for international operations, but viewing this case from the position of market entry or internationalization very little can be said on consultant's efforts besides providing new contacts through FinlandCare. However value adding actions from the company's perspective are providing specialized care with multi-lingual doctors for foreign patients as well as highly developed services by respected doctors. Growth activities such as targeted marketing and utilizing Export Finland's contacts have furthered effort towards internationalization which brings them to the next step of continuing network development and co-operation with FinlandCare.

5 Effective internationalization

Effective internationalization findings are based on empirical research of Export Finland's case studies and theoretical background. Specific findings of key elements regarding strategy, process development, innovative solutions and networking rose up to be some of the most important topics regarding internationalization utilizing an external consultancy service, so they will be discussed more in-depth in the next sub-chapters. Critically speaking, as company cases were based on successful practices there was less information on underlying problems, thus leaving some missing aspects in the findings on what could have been done better and where company still can improve.

Empirical research uncovered activities provided by external consultancy service such as training, financing, supporting negotiation process during internationalization efforts, and providing a platform for exposure to be really effective services that will help the internationalization process. All in all just providing these services is not enough. The company aiming to internationalize needs to be ready for the work that follows with receiving this sort of assistance as there is lots to do regarding marketing material for exposure platforms and preparing for negotiations for instance. If company has resources to perform successfully regarding these new processes, there is high potential for internationalization. Consultants will help set up processes and provide training to handle the new responsibilities and competencies required for continuous internationalization. These findings prove that supplying a company with external consultancy services effectively instigate internationalization efforts.

5.1 Key elements of effective international strategy

Each case presented different attributes related to strategy. Most cases had clear processes they had implemented based on strategy in Finland yet the internationalization aspect was missing and strengths based on product or service were not strategically decided on how to gain audience of potential buyers. A strategic decision in all of the cases was co-operating with consultants to create a new internationalization strategy. In the theoretical background it was mentioned how important understanding the market of entry was. Consultants helped with this by accompanying companies' travels to networking opportunities and negotiations to countries of entry, for instance HoviKoti to Singapore and Kyrö Distillery Company to Tokyo.

Strategically the most important thing is to prepare for the new challenges, gather information and stay true to the vision whatever companies offering is. Once an effective operating method, marketing and financing is found it is good practice to find how this could work in other countries and apply that strategy to the new market with alterations based on findings. This creates continuous internationalization opportunities. The new developed network is an important part of a successful strategy because once company is ready to begin internationalization process, decision makers of potential partners need to be found as well as potential clients. Network will be further discussed in sub-chapter 5.4. This brings the final recommendation, the strategy of internationalization has to have a plan and processes for exposure, networking, finances, work force, and operations to be successful.

5.2 Key elements of effective international processes

A common factor for effective processes in general regardless of them being intercontinental or international is that they can be measured monitored, and implemented based on strategy like discussed in the theoretical background. This can be incorporated into the company by utilizing ERP systems. Effective processes regarding internationalization are applied based on gathered information about the market environment and buyers thus each country requires customization of important processes.

The empirical research proved that the key of having strong core processes was a common denominator in each case which helps implementation of strategy to new markets. Knowing all required parties needed to fulfill operations is what helps finding the right partners for instance logistics, and service providers is imperative for running a successful international operation smoothly. A process may have various sub-processes adding a continuously more demanding preparation for work load thus proving international strategy is improved with having a strong network which consultant can help companies build.

5.3 Innovative solutions

When entering a new market or growing in an already entered foreign market like Orton in Russia with cutting edge treatments, innovative solutions are a great way to distance competition. Technological know-how in Finland is highly developed in comparison to other countries. An example of this was Elomatic Oy penetrating the Norwegian market by supplying a developed planning solution that competitors in the market were not utilizing yet. Innovative solutions can be as simple as using sustainable methods widely known in home country but still unknown in target market to achieve goals. This is what Doranova

was able to do by setting up a reference facility for sustainable energy production from sewage waste.

Being innovative and providing new alternatives can prove challenging so companies enlist different types of methods for research and development such as feed-back from clients and blue ocean strategy which involves clients in the innovation process. Developing innovative solutions will always be a constant in internationalization so being invested in development will provide new opportunities and partnerships. Disrupting markets by creating innovative solutions and technology is an opportunity and threat not to overlook.

5.4 Networking

Networking is a major key factor in today's business. Opportunities arise the more influential contacts a company manages to network with. Depending on the market internationalization requires ability to gain audience of decision makers for building permits, operational certifications etc. If these are taken care of or unnecessary being able to access potential buyers and partners, being in contact with people and organizations within target market will accelerate internationalization efforts. Consultants help the process of networking by offering opportunities to meet contacts within their network and through different trade fairs they know about or arrange. AirD, Arffman Group and Elomatic Oy cases success were directly linked with networking with the right people which proves how important finding influential contacts is. Each case interpreted had the similar aspect of networking being perhaps the most important activity which drove potential.

If companies do not network with different people within the target market, growth becomes more difficult because awareness of company and its offerings cannot be communicated as effectively as if with right partner. In some cases further networking in already entered markets has also proven to be instrumental for continuous growth. The environment is become saturated with different services and products in various markets thus being able to connect and partner with influencers continues to be important throughout operations. It is difficult to determine how much value networking creates but most of the time it still always creates opportunity.

6 Conclusion

This final chapter concludes the research and will concisely answer research question, what are the key elements external consultancy services provide that influence growth effectively, continue with building a recommendation on findings and after which recommendations for future research and reflecting on the process of the thesis will be delivered. The findings from cases combined with theoretical background were used to deliver answers to research question.

Based on empirical research it can be said that activities provided by external consultancy service such as networking, training, financing, supporting negotiation process during internationalization efforts, and providing a platform for exposure are really effective services that will help the internationalization process. It would be wise to choose a consultant with vision connecting to target market, a large network and resources to help develop processes based on internationalization strategy and experience with similar practices needed to create value.

6.1 Recommendations for future research

To continue or repeat this research in the future, I would recommend a more specified approach as information available can prove to be challenging to funnel into a recommendation on actions. Once saturation point is reached with empirical research and theoretical background is developed perhaps more in-depth knowledge can be produced on certain topics such as strategy and process development as they are both very broad topics. If doing this research in a tight deadline, I would recommend spending time defining case specific goals introduced in the empirical research and setting a framework for theoretical background as well.

6.2 Reflecting on the process of the thesis

As I began writing this thesis, I had a clear plan of what I wanted to achieve yet getting started I found the process constantly changing the direction of my thoughts and the entire direction of the thesis. This was no shocker, as I anticipated the thesis would change throughout the process of research and writing, but it did make actually producing material more difficult. After a month of hard work I found myself in a position of changing the entire angle of empirical research which prompted me to create a new timetable. Initially when I started to work on my thesis it was done in a vague matter doing some work here and there after which distraction would take over. Once I changed the direction of my thesis, the initial method of doing interviews started to show it would take very long, I

changed my method for empirical research to content analysis, and I set hours for my work schedule and for writing each portion which I updated during the process to the amount of hours I actually worked. This timetable I made after changing the initial method can be found in Attachment 2.

Nearing the end, like in most processes, there was still much to do which motivated me to work harder. Now that every part has been completed, the ups and downs I experienced give a whole new appreciation to the professionals working in consultancy and internationalization. The process taught me to narrow down the scope being researched to a more specifically defined area. This however did not interfere with reaching results which were easily formed from the theoretical background and empirical research. Putting together findings of successful practices and linking them to theory brought up key actions and knowledge needed to succeed.

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Attachments

Attachment 1.

Framework for case overview:

Topic	Answer
What company is trying to export service or product and where?	
How was the product or service exported?	
Why was the case successful?	
When did they start the project and when was it finalized?	

Framework for content analysis:

Topic	Answer
What were the company's value adding and growth oriented activities?	
How did company's network affect success?	
How did the external consultancy service help? What activities were provided?	
Why was the combination of company's activities in co-operation with consultants successful?	
What are the next steps?	

Interpretation groups:

Topic	Answer
Value adding activities (Negotiations, operations etc.)	
Effect of Network (Connection with decision makers, new partners etc.)	
Co-operation	
Growth of company (single or multiple new markets)	
Next steps	

Attachment 2.

	Work	Methods	Empirical	Theory	Findings	Conclusion	Intro
24.10.2016	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
25.10.2016	4	5	0	0	0	0	0
26.10.2016	4	2	2	1	0	0	0
27.10.2016	4	0	2	2	0	0	0
28.10.2016	4	0	2	2	0	0	0
29.10.2016	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
30.10.2016	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
31.10.2016	4	0	3	2	0	0	0
1.11.2016	4	0	2	1	0	0	0
2.11.2016	4	0	2	1	0	0	0
3.11.2016	0	0	2	1	0	0	0
4.11.2016	4	0	2	1	0	0	0
5.11.2016	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6.11.2016	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7.11.2016	0	1	3	1	0	0	0
8.11.2016	0	1	4	1	0	0	0
9.11.2016	0	0	5	2	0	0	0
10.11.2016	0	0	3	2	0	0	0
11.11.2016	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
12.11.2016	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
13.11.2016	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
14.11.2016	4	0	0	4	0	0	0
15.11.2016	4	0	0	5	0	1	1
16.11.2016	4	0	0	0	2	2	2
17.11.2016	0	1	1	4	2	2	0
18.11.2016	4	1	1	1	1	1	1