

KYMENLAAKSO UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES
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Strategy Implementation in Customer Interface

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ABSTRACT

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Media business environment is changing rapidly because of digitalization. Media advertising and especially advertising in newspaper has decreased significantly in recent years. The crisis of media causes changes in revenue generation strategy, business model and competition environment, and thus challenges traditional media houses to create interesting contents and new models to gain revenue. Traditional media houses are required to understand the connection of printed and digital media and to utilise benefits of printed and virtual communication.

In order to respond these challenges, the strategy of the case organization, Company X (name changed), was launched in spring 2012. This research was focused on strategy implementation in the customer interface in the case organization. The aim of this research was to provide comprehension about effective implementation of the strategy in customer interface. The objective of the research was to assist management of the case organization in evaluating the strategy implementation, especially in the b-to-b customer interface, and to provide suggestions for further implementation of strategy.

The research strategy was a qualitative case study. Thematic interviews of both employees working in the b-to-b customer interface of case organization and strategically significant customers were utilized in order to produce comprehensive data of subject and to evaluate how implementation of strategy has succeeded and how the chosen strategy is connected to customers' views.

This research sought for effective implementation of strategy. In current, rapidly changing world, rational, long-term strategic management is inadequate. Emphasis in postmodern strategy creation should be on interaction with the customers and connecting strategy of organization to strategic objectives of its customers.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background, Context and Situation

This thesis explores the strategy implementation in customer interface in the case organization, Company X¹. Company X is a leading media group in Päijät-Häme region which is most known from its subscribed newspaper. Today Company X is part of everyday life of inhabitants of Päijät-Häme by providing local contents through newspapers, radio, digital services and free papers. Organization of Company X is presented in chapter 2. Basis for the thesis is demand for strategic changes which occurs based on changes in consumers behaviours to use media.

Competition and business environment in media business has changed rapidly. According to Toni Hopponen (quoted in Uusitalo 2009, p. 12), discussion of crisis of media began gradually in this millennium. Since then, it has increased dramatically in recent years. Crisis of media means significantly rapid change in business which causes changes revenue generation strategy, business model and competition environment. (Uusitalo 2009, p. 12).

From the beginning of the year 2013 to August media advertising in Finland has decreased 9.8 % in comparison to same period in previous year. The change has been dramatic. Compared to previous year, advertising in newspapers decreased 16.3 %. Still market share of subscribed newspaper is 34 %. Also other traditional forms of advertising have lost their shares. Instead, advertising in Internet has increased 4.3 % and presents almost 20 % of media advertising. Market Shares of media business in Finland are shown in figure 1 and changes in media advertising are presented in figure 2. (TNS Gallup Ad Intelligence, August 2013.)

¹ Names of companies, persons and media are changed or erased in the public version of thesis

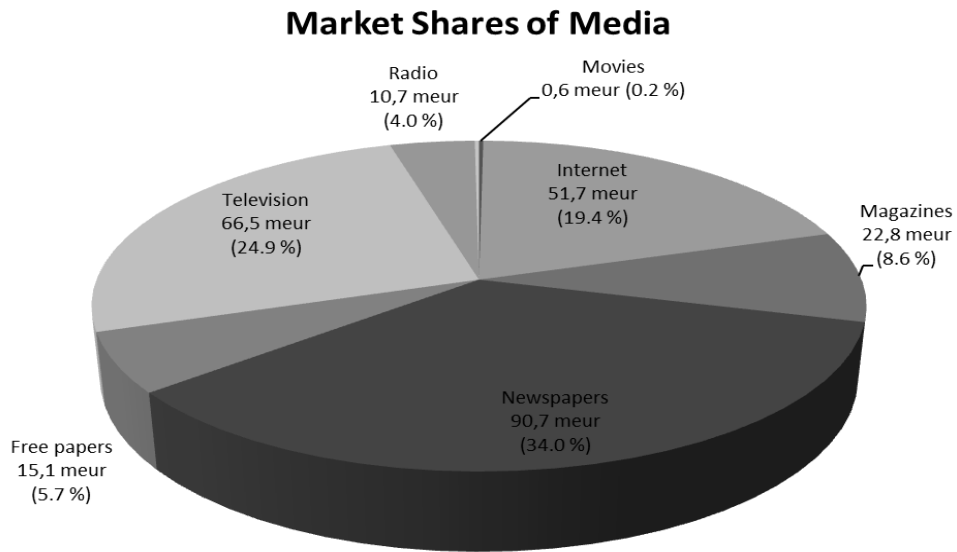


Figure 1: Market Shares of Media in First Half of Year 2013 (TNS Gallup 1H/2013).

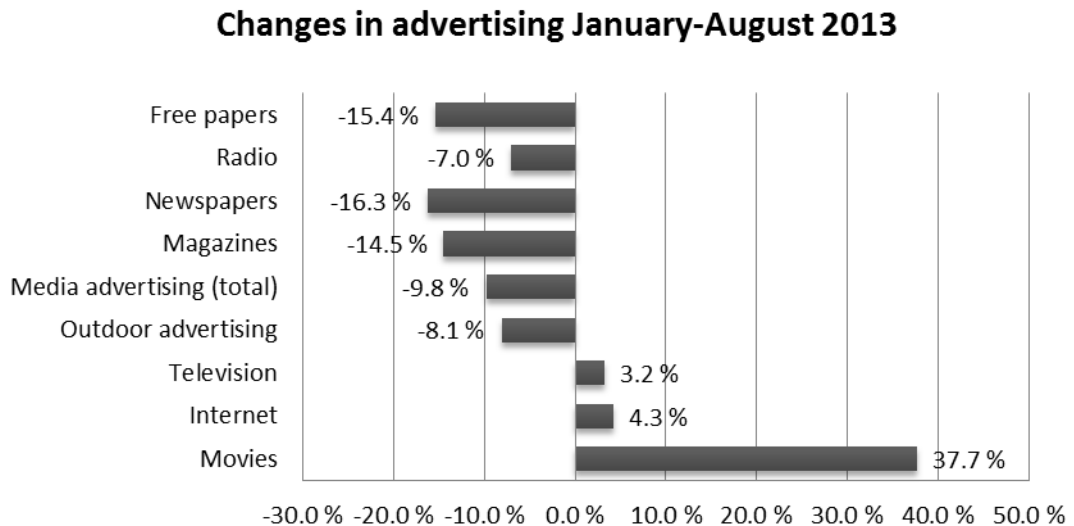


Figure 2: Changes in Advertising from the beginning of the year 2013 to August 2013 (TNS Gallup Ad Intelligence, August 2013).

E-business and digital communication transform operating in every field but especially on media business. Digital communication allows consumers new possibilities to obtain, share and create information. These changes of consumers'

behaviour are directly related to changes in media business. Although changes in media business have been rapid, traditional Finnish newspapers have managed to maintain competitiveness compared to other countries. (Uusitalo 2009, pp. 1-2).

Crisis of business challenges traditional media houses to create interesting contents and gaining revenue in changed business environment. Ability to understand the connection of printed and digital media and utilising benefits of printed and virtual communication is important for traditional media houses (Uusitalo 2009, pp. 2, 7). Revenue generation strategy of newspapers has based on selling advertising space and subscription fees. Implementing these strategies virtually is complicated. In order to succeed in digital business newspapers are obliged to develop new models of gaining revenue. (Uusitalo 2009, p. 12) (Keränen, Lätti, Elkelä, & Nikali, 2011). Digital marketing offers also new possibilities to advertisers. Shares of Internet advertising are shown in figure 3. Markets are fragmented and international operators compete with local media houses.

Internet advertising January-June 2013

TOTAL 106,2 meur, change 5,4 %

DISPLAY	FACEBOOK	CLASSIFIED	SEARCH	DIRECTORIES
43,3 meur	4,6 meur	17,5 meur	38,5 meur	2,3 meur
Change 9,6 %	Change -24,3 %	Change -6,9 %	Change 5,5 %	Change 0%

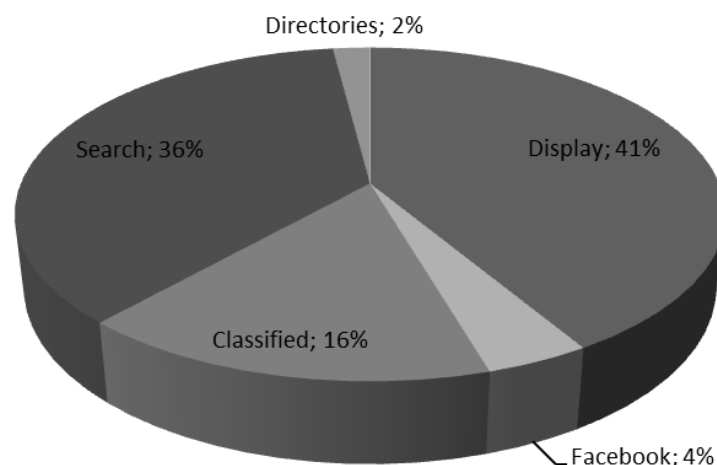


Figure 3: Shares of Internet Advertising in the First Half of Year 2013 (TNS Ad Intelligence H1/2013).

Rapid change in business environment and consumers' behaviour affects business of Company X. Local contents and contacts to people of Päijät-Häme region remain as strength of Company X's media but the form is changing. As figures in the paragraphs above indicate, contributions to develop digital contents are demanded in addition to traditional media. Printed newspaper does not provide revenue in future as it has in recent years. In addition, revenue gained from current digital forms of Company X will not replace diminishing revenue of the newspaper. Developing digital contents and forms of advertising is required to satisfy future needs of both advertisers and consumers of media. In order to respond the challenges the strategy of Company X was launched in spring 2012. The strategy is focused on co-operation and partnership, continuous regeneration, profitable growth and general reach. Strategy of Company X is presented in chapter 6. Contributions to strategy work have been substantial compared to previous years. This provides also a current and essential context for this thesis.

The focus of this thesis is on examination of the implementation of strategy in b-to-b customer interface. According to CEO of Company X, customers' perspective is emphasized on the creation of strategy of Company X so examination of this view is essential. Development of digital business effects also b-to-b customers' business. For example, e-commerce and digital methods of work are significant drivers for change. In addition customers consider own strategies for digital marketing. Need for digital marketing is acknowledged but execution of it is not obvious. Supply and suppliers for digital media has increased and market is fragmented. Opportunity for Company X is to utilize its strengths and abilities to regenerate in order to produce interesting contents and media surroundings to its customers.

1.2 The Aim, Objectives, Research Question and Limitations

The aim of this research is to provide comprehension about effective implementation of the strategy in customer interface. The data may be utilized also in other companies, for example in another traditional and regional media house which is confronting the same issues as Company X is. On the other hand noticing the customer interfaces in strategic management and is essential for organizations from every field.

The objective of the research is to assist management on evaluating the strategy implementation especially in the customer interface and provide suggestions to process strategy implementation further. This is an essential issue in strategic management because the success of strategy work is highly dependent on the implementation of strategy. The objective of the thesis is achieved by gathering information from both employees and customers of Company X. As the strategy process, creation of the strategy and implementation of it is continuous, possible changes required are able to accomplish during the examination.

These objectives, mentioned in the previous paragraphs, are answered through research questions of the study which is

- How the strategy implementation has succeeded in the customer interface of Company X?

The theoretical framework and the empirical research of case organization assist on answering to this research question. In Company X every employee is obliged to acknowledge the need for the change in one's behaviour and how the chosen strategy effects on everyday work. Strategy is not considered as long-term plan. Instead rapid changes in the media business environment require adjustments of practices and behaviours in the current moment. By creating comprehension of the meaning and demand of the strategy, employees are able to commit to strategy and develop it in co-operation with customers of Company X. It is essential for the organization's success that formal process and structures and also informal processes and relationships are related with key strategic challenges (Johnson, Schoels & Whittington. 2006, p. 396). Customers' views of strategic issues are essential part to be explored in this thesis. Based on this thesis focuses on exploring the strategy implementation on the customer interface.

The evaluation of implementation process of strategy is limited to the b-to-b customer interface of Company X. The internal evaluation of the success of the implementation process concerns Company X's b-to-b sales department. The data will be collected from Sales Managers of Company X. Comprehension of strategy will be evaluated as well as the strategy process. Strategy work is a continuous process and demands updating in changing business environment. Strategy work involves everyone and employees should be committed to the chosen strategy. Dialogue between managers

and employees is an essential part of the strategy work. In order to develop and update the strategy process, evaluation and feedback is required. One strategic objective for the b-to-b sales department is active working with customers including providing effective media solutions for customers. In order to achieve strategic objectives, changes in behaviour are required from every Sales Manager of Company X.

Importance of connecting customers to the process of strategy creation is highlighted. Externally focus is on strategically significant b-to-b customers. Exploration how strategy of Company X supports customers' views is essential in order to evaluate the chosen strategy. The chosen customers have contacts with Company X in various levels of organization. Interaction with b-to-b sales department is not the only basis of evaluating the implementation.

1.3 Introduction of Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this thesis consists of three elements: strategic management, implementation of strategy and implementation of strategy in customer interface. Chapter three consists of discussion of strategic management, which is focused on different views of the subject and the strategy process. This provides the wide basis for comprehension of the subject although topic of the thesis is more about actual implementation of the strategy. Chapter 4 discusses the strategy implementation and chapter 5 strategy implementation in customer interface. These elements of theoretical framework are shown in figure 4.

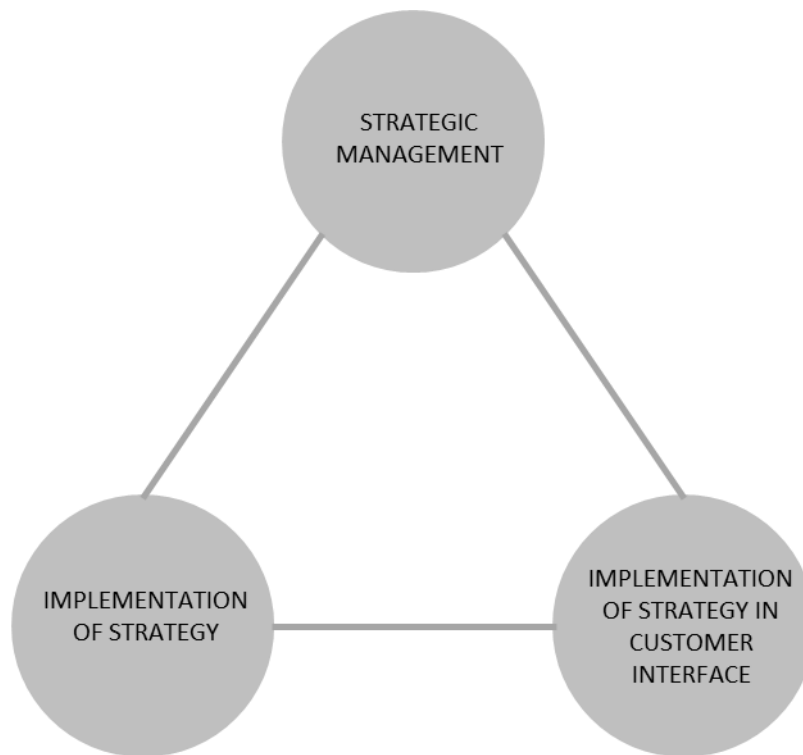


Figure 4: The Theoretical Framework of the Thesis

Although these elements are separated in different chapters of thesis, the subjects are closely connected to each other because instead of being linear, the strategy process should be continuous. The theoretical framework is focused on these subjects and clarifying how the strategy should be implemented in nowadays rapidly changing business environment.

This thesis is focused on the strategic management and implementation of strategy. The creation and evaluation of strategic decisions were outlined from this thesis. In addition to rational views of strategic management and strategic tools, this study highlights more modern views of strategy. The focus is on customer-centric views and more informal processes of strategy. In strategy process of Company X traditional strategy tools, communication of strategy and participation of personnel is utilized when the strategy is implemented. In order to provide value added and different perspective to the strategic management in current business context, the more modern view of the strategy were chosen as an approach in this thesis.

Although issues discussed in this thesis are also close to customer relationship management and marketing, the strategic view was chosen in this thesis. As changes in business environment require actions in whole organization in order to respond to

the customer behaviour and creation of new business opportunities, strategic view to the subject is more appropriate. It is essential to connect strategic objectives of organization to customers' objectives.

After theoretical framework, interviews of Sales Managers and strategically significant customers provide data about the current situation of the implementation of strategy in Company X. In this research Sales Managers and chosen customers present the customer interface of Company X. Interviews focus on evaluating how the implementation of the strategy has succeeded internally and on the other hand if the chosen strategy supports the views of customers of Company X. Based on interviews, actions in order to improve the strategic management of Company X are presented.

2 CASE ORGANIZATION

2.1 Company Presentation

Company X is a leading media group in Päijät-Häme region. The group includes parent company and its subsidiaries. The group possesses also an associated company. Operations of the company are divided into three business units which are media, operations which support media and other operations. (Company X. 2012b.)

Media is the core business of Company X. Media business consists of subscribed newspapers, local radio station, free papers and digital services. In addition to media business the group provides printing and delivery services. The structure of Company X group is presented in the figure 5. (Company X 2012b.)

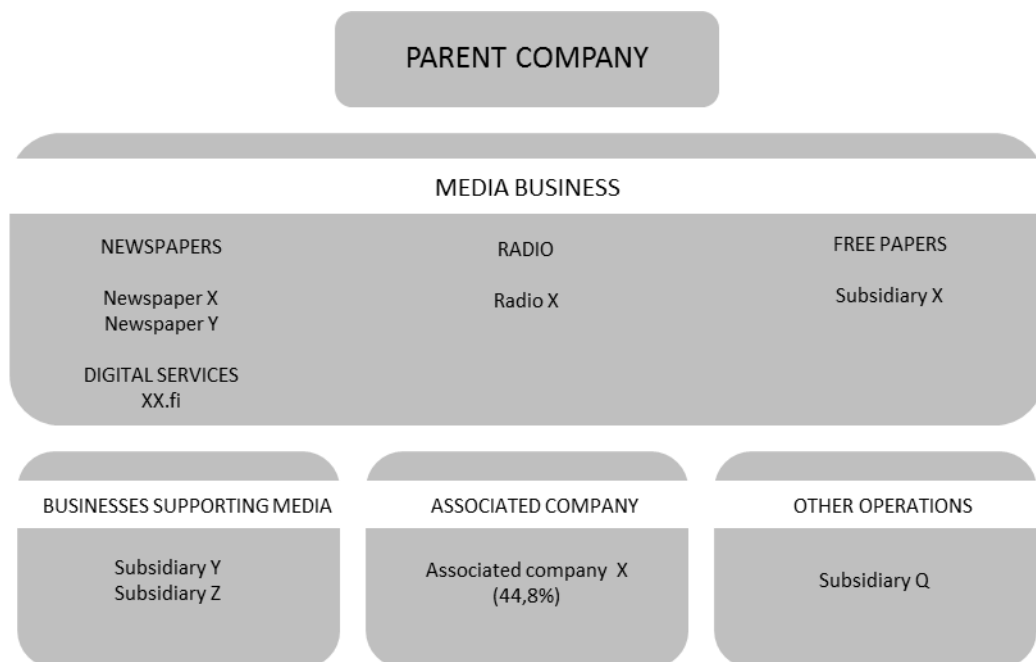


Figure 5. The Structure of Company X (Company X, 2012b)

Total sales of Company X in the year 2012 were 40.6 million Euros. Profit in the year 2012 was 1.5 million Euros. Company X employs 286 full-time persons and 419 part-time deliverers of newspapers. (Company X 2012b.)

2.2 The B-to-B Sales Department of Company X

The media sales department of Company X operates in a matrix organization by offering contacts of newspapers, digital services and radio to advertisers. Company X is the market leader in market area of Lahti. (Company X 2012e.) Shares of media sales from January to September 2013 are shown in figure 6.

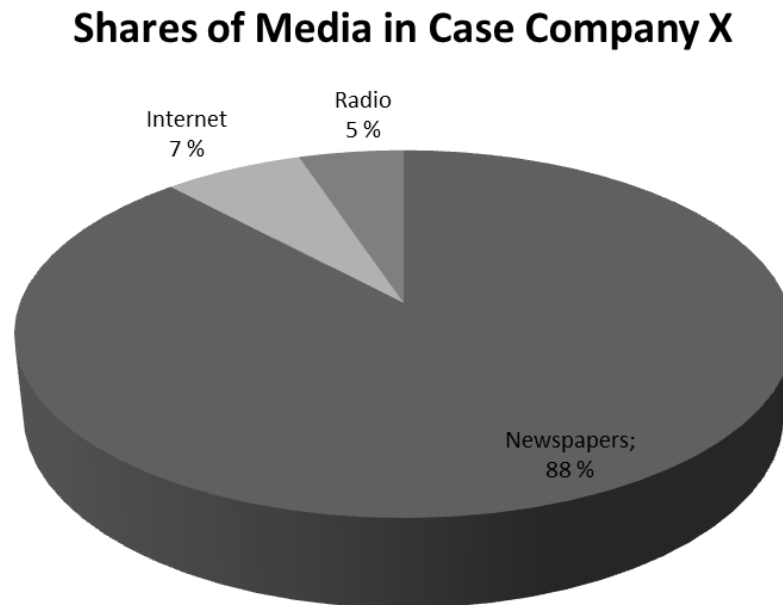


Figure 6: Shares of Media in Company X 1-9/2013

The objective of Company X's b-to-b sales department is to create effective media solutions to advertising customers. B-to-B customers provide little less than half of revenue of media business of Company X (subsidiaries excluded). The b-to-b sales department of Company X is divided into two sales groups. The other group consists of the Sales Director and seven Sales Managers from which two is located in Heinola. These provide media solutions for all media of Company X except free papers. The other sales group emphasizes the possibilities of digital media solution in addition multimedia solution. This sales group consists of Head of Sales, two Sales Managers, one Sales Representative and a Media planner.

The most significant customers of Company X are divided and named to sales persons. B-to-B customers are segmented into key accounts, which volume exceeds

20 000 euros per year, growth accounts and potential customers. Targets are to achieve committed relationships with key accounts and strengthen growth accounts. Active customer acquisition is also accomplished. (Company X 2012e.)

3 STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

3.1 The Definition of Strategy

The word 'strategy' has various definitions by different authors during time. Many of these have similarities to each other. Most commonly strategy associated to a long-term direction or a plan for future of an organization. It includes decisions, actions and goals for organizations' unpredictable changing environment and highlights the competitive advantage of an organization.

Johnson, Schoels & Whittington (2006) defines the strategy as *a direction and scope for organization over long-term, which achieves advantage in changing environment through its configuration of resources and competences with the aim of fulfilling stakeholders' expectations.* (Johnson et al. 2006, p.9).

Mintzberg (1994) and Mintzberg, Ahlstrand & Lampel (1998) defines strategy by five Ps. First, strategy is a **plan** or direction for future. Secondly, strategy is a **pattern**, that consists of behavior in past. Plan indicates what was intended to do and pattern shows realized strategy. Realized strategy includes thinking ahead and allows adaptation of the plan. The strategy is a **position**, which determines the particular products to particular markets. Strategy is also a **perspective**. As the position shows external marketplace, perspective looks inside the grand vision of the organization. Fifth definition for strategy is a **ploy** in order to outwit the opponent or competitor. (Mintzberg 1994, pp. 23-29; Mintzberg et al. 1998, pp.9-15).

Kaplan & Norton (2002), say that the strategy is a hypothesis which announces how an organization moves from its current position towards the wanted uncertain future position (Kaplan & Norton 2002, p. 84).

According to Haberberg and Rieple (2001, p. 32), *strategy is the set of actions through which an organization, by accident or design, develops resources and uses them to deliver services or products in a way which its users find valuable, while meeting the financial and other objectives and constraints imposes by key stakeholders.* The strategy provides unique property to an organization and possibility to renew its competitive advantage in the changing business environment.

Kamensky (2010, p. 18) gives three supplementary definitions for the strategy. According to Kamensky, strategy is a conscious choice of organization's goals and operative directions in the changing environment. It is organization's method to control its business environment. By creating a strategy, an organization is able to control its internal and external elements and interdependency of these in order to succeed.

Freedman & Tregoe (2003, pp. 17-18), define strategy as a frame of choices, which defines the character and the nature of organization's action. This frame consists of limits and parametric of the organization's field of action, which are for example choices of organization's values, competitive advantage and interests of stakeholders.

In order to comprehend the strategic management, it is essential to comprehend the basis of the strategy. Definitions of strategy, described in previous paragraphs, characterize the core issues of strategy. Gaining profitability, competitive advantage and achieving the wanted future is essential in these definitions. Strategy is considered as an organization's plan to success in the future. It is seen as organization's method to affect its business surrounding and create the desired future for the organization. Although issues of these definitions are still valid and essential for organizations nowadays business environment set limits to some of these views. Many of these definitions refer to a future plan although time period of planning has become shorter. The creation of long-term plans is complicated in the current rapidly and irrationally changing world. In some definitions the strategy is also considered as a method to adapt operation towards the changing business environment. Instead of planning the unpredictable future, organizations ability to change actions in co-operation with business environment seems more realistic.

3.2 Views of Strategic Management

As also noticed in the definition of the strategy in the previous chapter, rationality and planning of the future is often seen as a basis for the strategic management. The strategic management is often considered as a rational and analytic determination of causes and making intellectual choices for the future. In rational view of world the strategy process is utilized to create a picture of an organization, business surrounding, desired future and methods to achieve the wanted future. Through this process a logical and rational strategy of the organization evolves. The strategy is divided into

sub-goals, responsibilities and actions, which are followed and measured. The process is controlled. In the rational world the strategy is seen as ideal promise of the desired future. The rational view of strategy, its theories and tools create an essential basis for developing the strategic management of an organization and the role of this view is significant. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, pp. 41-42, 104).

In addition to the rational view of the strategic management, other views have arisen because of the complexity of the subject. According to these, strategic management is evolving, incremental and continuous and cannot be summarized in a plan and implemented. Its objectives are unclear and elements of it develop as the strategy proceeds. These three core areas of the strategic management: analysis, development and implementation are interrelated and both development and implementation of the strategy are closely linked. The strategy emerges during an experimental process and discussion. (Lynch 2009, pp. 16-17, 19.)

Juuti & Luoma (2009) present the complex view of strategy as a next step from the rational view. The complex view of strategy focuses on connectivity, cycles, nonlinearity, sensitivity and self-organization instead of values of the rational view. Interest is in actions of the current moment. Management's objective is together with an organization to recognize and reinforce actions which improves organization's performance in the changing environment. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, p. 174.)

Although the complex and rational view of the strategy vary significantly, the challenge for the management is to connect these views by recognizing rational views and expanding the focus outside of it. The objective for the management is to lead sense and sensibility as well as the ideal future and the current reality. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, p. 175)

As a final step, Juuti and Luoma (2009), present a postmodern view of the strategic thinking. Features of the postmodern time are uncertainty and discontinuation. The postmodern time is in continuous change, hectic and fragmented. The change is so rapid that meanings of long-term plans diminish. Media, communication and images creates meanings in the postmodern time. The image of organization is more essential than its performance in the real-life because the real-life is so complex and fast changing. Information is local stories and created by creating images and repeating

these. Differences between these three views are presented in figure 6. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, pp. 197-199).

	Rational world view	Complex world view	Postmodern world view
Who creates the strategy?	Emphasize the management's role, employees participate on planned process	Everyone in the organization is a strategist	The emphasis is in interaction between the organization and its customers
How is the strategy process?	Formal process, planning and execution are separated	No separated processes, planning and implementation are connected	The strategy is involved in every action
What is the objective of the strategy?	Finding logically the most appropriate course of action	Inspiration and creative atmosphere	The creation of experiences and identity to customers
What are core issues of the strategy work?	Planning of logical and analytical methods and practices	The exploring of relationships and recognition of the changing emotions	Continuous creation of images and stories in dialogue between customers, management and personnel

Figure 7: Features of strategic views (Juuti & Luoma 2009, p. 260).

Strategy is often seen as a long-term plan although planning and forecasting the future in rapidly changing business environment is impossible. On the contrary, term postmodernism refers rapidly changing and chaotic thinking. In the postmodern view the strategic thinking *is an on-going discourse which creates and supplies meanings between customers and personnel*. The strategy is created and defined in social situations through discussions and relationships. The postmodern strategy creates images and meanings to customers and allows also customers to create meanings of the organization. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, pp. 203, 219). Also Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004) refers to the importance of these images and experiences to customers. According to them, the most fundamental change of the competition is in creating value to customers. Value is centered in experiences of consumers instead of products and service. (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004, p. 137.)

Interests of postmodern strategists are the same as in the rational view: what are organization's position and the desired future and how to create core competence and find new markets and concepts. Organizations' focus is to create and produce positive

images to its clients in order to succeed. Every action done in the organization should be reflected to contacts with a customer. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, pp. 219-220).

Strategy is choices about how organization is and how it wishes to be. In postmodern view, essential part of the strategy work is to determine relations between the marketing communication, brand and encountering the customers. The other objective of strategy work is that the image of organization is equivalent with the reality. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, p. 222).

The strategy could be considered stories, which make the strategy more comprehensible and justified. These stories create possibilities to customers in order to identify with the organization and its products. Strategy is part of the organizations', its members' and customers' dialogue. Stories of the organization appeal to feelings. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, pp. 234-235).

The postmodern view of the strategy work focuses on the present. It acknowledges that the organization has its past and the future is unpredictable. Methods of the postmodern strategy view are dialogue, stories and creating images. The organization is obliged to define how it is able to modify encounters with various customers in order to create discourse and stories. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, pp. 257-248, 250.)

As focus of this thesis is on the strategy implementation is in the customer interface, offers the postmodern view of the strategy a fresh approach to the subject by emphasising the meaning of customer encounters and images. The media business surrounding is also an example of rapid and continuous change where rational long-term views of strategy are inadequate. Based on the postmodern view, the objective for the strategy is to create the image to customers that is equivalent with the future. In order to succeed in this objective, effective co-operating and dialogue between different operations of organization and customers is required. The organization is obliged to operate towards the same objective and image of organization. Still strategic management and this co-operation between departments requires controlling, defining the objectives and measurements as every employee of the organization are not in direct contact with customers. Combining these views effectively and adequately would be most preferable.

3.3 Combining Rational and Postmodern Definitions of Strategy

Because of the complexity of the subject and the rapidly changing, hectic business environment, wider definition to strategy is required as the future is unpredictable and reference to the long-term plan is no longer equivalent. Juuti & Luoma (2009) and Lynch (2009) among others have created definitions for the strategy, which correspond to the demands of the current business environment and current views of strategy.

According to Juuti and Luoma (2009), the strategy is possible to define as a long-term direction of an organization and key elements for its success. It is organization's ability to utilize its resources in the changing business environment and the core competence of an organization. Strategy is also an answer to markets and shareholders demands. This definition is reflected in the rational view of the strategic management. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, p. 25-26).

When the world and the business surroundings become more complex, wider definitions for the strategy are demanded. In the complex world the strategy is based on repeatable and reinforced interaction. The objective for the strategic management is establishing, reinforcing and maintaining the positive development based on interaction in the current moment. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, p. 278).

In the postmodern view, strategy is discourse in organization which assists customers to develop their identity and strategic management means offering impulses to customers. Combining these definitions, Juuti & Luoma (2009) define strategy as the organization's will, actions and speech and strategic management is producing this will, action and speech. In this definition, the strategy involves the every member of organization and its interfaces. Willing refers to goals and intentions to achieve these goals. Action is interaction and speech refers to producing meanings which creates the identity and images. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, p. 279.)

Also Lynch (2009) presents two definitions about the strategic management and a combination of these two definitions. The first definition, prescriptive strategic management, is based on the rational view of strategy and second is more modern, emergent strategic management. According to the prescriptive view, strategy is objective that has been defined in advance and main elements of it are developed

beforehand. The strategic management is fundamental decisions about organization's future direction including its purpose, resources and how it interacts in its operation field. People, finance, production method and environment including its customers are part of the creation of the organization strategy. The definition of the strategic management is the identification of organizations' purpose. This view suggests that it is possible to plan strategy in advance. (Lynch 2009. pp. 2-5, 37)

An alternative and more dynamic definition for the strategy is that its final objective is unclear and its elements are developed during its life when the strategy proceeds. Strategic management is finding market opportunities, experimenting and developing the competitive advantage over time. (Lynch 2009, pp. 2-5, 42.)

Based on these two different views Lynch (2009) defines strategic management as follows: *The field of strategic management deals with the major intended and emergent initiatives taken by general managers on behalf of owners, involving and utilization of resources, to enhance the performance of firms in their external environment.* (Lynch 2009, pp. 2, 5-6.)

Combining the rational nature of the strategy and noticing the features of current business environments offers these wider definitions of strategy more proper approaches to the strategic management. Both definitions still include goals which are able achieved in co-operation of employees and interfaces of organization in current moment. According to previous views intended and emergent actions effects on strategy as well images and identity created to customers. These provide the more comprehensive definition for the strategy in nowadays business surroundings.

3.4 Strategy Process

Strategy process develops message to the organization that recent problems in its business environment are possible to be solved. (Juuti & Luoma 2009. p. 245.) Traditionally strategic management is seen as rational and linear process, which consists of three core areas: strategic analysis, strategy development and implementation of strategy. Strategic analysis includes examination of organizations relationship with its environment and resources and identification of vision, mission and objectives. After the strategic analysis of organization strategy options should be

developed and selected. Finally, these options have to be implemented in practice. (Lynch 2009, pp. 13-16.)

Kaplan & Norton (2002) define five principles to create strategic orientated organization. These five principles are

- 1. To present the strategy as operative terms.** This means defining the strategy through terms of action.
- 2. To adapt organization to the strategy** by creating collective objectives in order to link different business units and departments to the strategy.
- 3. To participate everyone in strategy in daily work.** The strategy must be transferred from top to bottom to every employee of organization.
- 4. To develop the strategy as a continuous process.** Instead of creating and updating the strategy annually should strategy work be considered a process and developed through new ideas and understandings
- 5. To implement the change through strong and effective management.** The most important factor of succeeding in implementation of strategy is commitment and activeness of executive group. (Kaplan & Norton 2002, pp. 9-18)

The principle in the strategic orientated organization is that every employee is obliged to understand the strategy and support the strategy in one's action. Well planned and understood strategy offers benefits to an organization when its limited resources are integrated and focused towards same goal. Importance of committing and motivating employees to accomplish the strategy is essential. (Kaplan&Norton 2002, pp. 11, 14, 235).

The traditional view of the strategic planning involves structured strategic planning system and implementation of selected strategy while more modern views refers that the strategy process does not have a final objective and final outcome may be unknown. (Lynch 2009. p. 67). Mintzberg (1994) also pointed out fallacies of rational view of strategy process. According to Mintzberg (1994), the future cannot be predicted and planned, because of discontinuities. The problem occurs also when

strategists are detached from operations. The powerful strategy process is created in the context where strategy has to work. The pure formal strategy process does not allow strategic thinking in the organization. (Mintzberg 1994, pp. 240, 273).

Mintzberg (1994) describes the strategy process as a fundamentally dynamic process which corresponds to dynamic conditions. The dynamic process is required because the environment's change is unpredictable. (Mintzberg 1994. pp. 241, 245).

According to Lynch (2009), organization's strategic management could be considered a process where the strategy is derived as a result of repeated experimentation. The strategy is more emerged than actually planned. The advantage of it is that the strategy is related to practices of the organization which allows flexibility to respond the market change. (Lynch 2009. pp. 43-44, 67.)

Some authors utilize features of both traditional and more modern views when describing the nature strategy process. According to Mantere, Aaltonen, Ikävalko, Hämäläinen, Suominen & Teikari. (2006), the objective for the strategy process is to create and develop the strategy of the organization. The strategy process consists of deciding the strategic policy, planning of actions and the evaluation of success of strategy. The process includes also communication, measurement, reporting and rewarding. The process ensures that every choice and decision in organization's every level direct organization to the desired direction. Operations in the organization demand interaction and connection between the strategy and practices. The strategy process is continuous. (Mantere et al. 2006, pp. 118-119.) According to Kamensky (2010), the strategy process should be both discipline and creative; it is important that used methods are analytic and creative and atmosphere is creative. The participation of key persons of organization in creation, implementation and development of the strategy is essential. The other members of the organization should understand the connection of the strategy and practices. (Kamensky 2010, pp. 63-64.) The strategy is also social practice. It is presented in everyday lives of members' organization. The challenge for the strategic management is to clarify whose actions in organization should be explored. (Mantere 2005, p. 117.) Another challenge is to define which actions of the organization's members actually are strategic (Jarzabowski, Balogun & Seidl 2007, p. 5).

The comprehension, abilities, state and will are features, which direct employees' actions and effect on employees' actions in the strategy process. Comprehension of the strategy defines how employees understand the strategy and the strategy process. It is essential that employees understand the benefit of the strategic process. The ability refers to employees' knowledge and attitude to operate strategic. Ability is required also to connect the strategy with practices. The will is motivation to act strategic and the state is how organization supports and allows strategic actions. (Mantere etc. 2006, p. 121-123.)

The strategy process is successful when members of the organization understand the meanings of the strategy. When the process is open and continuous employees are able to comprehend the strategy. The objective for strategy process in the organizational level is to create practices and common processes. The successful strategy process develops interaction between the strategy and practices and creates meanings for individuals work. The strategy process creates common practice for the organization which every member of the organization acknowledges. The process is continuous entity which directs actions towards common direction instead of solitary actions. In the operative level strategy process assists on creating practices, obtaining feedback and measure development and implementation of the strategy. (Mantere etc. 2006, pp. 125-126, 133.)

Essential in the strategy process is that practices and strategy are aligned. Practices effect on contents of the strategy. The challenge for the strategy process is to create meanings for practices of units or individuals of organization. The emphasis of dialogue between the management and employees is significant when the strategy is created, executed and aligned with practices. (Mantere etc. 2006, p. 150.) According to Juuti & Luoma (2009), postmodern organizations are more professional organizations and networks. The postmodern organization is based on opportunities and utilizing these opportunities instead of control and from top to bottom leadership. This demands that every member of the organization is open to regeneration. Flexibility and organization's ability to renew its operations are keys to the success. Ideas, knowledge, relationships and trust are essential. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, pp. 200, 240).

The strategy of the organization is accomplished through practices. Defining these practices in the organization and evaluation of these is complicated. Basis for the evaluation is planned and official strategy process. The appearance of the strategic actions is evaluated through meanings of these practices in employees of everyday work. Occasionally these strategic actions are possible to evaluate afterwards.

(Mantere etc. pp. 169-170.)

The ultimate question for success of the strategy is how organization accomplishes in the operation field. Acknowledged actions of employees are not necessarily equivalent to support the strategy of the organization. In the hectic working environment every decision of employees does not necessarily support the chosen strategy. Development of unacknowledged routines in strategic process supports accomplishment of the strategy. (Mantere etc. 2006. p. 163.)

The success of the strategy process should be evaluated through two basic questions: Does the organization focus on the right issues and does the organization perform right? In the strategy process management's mission is to evaluate how successful the chosen strategy is, how the strategy is implemented in practices and to ensure that the strategy is appropriate. (Freedman&Tregoe 2003, p.198.) Evaluation of actual validity of the strategy is should also be accomplished (Mantere etc. 2006, p. 155).

The strategic objectives and measurement of these motivate employees whose input is essential in order to accomplish the organization's strategy. Organization should create motivating evaluation practices based on its organizational culture. While other members of organization require specific, safe objectives to follow, other are inspired of the creative interpretation and accomplishment of the strategy. (Mantere etc. 2006, p. 172.)

In this thesis, the examination of strategy process is based on features mentioned in this chapter. As shown in the context of this thesis, media business environment is in tremendous change and predicting of future is impossible. Dynamics of both rational and modern views of the implementation of the strategy is taken into account in this study. As Sales Managers of Company X presents the key persons of organization, creative participation in the strategy work is preferable and evaluation of their views of the strategy process is essential. Finding competitive advantage from new solutions demands fast reaction to signals from environment. Utilizing the knowledge of the

customer interface is required in order to develop. Comprehension, attitudes, strategy's effects on actions and the nature of strategy process are significant issues when implementation of the strategy is evaluated. The ultimate questions of organization's performance and ability to focus on the right issues are replied through interviews of customers.

3.5 Developing of the Strategic Management

The rational view of the strategic management is formal and logical. Planning and execution are separated. The ability to react in the changing business environment is slow. When developing the strategic management from rational view of strategy, the focus should be in the strategic thinking instead of strategic management. Instead of periodic strategic planning, analysis of current situation, this requires conversation and effective use of strategy tools in order to make appropriate choices and plans and clarify the objects of organization. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, p. 262.)

When the business surrounding becomes more complex and unexpected, creation of relevant plans becomes problematic. In the complex world the difference between the strategy and its implementation depends on differences between the management and operations. When the strategy is not related to operations, the strategy guides actions to the false direction and the meaning of the strategy diminish. Gap between the management and the strategic thinking become larger and employees are less committed to the strategy. The rational view of strategy becomes less valid. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, pp. 263-265.)

In the complex world where goals and the future are unpredictable, locality and the current moment define the operation field of organizations. Desires and the reality of customers is a driver for action. The meaning of encountering the customer increases and the emphasis in strategic management is customer driven. The focal point of the strategic management is close to operations. The objective for the management is to search successful practices in operations and to inspire employees to copy these practices. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, pp. 268-270.)

The post modern view of the strategy offers an appropriate approach to this thesis which highlights the importance of the customer interface. The postmodern strategic thinking is not based on models; instead the objective is to be open to customers' view

in current moment. Interest is to interpret customers' views of the organization and its products and services. Interaction is more essential than models and structures in the postmodern view because every encounter with customers is unique. Dialogue with customers is required in order to inspire customers to interpret the situations. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, pp. 271-273.)

Although the postmodern view of strategy varies from traditional alignments of the strategy work, some features of former views are still valid. According to Juuti & Luoma (2009), an organization is obliged to have knowledge of all, rational, complex and postmodern views in order to develop its strategic management. Basis of strategic management is still rational. Lynch (2009) highlights the possibility to analyse strategic tasks from both prescriptive and emergent perspectives in order to arise important issues for development of the strategy. The combination of strategic approaches allows different aspects to arise. (Lynch 2009, p. 731). Also Barney (1991) argues that formal processes of strategy creation may be effective in some environment and ineffective in other, whereas more informal strategy-making processes may be effective and create sustainable competitive advantage (Barney 1991, p. 114). The objective of the study is to connect postmodern views to rational strategic management in order to develop strategic thinking in case organization.

Utilizing effectively but creatively traditional tools in the strategy work is justified when these are used to support the postmodern objectives. Objectives for utilizing these methods are to shock the organization, to support the creative change and to create images and experiences to customers. The strategic management requires employees of organization participation in the strategy work. Strategic tools must be utilized in order to inspire every employee to be a strategist. The speech of strategy must communicate itself through employees to customers and create value added and experiences to them. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, pp. 256-257.) How the strategy speech appears in customer interface of Company X will be evaluated also on this thesis.

Juuti & Luoma (2009) describes five levels of the strategic management. These levels are shown in Figure 7. It is possible that organization is simultaneously in several level of chart in its operations. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, 274-275.)

Level 0	There does not exist a written strategy in an organization or communication and the discussion of the strategy
Level 1	Strategy is created. The planning and execution of strategy are separated. Random tools are utilized.
Level 2	Discussion of the strategy is continuous in management and the strategy is implemented through communication. Several strategy tools are utilized.
Level 3	Management thinks strategic. Management utilizes proper strategy tools and personnel participates planning and implementation of strategy by using appropriate methods of communication and group discussions.
Level 4	Organization recognizes influences of every action. Management's focus is to develop creative organization. Most of the employees think strategic. Conversation between management and employees is open dialogue when everyday actions and views of managers influence to the strategy and operations.
Level 5	Organization is focused on producing significant experiences to its customers by using virtual and dramatic methods and stories. Experiences of customers are drivers for actions. Thinking, action and feelings create the inspiring strategy in every moment.

Figure 8: Levels of Strategic Management (Juuti & Luoma 2009, p. 274).

Developing the strategic management in the first level of chart requires acknowledgement of the strategic management and strategic methods in order to achieve next level of the strategic management. Step from level 2 to 3 requires managing employees, developing organization and organization's methods of communication simultaneously. The next step demands radical changes in operations by accepting personnel's experiences so that these begin to guide actions in the organization. In order to access level 5 organization's action are inspired and employees of organization are able to recognize emotional and open processes and use these abilities in customer dialogue. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, pp. 275-276.)

The emphasis of customer interaction is significant in order to develop the strategic management of the organization. The strategist on fifth level is an employee of organization, who is genuinely able to listen to the customer and clarify the discourse of the organization and create positive and desirable images to the customer. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, p. 277.)

This thesis focuses on exploring the features which assists Company X to develop its strategic management and to recognize the meaning of customers' views when strategy is created. Strategist on the fifth level recognizes the demands of customers. The customer-centric approach to strategy is required in order to produce value to

customers in every actions of the organization. Organization's and its members' ability to listen to its customers is essential. Exploration of issues presented in fifth level of strategic management provides view for this thesis in order to develop strategic management of Company X.

4 IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGY

According to Jarzabkowski et al. (2007), the strategy is not considered some property of the organization but instead something that members of organization do (Jarzabkowski et al. 2007. p. 6). The implementation of the strategy means putting strategy into practice. The objective for implementation is to deliver the mission and objectives of organization. (Lynch 2009, pp. 488-489.) The implementation of strategy is often the most difficult part of the strategy process (Haberberg & Rieple 2001, p. 535; Kamensky 2010, p. 319).

The accomplishment of strategy is shown in continuous, conscious and unconscious choices and decision in everyday operations. The common direction of the organization assists an individual on decision making. Concrete, open and reasonable strategy supports accomplishment and commitment to the strategy. (Mantere et al. 2006, pp, 21-23.)

4.1 The Implementation Process

The implementation indicates how the strategy actually acts in practice. The successful implementation of the strategy is effected by the strategy itself, the management, learning and interaction. The implementation of the strategy consists of communication, connecting operative management to the strategy and professional strategy work. (Kamensky 2010, p. 330.)

The implementation process begins by specifying general strategic objectives and turning them into specific tasks and deadlines. Corporate objectives are translated into objectives for main areas of the business and then into tasks and action programs. Challenge is specifying these tasks in fast changing environment. When the environment changes rapidly, tasks should be flexible, close monitored and quickly responded by those who operate closest to the environment change. After specifying objectives and tasks, allocation of resources and budgets should be done effectively and strategically. Final state is to monitoring and controlling in order to ensure that objectives are achieved. Strategy implementation should be considered a continuous process. Implementation is not just single event but series of activities which shape the strategy. (Lynch 2009, pp. 491, 495, 497.)

Instead of separating formulation and implementation of strategy, strategic thinking and acting should be associated together (Mintzberg 1994, p. 285). Making strategic decisions and implementing it is not simple. The chosen strategy is affected by people involved in it. Managers and employees of organization, its customers and suppliers influence on the strategy. Also the environment may change while implementing the strategy. Environment within the strategy operates and main actions of strategy and processes of organization should be evaluated in every strategic decision. Controlling the process is most problematic because it is influenced by the way people develop and implement the strategy in the changing business environment. (Lynch 2009, pp. 15-16.) The leaders' objective is to monitor the impacts of strategic decisions closely and ensure the possibilities to reformulate the chosen strategy during its implementation (Mintzberg 1994, p. 287.)

The operative management has the responsibility for the strategy work but the strategy must involve the whole organization. The management leads strategy work and owns the responsibility for its success or failure. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, pp. 29-30).

According to Juuti & Luoma (2009), challenge for the strategist is to attend every employee of the organization to the strategy work in order to develop their own position and work environment. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, p. 245). Actual accomplishers of the strategy are members of the organization who are not necessarily expertise of strategy work (Mantere etc. 2006. p. 10). Still involvement in strategy process is higher, when person has actually participated in the strategy process. (Lynch 2009, p. 496).

The interaction in strategic thinking and actions is essential (Mintzberg 1994, 292). Formal approaches of the strategic management have emphasis top-down view, where managers made decisions and employees implemented it. This view is not valid in nowadays organization where employees possess the key knowledge and the change is constant. (Johnson etc. 2006. p. 396). Also Mantere etc. (2006) agree with this view. According to them, directive from top to bottom management is ineffective when implementing the strategy. Those who create the strategy are not experts of all of employees' actions in the organization. (Mantere etc. 2006, p. 56.) In addition to the top management, middle managers and lower-level employees are significant strategic actors although they necessarily do not have a formal strategic role. Although action

of these may unintended effect on the strategy, these actions are essential for gaining competitive advantage (Jarzabkowski etc. 2007, p. 12.)

Monitoring and controlling of the implementation process is required to evaluate how strategies are implemented and how environment is changing. The importance of monitoring increases when the strategy becomes as a continuous process and when organization interprets and process information about its environment. Controlling system should monitor the main elements of the strategy and strategic objectives. Both qualitative and quantitative evaluation is required. (Lynch 2009, pp. 506-507.) There is diversity of how the strategy should be evaluated. While on the other hand strategy should be measured through tightly explicated targets, employees should also have freedom to understand the meaning of the strategy to one's own work (Mantere 2005, p. 167).

According to Mantere et al. (2006), modern method for directing implementation of strategy is to measure employees' comprehension of the strategy (Mantere et al. 2006. p. 56). Also objectives of employees should be adjusted to the organization's strategy. It is essential that employees are conscious of their ability to effect on practical implementation of the strategy. These objectives should be measured, and employees should be rewarded if the strategy work is successful. (Kaplan&Norton 2002, p. 236.)

On the other hand instead of measuring of objectives of the strategy emphasis Mantere etc. (2006) trust between producers and accomplishers of the strategy. Strategists' ability to trust employees will and abilities to improve their actions in order to benefit the organization is essential. Employees are experts of their own actions so their interpretations of strategy is often more accurate than managers views. It is also important that employees acknowledge that communication of the strategy is open. Creation of strategic thinking in organization demands continuous dialogue between producers and accomplishers of strategy and evaluation of possible feedback. (Mantere etc. 2006, p. 56).

4.2 Strategic Communication

Kaplan & Norton (2002) say that the first phase of actual implementation of the strategy is communication through an effective and comprehensive communication processes to employees in order to create understanding of the strategy. Organizations

ability to communicate is essential in order to succeed in implementation of strategy. (Kaplan&Norton 2002, pp. 238-239).

Strategic communication has several objectives. The main objective for communication is to develop comprehension of the strategy. Lynch (2009) defines four objectives for strategic communication, which are to ensure the everyone's comprehension, to allow confusion to be resolved, to communicate clearly to the judgments, assumptions and possibly the choice made during the strategy decision phase and to ensure that the organization is properly coordinated. (Lynch 2009, p. 498.) According to Mantere et al (2006), the objective for successful strategic communication is to make both producers and accomplishers of the strategy to understand strategic choices and the consequences of strategy. Strategic decisions demand often changes in operations of whole organization and importance of comprehending common objectives is essential. (Mantere etc. 2006, p. 18.) Freedman and Tregoe (2003) say that objective for communication is to change practices. Employees should be motivated and committed to new strategy. Everyone involved in are obliged to understand the meaning of the change in one's personal life. (Freedman&Tregoe 2003, p. 185).

Members of an organization resist change. This provides stability and predictability of the behaviour and prevents chaos in organizations. The disadvantage of this resistance is that it inhibits adaptation and progress. When change in behaviours is required is it possible to reduce this resistance for example by communication and participation. When employees understand drivers of change and are part of the change process increases commitment to made decisions. (Robbins 2001, pp. 545, 548). The accomplishment of new strategies demands ability of transformation. The fear of future is often driver for rapid change but good leaders are also able to motivate the change by creating visions of the better future. (Kaplan&Norton 2002, p. 367).

Practices and rituals of employees are often obstacles for new strategies. Communication has often been seen as tool for diminish the gap between old operations and new thinking. (Luoma & Juuti 2009, p. 244.) According to Mintzberg et al (1998), in contrast with this view, the best method to manage change is to let it occur and allow people to transform their own behaviour. (Mintzberg et al.1998, p. 324). The gap between strategy and its implementation could also evolve because

strategists and those who accomplish strategy misunderstand or do not listen to each other. Solitary interpretation and understanding of the strategy in order to diminish this gap is created through communication and co-operation of members of the organization. (Mantere 2006, pp. 10-11.)

Strategic communication is succeeded when the strategy is comprehended. Communication of the strategy is a continuous process. Awakening interest towards the strategy and creating new practices is simpler than creating a long-term maintenance of it. Strategy work should be continuous and new ideas and views brought in order to arouse and maintain interest. (Mantere etc. 2006, pp. 39, 154.)

Understanding and the support for strategy is created most effectively when communication and discussion of the strategy is open in both internal and external level of the organization. When communication is open, employees have better ability to comprehend the actions and behavior that supports the strategy. Also stakeholders must understand and rely on the strategy process. (Freedman&Tregoe 2003, p. 184). Importance of the strategy communication to stakeholders such as customers, press and other partners has increased recently because of issues of the organizational image and capital markets. It is essential that the strategy and an image of organization are equivalent to the reality. (Kamensky 2010, p. 330.)

Evaluation of comprehension of strategy is essential. Understanding of the strategy only in organizational level is inadequate. When the producer of the strategy is able to express meanings of the strategy in the organizational level the accomplisher of the strategy must define the meaning of the strategy in one's own actions. Implementation of strategy requires changes in employee's own behavior and this measures the actual comprehension of the strategy. The objective for the employee is to justify own actions towards the strategic goals. (Mantere etc. 2006, pp. 60-62.) The measurement of comprehension of the strategic message and the observance of strategy should be accomplished. According to Kaplan and Norton (2002), the final question for evaluation of communication is to define how many of employees teach the strategy to others. (Kaplan&Norton 2002, pp. 238-239).

Comprehension of strategy requires support of interpretation and understanding of abstract issues of strategy. Experiences and inspiration of members of organization are

more effective method to implement the strategy than passively heard message of strategy. (Mantere etc. 2006, p. 39.)

4.3 Strategic Dialogue

According to Juuti and Luoma (2009), instead of communication, organization should utilize respectful interaction in order to support creativity and experiences and to develop extensive change in postmodern organization. Negotiation and discussion is more preferable and motivating method to implement the strategy than instructing (Lynch 2009, p. 496). The strategist is obliged to make every member of the organization to participate in strategy work and assist them to develop their own working environment by supporting them to express their own thoughts in order to benefit the organization. (Juuti & Luoma 2009. p. 245.) Interactive discussion and negotiation of the strategy and responsibilities allows strategically thinking employees to express their ideas and feel ownership about their work (Mantere 2005, 175). Also Vaara & Mantere (2008) argues that discourse is one essential part of complex social practices which constitutes strategy as practice. Role of discourse is essential in order to create participation and avoid problems of implementation of the strategy. (Vaara & Mantere 2008, p. 344.)

The existence and the importance of strategic dialogue is one aspect to explore in this thesis in order to avoid resistance and create inspiring atmosphere for the strategic management. Demand for the strategic dialogue is between management and employees but also between organization and its customers. In this chapter the focus is on the dialogue between the organization and its employees. The last section of the theoretical framework focuses more on strategy implementation in customer interface.

The objective for employees is to define the meaning of the strategy in organizational and personal level. In order to achieve this goal employee must interpret, accept and learn the strategy. In this process dialogue between producers and accomplishers of strategy is required so that producer is able receive feedback and accomplisher of the strategy is allowed to active strategic thinking. The circle of strategic communication and comprehension is shown in figure 8. (Mantere et al. 2006, 62-64.)

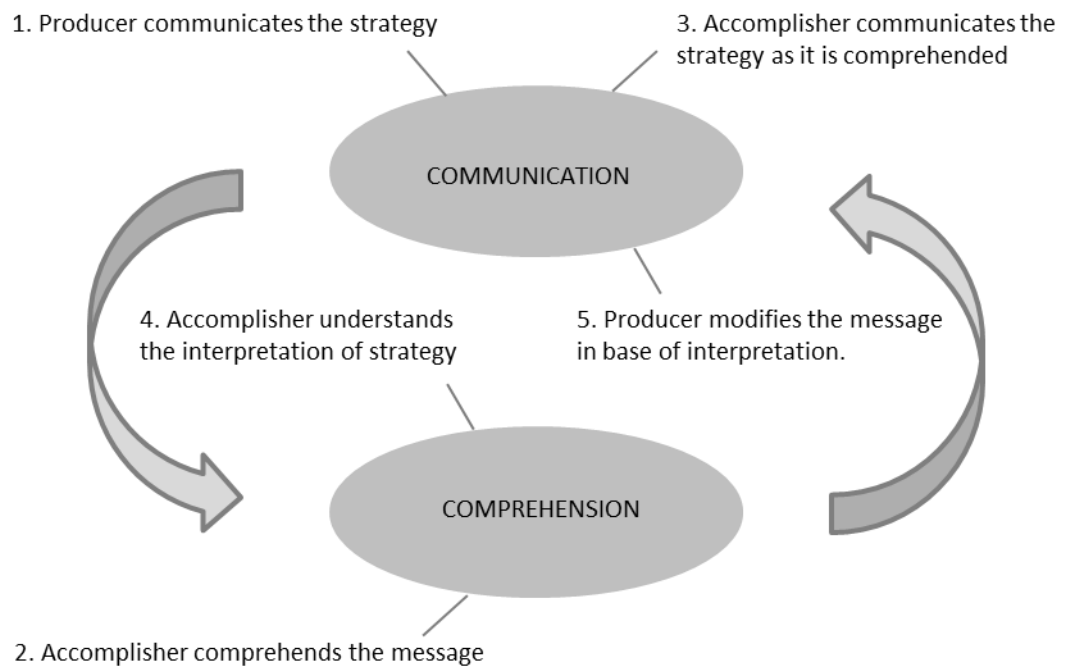


Figure 9. Communication and comprehension of strategy (Mantere et al. 2006, p. 64.)

Employees could not be obliged to participate in the strategy work. Instead they should be inspired to participate actively. Traditional view of the strategy emphasizes the role of management and process in the strategy work when postmodern strategy demands open interaction and conversation between organization, its employees and customers. Genuine conversation is created in moments of connection without formula. Strategy is shown in every action in the organization. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, p. 259).

According to Vaara & Mantere (2008), self-actualization, dialogization and concretization are discourses which are required to create participation in strategy work. Self-actualization means discourse focusing on employees' ability to outline and define objectives to them. Dialogization requires various groups of people to participate in strategic decision making and negotiation. Concretization is considered social grounding for employees' meaningful strategic roles. Focusing on these, passive resistance and withdrawal from strategy work are avoided. (Vaara & Mantere 2008, pp. 366-368, 370, 377.)

Dialogue between strategist and accomplisher of strategy is beneficial. According to Mantere etc. (2006), genuine interaction assists strategist to understand better the strategy. Employee of organization is able to describe effects of strategy in practice

and offers valuable information to the strategist. (Mantere etc. 2006, p. 55.) Mantere (2005) argues that creative freedom and allowance of strategic thinking effects on the success of the strategy (Mantere 2005, p. 179).

4.4 Strategic Role

Individuals' active interpretation of the strategy allows strategic actions and implementation of the strategy in one's own operations. Employees actions effects how the strategy is accomplished in the organization. The strategic role describes employee's actions of implementing the strategy to one's own work. The strategic role is shown in choices, decisions, speech and actions. Strategic role is also evaluation, criticizing and changing the strategy. (Mantere etc. 2006, pp. 81, 86.) The strategy is performed over time and skills of employees. Dealing with practices has significant effects on outcomes of the strategy (Vaara & Whittington, 2012).

The strategic role of employees could be passive or active. Passive employees participate in the strategy process by receiving the strategic message, while active members are interested of the strategy and interested to develop it. Both roles are important. The role of the management is to find balance between these roles in the organization and ensure that enough activists exist. (Mantere etc.2006, pp.87, 89.)

According to Mantere etc. (2006), in the strategy process individual or unit of organization is able to create the role to itself by defining the ideal state, estimating it and developing action to achieve the state. Skilled strategic performance involves improvisation instead of strict adhesion (Vaara & Whittington 2012). Developing the ideal role is based on organization's objectives and the desired future of the organization. The process of creating the role should involve every member of the unit. Next the role is brought to the current moment and utilized in everyday work and the success of it is analyzed. Members of unit have the responsibility operate and evaluate own actions according to chosen role. Every role should be connected to the strategy of the organization. (Mantere etc. 2006, pp. 90-95.)

Employees of the organization are obliged to execute the chosen strategy. The acknowledgement of one's own strategic role requires individual thinking of own actions. The development of strategic role is a process of learning and should be

accomplished when changes in actions of a unit are necessarily in strategic view. (Mantere etc. 2006. pp. 111, 113.)

5 IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGY IN CUSTOMER INTERFACE

The final chapter of the theoretical framework of this thesis is focused on implementation of the strategy in customer interface. Implementation of the strategy to employees of the organization is recognized as the most significant but also difficult issue to organization's strategy management. Instead the strategy implementation in customer interface is often paid less attention in literature although the influence of customers to the strategy is recognized. As implementation of the strategy in general, strategy implementation in customer interface is also a complex issue for organizations to accomplish. As this research evaluates strategy implementation in the customer interface, the aspect of customer-driven strategy is significant. Finally customers define weather the organizations and its strategy is focused on right issues and does the performance of the organization support strategic objectives of customers.

The traditional creation of the strategy notices customers on analysis of the business surrounding of an organization. Nowadays networks and connections, including customer relationships, are significant part of this environment and essential features of organizations success also strategically. Actors outside the firm shape organization's strategy indirectly (Jarzabkowski et al, 2007. p. 13). Networks and connections create the social capital of an organization. Without this social capital the organization is unable to implement its strategy to other organizations beneficially. The effective strategy is inadequate; the strategy must be aligned with strategies of other organizations. A strategic challenge for organization is to connect its strategy to organization's network and surroundings (Figure 9). (Mantere et al. 2006, pp. 175, 177-178.)

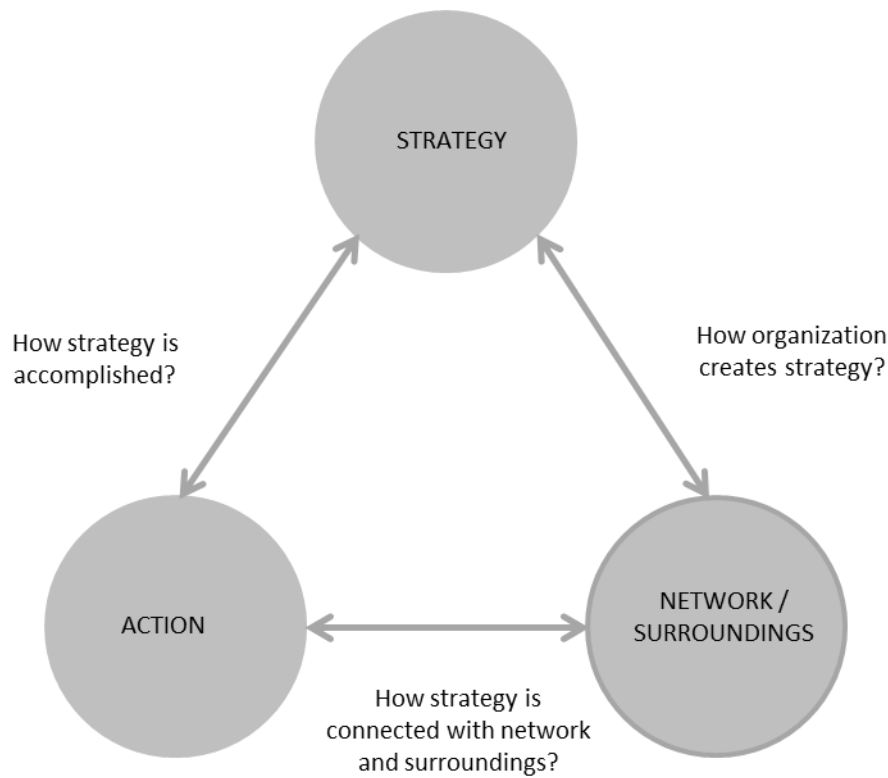


Figure 10: Strategic Challenge in Networks (Mantere et al. 2006, p. 175.)

Stakeholders of organization are not necessarily considered drivers of the strategy formulation and implementation. It is essential that interests of organizations' stakeholders, especially employees and customers, are the basis for creating the strategy. Because stakeholders are able to influence on organizations ability to achieve its objectives, actions of stakeholders may effect on organizations decisions and performance. Strategic stakeholder management is required to enter the strategically significant stakeholders to organization's decision making. Managerial attention to stakeholders' interests may affect positively on the financial performance of an organization. (Berman, Wicks, Kotha & Jones. 2006, pp. 491-492, 503.)

5.1 Customer-driven strategy

The importance of customers in developing the strategic management is significant. The objective for the strategy management is also to develop customer-driven strategies in order to increase revenue and create competitive advantage. Attracting and retaining customers is organization's method to obtain long-term profits. Financial measures or profitability not solitarily ensure the growth. Customer loyalty and satisfaction are required also. According to Lynch (2009), the strategy is customer

driven when every function of an organization is directed towards customer satisfaction. (Lynch 2009, pp. 521, 527.) If the organization is engaged to implement the strategy in customer relationships, it needs to ensure that focus is on customer and strategy is high quality and well executed. The unsuccessful implementation process affects negatively on customer satisfaction. (Colgate & Danaher, 2000. p.385).

Customer knowledge enables firms to develop customer-specific strategies (Campbell 2003, p.376). Developing a customer-driven strategy begins by identifying the actual and potential customers. Comprehension of customers, responsiveness to their needs and providing value to customers are main elements of the customer-driven organization. The customer-driven strategy involves everyone in organization also functions which are not directly connected to customers. (Lynch 2009, p. 526.)

When the customer-centric approach is an objective for the strategy in addition to successful encounters with customers, every process of organization must support this. Developing of customer driven organization demands improving actions and practices in the whole organization. Images and experiences of the organization are not solitarily created in customer interface. (Mantere et al. 2006, p. 59.)

In order to implement the strategy to the customer interface, organization is obliged to understand the customers, market segments and customers reasons to choose products of an organization. Analysis of customers' purchasing decisions explains why customers prefer products or services of an organization over its competitors. In addition to customer purchasing decisions, the objective for customer-driven strategy is to identify the future needs of customers. These future needs may provide the breakthrough that will offer new strategic opportunities although in turbulent markets and rapidly changing environment exploration and forecasting of these future needs is complicated. (Lynch 2009, pp. 528-537.) Although organizations' intention to comprehend the customer is sincere, there also exists the gap between managers ability to understand the customers' demands in large organizations. Frontline employees are most likely to understand the customer and instantly influence the customer experience. In order to build new strategic capital should the gap between managers and customers also to be diminished. (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004, p.150.)

After identification and comprehension of customers, their needs and market segments choice of organization's differential advantage against its competitors should be accomplished. (Lynch 2009, pp. 528-537.) Importance of differentiation remains in postmodern world because organizations are obliged to be separated from each other (Juuti & Luoma 2009, p. 228). Focusing on heterogeneous customer experiences offer new meaning for differentiation of organizations (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2009, p. 146).

Organizations should direct their strategic thinking to improve the reputation of the organization (Juuti & Luoma 2009, 232.) The brand and reputation of the organization effect on customers' decisions and loyalty. Customers recognize the strength and weaknesses of organization's brand and reputation. Reputation includes brands of organization and also aspects of the product, service and quality. Reputation is customer knowledge about an organization which is developed over time. From the strategic perspective, analysis of brand and reputation concentrates on the degree of competitive advantage and added value which is provided through organization's brands. (Lynch 2009, pp. 540-542.) Also Juuti & Luoma (2009), highlight the organizations' focus on exploring the ultimate value that an organization aims to provide to its customers. Concentration on this value raises organization's reputation because reputation is spread through stories of individuals. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, p. 233).

The creation of value has also changed. The product is no longer considered a source of creating value. According to Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004), value to customers and competitive advantage nowadays is created through customer experiences instead of products. Experiences of customers are heterogeneous. Customers co-create the value and these experiences with organization and other customers. (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004, p. 146.)

5.2 Strategic Communication in Customer Interface

The objective for an organization to communicate to its customers is to inform them about products, to persuade customers to buy its products or services and establish and secure the competitive advantage. Although mass marketing is more cost-efficient, encountering the customers personally is the most effective method of communication when the message is delivered and tailored to customers. (Lynch 2009, p. 542.)

Contacts create a product which include services and provides identity to customer. Strategy should appeal to personnel's imagination, intelligence and feelings so that it challenges them to operate creatively and inspiringly with customers. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, pp. 219-220).

The postmodern strategic objective for organizations is creating interactive relationships between the customers and organization. When the organization creates images is every process, action and encountering with customer important. These create positive images and experiences to customers. These customer experiences vary and are not duplicated. Instead, these customer encounters are more subjective experiences. The quality of interaction, scenery, story and ploy create these images and experiences. (Juuti & Luoma 2009. 223,225.)

Organizations are able to create experiences to customers through encounters and stories when these encounters between organization and customers are seen as processes. Strategic thinking should be directed into critical evaluation of the customer interface and improving the reputation of an organization by providing high quality products and services to a customer. These highlight the benefits for customers and sees customers as partners. Every customer deserves excellent service and high-quality products so that interface between customers and organization is successful. It is essential that every employees of an organization understand the strategic dialogue and is able to provide sights considering one's own work and customer's view. Value is created in the customer interface (Juuti & Luoma 2009. p 231-234, 240, 257.)

Customer-driven strategy involves the whole organization to operate towards customer satisfaction. The transference of an organization to dialogue with its customers is often complicated. Organizations are often rational and used to monologues. Instead of conceptual customer encounters genuine dialogue with customers creates close relationship and images of customers. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, pp. 273.)

5.3 Discussion of the Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the thesis focused on three elements: strategic management, implementation of strategy and implementation of strategy in customer interface. All these elements were essential in order to develop the total comprehension of

the subject although the subject of the thesis refers mainly to implementation of strategy and implementation of strategy in the customer interface.

Chapter 3, Strategic Management, created the basis of the theoretical framework by focusing to the different definitions and views of the strategy, strategy process and developing the strategy from rational to the postmodern direction. Actual implementation of strategy was discussed in chapter 4. Chapter 5 focused on actual implementation of strategy in customer interface. This chapter was related to both creation of the customer-driven strategy and strategic communication in customer interface.

Although the main interest was to emphasize the modern views of strategy, roots of strategic management are still rational, and because of this fact also discussion of rational features of the strategy was justified in order to create the comprehension of the whole subject. Also in the case organization, as shown in following chapter, rational strategic management is utilized and the objective for development is to add features of postmodern views to the strategic management.

6 STRATEGY OF COMPANY X

6.1 The mission, vision and values of Company X

The mission of Company X is based on the Ossi's declaration from year 1971. Ossi Kivekäs was a former CEO of Company X. According to his declaration, Company X operates as a bond between people in the Päijät-Häme region by telling those phenomena, events and these contexts. (Company X 2012c.) Declaration of Ossi is still valid, although forms of media have changed based on digital development. Strength of Company X is still interesting contents to local inhabitants. Company X is also active operator on behalf of Päijät-Häme region.

The vision of Company X is attached to Ossi's declaration. As the mission of Company X is to bond people, vision of Company X is to be the best partner to all customers, partners and personnel. This appears in aiming at long-term relationships with both subscribers and advertisers. Co-operation is highlighted and Company X wishes to be an interesting partner to organizations of the area. Also employment relationships have been long. As an employer Company X aim is to be a desirable employer in order to gain required knowledge.

Values which direct all operations are responsibility, trust, community spirit and journalistic independency. (Company X 2012c.) Values are based on the nature of subscribed newspapers. Newspapers are trusted media; printed word is the truth. This is linked also closely to other values of Company X: responsibility and journalistic independency. The community spirit refers to vision of Company X and co-operation with local operators, consumers of media and employees. These values communicate itself through all actions of Company X and its employees.

6.2 Processing "The Direction of Company X"

Creation of the strategy of Company X began in year 2011. According to CEO of Company X, changes in media business require continuous updating of the strategy and planning is possible to accomplish for 1-2 year period. The strategy of Company X is named as "The Direction of Company X". Four cornerstones of strategic planning of Company X are co-operation and partnership, continuous regeneration, profitable

growth and general reach. Customers' perspective was emphasized when creating the strategy. (CEO of Company X 2012.)

Instead of single business units the strategy of Company X is created based on spheres of responsibility in a matrix organisation. Co-operation between business units is vital in order to succeed in unstable business environment. These four spheres of responsibilities in Company X are contents, b-to-b sales, b-to-c sales and digital business and development. According to CEO of Company X (2012), creation of the strategy generated revised practices and lowered boundaries between business units. (CEO of Company X 2012.) As before interests of single business units directed the actions, today thinking and acting in Company X is more comprehensive as the focus is in these spheres of responsibilities. For example journalists are able to create news in several media and in sales departments benefit of the matrix organization is to produce value added to customers by creating effective multimedia solutions instead of one medium.

6.3 Strategic Objectives of Company X

In this thesis the strategy of Company X and the strategy process is described as it evolves during interviews. The strategy work is continuous and the strategy is updated frequently. According to "Direction of Company X", strategic objectives of Company X are

To provide additional value through locality by developing contents and practices so that media of Company X express substantial issues to inhabitants of Päijät-Häme region,

To generate factual interaction through interactive dialogue with inhabitants, operators and organisations of the area,

To utilise multimedia in practices and apply contents and ideas in various media including newspapers, radio and digital media by developing methods of operations in co-operation with internal and external partners

and **To develop digital business** by increasing digital contents, upgrading its quality and exploitation in b-to-b and b-to-c sales in order to obtain significant percentage of turnover from digital contents and advertisements (Company X 2012a).

6.4 Implementation of Strategy in Group Level

At the beginning of year 2012 spheres of responsibilities defined strategic projects, which assist achieving strategic, goals and targets of implementing strategy was discussed. Strategic projects are methods of implementing the chosen strategy. In addition, every employee of Company X is obliged to realize changes in consumer behavior, the chosen strategy, and these impacts and necessity for changes on team level and on employee's own action. (Company X 2012a.)

The strategy was launched to the personnel in two presentations with same content 16 April and 7 May 2012. Every employee was obliged to participate in either one of these occasion. In addition to these implementing strategy in Company X includes dealing subject in the sphere of responsibilities, business units, and teams and in personal development discussions. The process of launching of the strategy to personnel is presented in figure 10. (Company X 2012a.)

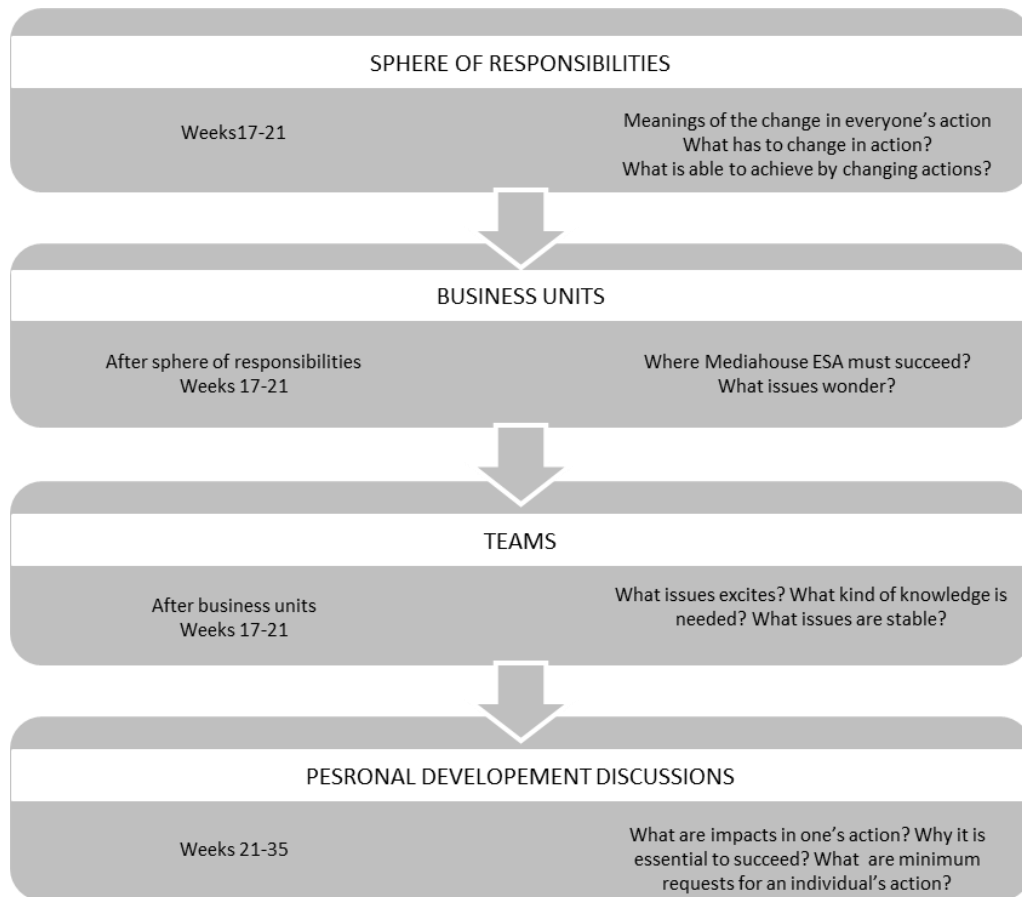


Figure 11. The process of Launching the Strategy at Company X (Company X 2012a).

The objective of these activities is to implement the strategy and its objectives close to every employee's own action. The most significant issues are conversation and understanding of objectives, strategic projects of the sphere of responsibility and how strategy relates to employees' own sphere of responsibility, unit and team.

Participation is obligatory and observed. (Company X 2012a.)

6.5 The Strategic Objectives of B-to-b Sales Department of Company X

B-to-b sales are one sphere of responsibilities in Company X. The strategic project of b-to-b sales of Company X is coaching of consulting sales in the year 2012. This coaching supports implementing the strategy and operating according to it when encountering customers. Benefits of the project are mutual promises to all customers, mutual practices and rules and practices and criteria for management. The owner of the project is, Sales Director of Company X (Company X 2012a). In this thesis strategic projects and objectives of Company X's b-to-b sales department are also presented as these evolve during interviews.

The strategic objective of Company X is gaining growth by active leading of customers. This demands active working with customers, increasing anticipation, developing personnel's knowledge and coaching management. Strategic objectives and actions towards these are presented in figure 11. (Company X 2012d.)

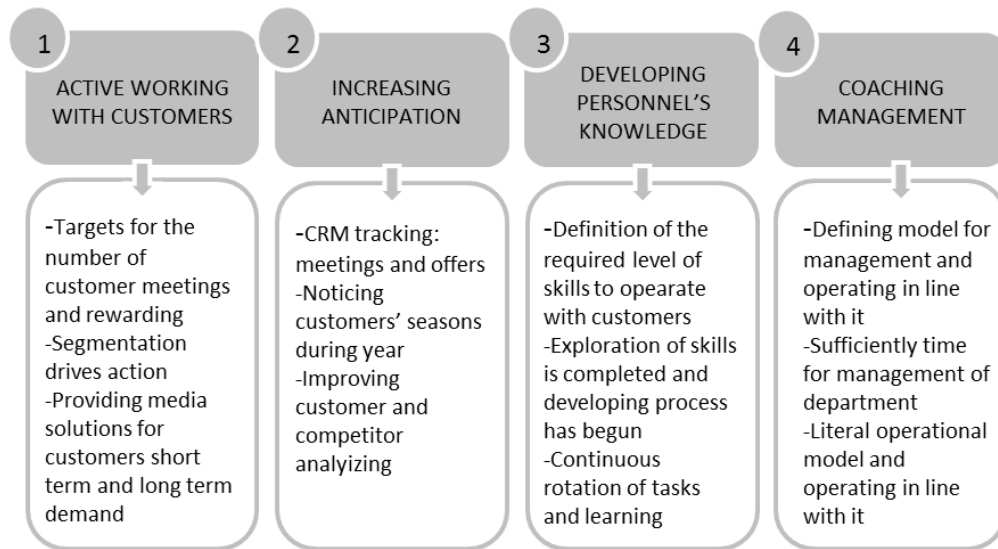


Figure 12: Strategic Objectives of B-to-b Sales of Company X (Company X 2012d)

The active and objective-oriented encountering of the customer is a main objective for the b-to-b sales department of Company X. When encountering the customer, the purpose is to listen to the customers and offer effective media solutions to their needs and create long-term relationships. This first objective of these influences directly in the customer interface, other objectives are created in order to support these customer encounters. The second objective is to gather data of customers and utilize the data in order to increase anticipation and analysing the customers' demands. Developing of personnel's knowledge is essential in order to operate with customers in the changing business environment. Selling multimedia and solution sales require new kind of skills and knowledge as selection of offerings increases. The final objective is to develop the management of the media sales department.

7 METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 The Project Plan

Discussions of the subject of the research began in April 2012. The Sales Director of Company X suggested the topic for the research when the new strategy of Company X was launched in April 2012. Implementation of the strategy in group level proceeded gradually from April 2012 to September 2012. Company X's B-to-b Sales Department's strategic project "Coaching of consulting sales" continued from May 2012 to January 2013.

First plan was to research the subject earlier in the year 2013 but it delayed because of hectic beginning of the year and organizational changes in Company X. Collecting of the literature material began in summer 2012 but actual writing of the theoretical framework was accomplished in summer 2013. Research objectives and questions were also defined in July 2013. Interviews were held in the August 2013 and analysis of the data was scheduled in the autumn 2013. The purpose was to deliver the final version of the thesis in the end of October 2013. The schedule of project plan is shown in figure 12.

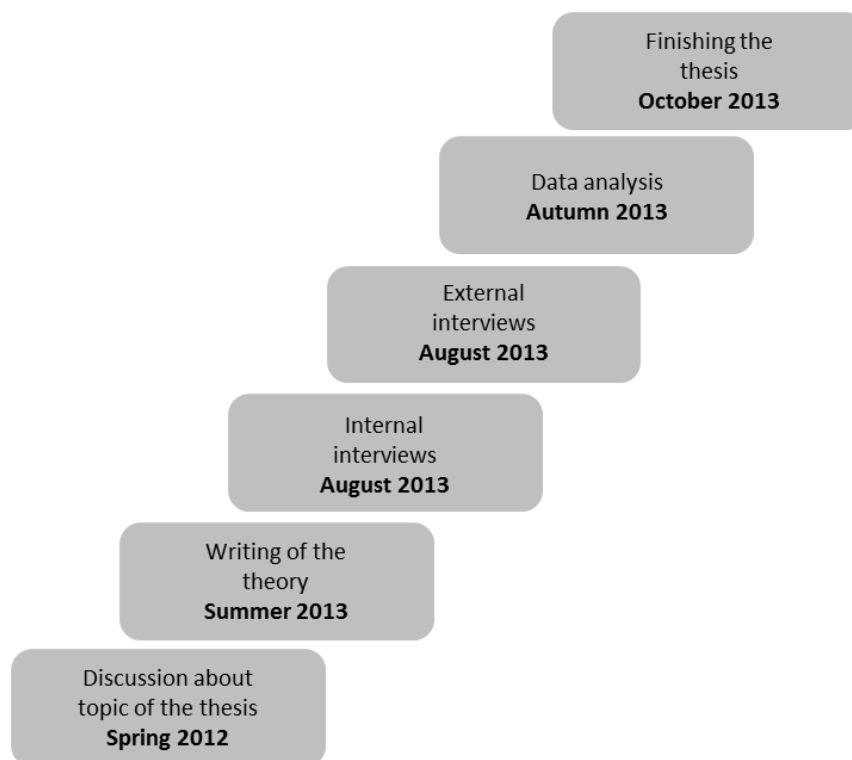


Figure 13: Schedule of the Thesis

7.2 Research method

The research problem and the context define which method is the most suitable. In this study the research strategy is a qualitative case study which evaluates implementation of strategy in the customer interface of Company X. Utilization of the qualitative case study enables evaluation how implementation of the strategy has succeeded in internally and externally. Subject is also very complex. In order to produce extensive comprehension of the subject was qualitative method chosen.

7.3 Qualitative Research

The definition of the qualitative research is often opposite to the quantitative research. Qualitative approaches emphasis interpretation and understanding of issues whereas quantitative research focuses on explanation, testing of a hypothesis and statistical analysis. According to Erikson & Kovalainen (2008), qualitative business research produces information about how the phenomena appear in real-life business context. (Erikson & Kovalainen 2008, pp. 3-5.)

The qualitative research is appropriate method when meanings and the context of behaviour is examined. The qualitative research allows examinees to express observations about research case and allows cognition of elements from examinee's past and development. When an individual and situated activity is researched qualitative research methods are most preferred. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, p. 27.)

Planning of the research is essential although the qualitative research not necessarily progress according to the tightly designed plan; qualitative research allows deviations during process. However, key elements which assist creating the qualitative research design and planning the study are

- the decision of the research area and topic,
- formulation of research question,
- the choice of appropriate method, role and theories and
- designing the data collection. (Erikson & Kovalainen 2008, pp. 25-29.)

The qualitative research is a circular process where phases are not linear. Process demands back-and-forth movement between research ideas, theoretical concepts,

research design, data collection as analysis and findings. The most important element for a qualitative business research is formulating and reformulating the research questions. “What”, “how” and “why” questions are the most typical for the qualitative business research. These questions aim to explain process and describe situations, processes and consequences. (Erikson & Kovalainen 2008, pp. 32, 37-39.)

7.4 Case Study

Erikson and Kovalainen (2008, p. 115), say that the case study investigates the chosen case in the relation to its historical, economic, technological, social and cultural context. In the case study the research question is related to comprehension and solving the case and its meaning. (Erikson & Kovalainen 2008, p. 115). According to Yin (2009, p. 2), case studies are preferred when ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are set, researcher is not controlling the events and focus of the research is on phenomenon which relates to the real-life context.

The case study is often practical method to investigate successful or problematic projects in managerial point of view. The utilization of the case study provides information how to perform a successful project and how to avoid problems at least in the chosen business context. (Erikson & Kovalainen 2008, p. 116.)

The case study is mainly considered a qualitative research but there is no limitation of using quantitative data. The case study is more like a research approach or strategy than a method. Aims of the study and research questions are features which defines data used in research. (Erikson & Kovalainen 2008, p. 116.)

7.5 The Thematic Interview

The data of the research is collected by interviews. According to Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2000, p. 41), an interview is a data collection method, in which person’s opinions about a research question is asked and answers are vocal. In other words the interview is a social interaction. Interviews are one of the most utilized forms of the data collection. It is a flexible and an appropriate method for various research purposes. Interviews emphasis a person as a subject and allows free and active expression of opinions. Interviews provide deep information and arguments to opinions. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, 27, 34.)

Yin (2009, 106, 108) says that the interview is one of the most important sources of the data collection in a case study because research questions are mostly connected to human affairs or behaviour. Interviews used in case studies should be more like conversations which are guided by interviewer than structured queries (Yin 2009, 106). Interviewer's role is to direct the conversation and motivate the interviewee. Confidence is an important issue in an interview situation. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, p. 43.)

The thematic interview varies from other interviews because the researcher has knowledge of the phenomenon and its structure and processes. The researcher has theories which create the basis of the interview. Interview is focused on themes. Instead of specified questions, thematic interview proceeds based on these themes. Essential for the thematic interview is that it allows interviewees' interpretations and meanings of subject. The creation of these meanings is interactive. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2010, pp. 47-48.)

The objective for the interview is to collect the data which provides a basis for reliable conclusion of the phenomena. Planning of the interview includes the creation of the hypothesis but when subject is complex is creation of hypothesis also questioned. The creation of hypothesis is dependent on the research question and previous theories and the information of the subject. When utilizing a theme interview, interests are more on features of the phenomena and creation of hypothesis, than the verification of a pre-set hypothesis. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2010, p. 66.)

Planning of themes is most essential when planning a thematic interview. Themes of the interview are specific sub-concepts and categories of theories. Questions of the interview are focused on these areas. Themes of interviews are specified through questions. Based on themes an interviewer is able to continue and deepen the conversation according to interests of the research. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2010, pp. 66-67.)

7.6 Themes of Internal Interviews

In this study, the interview was chosen to develop the deeper information and the comprehension of the subject. The objective is to utilize interviews in the wider context. Interviews will be semi-structured and focuses on chosen themes. Themes

were chosen based on key issues considering the implementation of the strategy and customer encounters. These themes guide the conversation without limitation of interviewee's aspects. Themes of employee's interviews are presented in figure 13.

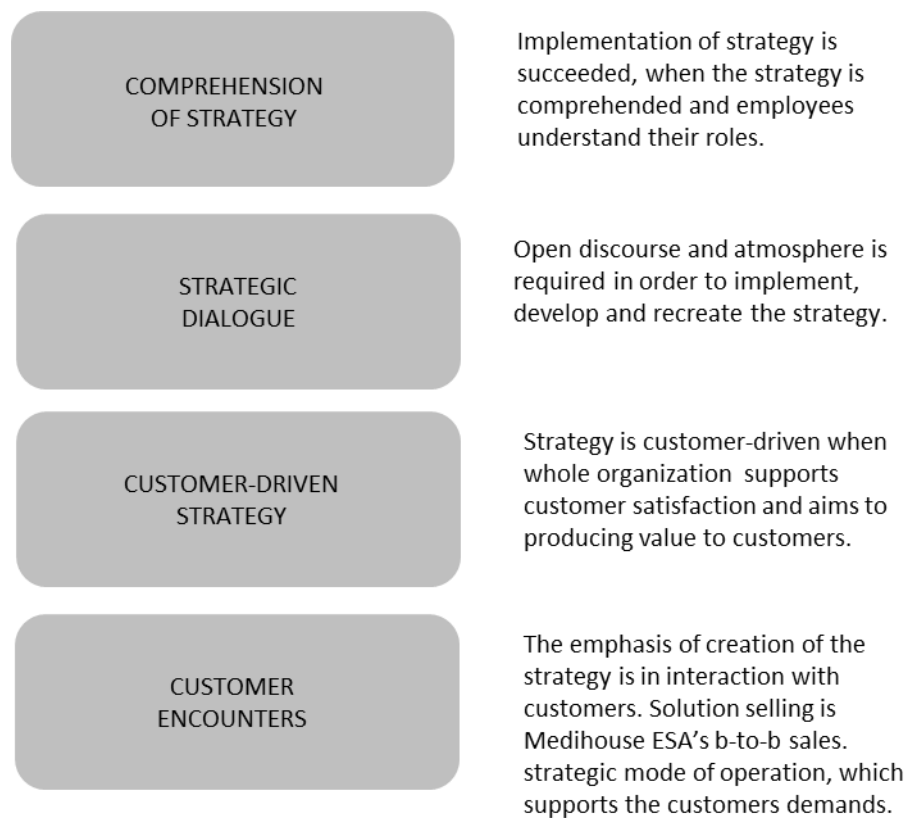


Figure 14: Themes of Internal Interviews.

The objective for the implementation of the strategy is to create comprehension about it. Employees are able to accomplish the strategy and act according to it when the strategy is comprehended. Comprehension also means adaptation of the strategy into own actions and understanding the strategic role of an employee.

The strategic dialogue allows employees to comprehend, interpret and apply the strategy. It offers valuable feedback to creators of the strategy and inspires employees to participate in creation process of strategy. Strategic dialogue should be open and regenerate the strategy. Strategic dialogue is also crucial element on success of the strategy implementation.

Customer perspective is a significant part of the creation of Company X's strategy. An organization is genuinely customer-driven when all functions of the organization are

focused on creating value and better quality in order to satisfy the demands of customers in rapidly changing business environment (Lynch 2009).

Emphasis in the postmodern strategy creation is in customer encounters which create experiences to the customer. The strategy is created in dialogue between the organization and customers. (Juuti & Luoma 2009.) Company X's b-to-b media sales department's strategic mode of encountering the customers is effective and active solution sales. Evaluation of the state of this solution sale is significant part of the evaluation of customer encounters and creating images to customers.

7.7 Themes of External Interviews

Themes of external interviews were chosen from strategic cornerstones of Company X. In order to evaluate the strategy implementation in customer interface, the choice of themes was logical in this case. Themes of customer interviews are shown in figure 14.

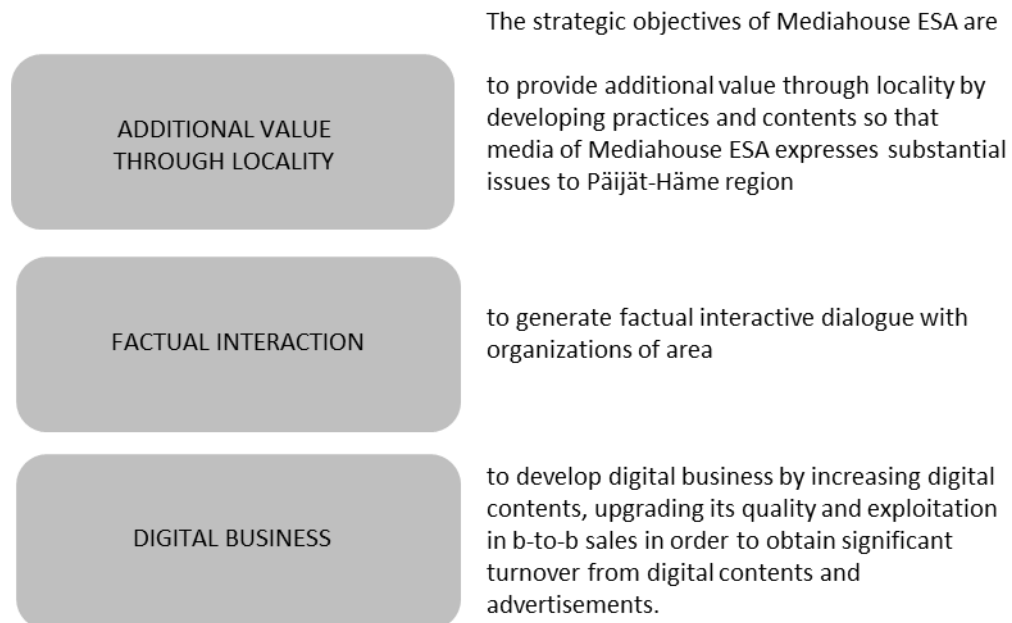


Figure 15. Themes of External Interviews.

Strategic objectives of Company X are creating additional value through locality, generation of factual interaction with organizations of area and to develop digital business. The objective is to evaluate how these strategic cornerstones are connected

to the customer's business and how effectively Company X is able to implement its strategy in its b-to-b customer interface.

7.8 Data Collection

The data was collected interviewing both employees and customers of Company X. Focus in this research was on the b-to-b customer interface. Sources of data collection are described in figure 15. Internally selection of interviewees focused on b-to-b sales department of Company X. There are ten sales managers working in Company X from which two operate in Heinola. For the research, four of sales managers of Company X's b-to-b sales department were interviewed. Selection of interviewees was accomplished by evaluating roles and customer responsibilities. All interviewed employees work in Lahti.

The selection of customers was focused on the strategically significant customer. Customers were mainly chosen from different fields of operations. Interviewees presented key customers of Company X and interviewed persons were chosen from the top position of organizations. These interviewees have a wide interface with Company X, not only as advertisers but as overall partners. It is essential to evaluate customer's views of strategic questions of Company X and how strategy is implemented and evaluated externally



Figure 16: Data Collection

All internal interviews were accomplished in August 2013 in a conference room of Company X. All interviews were recorded with participant's permission. The duration of interviews varied from half an hour to one hour. The atmosphere of interviews was open and confidential. The creation of atmosphere was enabled by the fact that interviewees were colleagues of the interviewer.

External interviews were accomplished in August and September 2013. Sales Director of Company X assisted on settlements of interviews. Every customer chosen to interview agreed to participate. One hour time for interview was booked in advance. All interviews were accomplished in interviewee's facilities and also these interviews were recorded. Interviews proceeded conversationally and calmly although none of interviewees were familiar to the author beforehand. The duration of interviews was from half an hour to one hour.

Interviews followed the chosen themes. Questions and sub-questions were set beforehand but the interview situations were conversational. Before questions, the purpose of thesis and study was told briefly. Interviewees had the possibility add comments afterwards about their thoughts of subjects that had occurred during the interview.

7.9 Data Analysis

The analysis in a qualitative research begins often during interviews (Erikson & Kovalainen, 2008, p. 299; Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2010, p. 136). The researcher is able to observe the phenomenon, classify models of a phenomenon and collect more material for the hypothesis. Analysis and technics of the qualitative research are variable. The procession of data includes analysis and synthesis. While analysis is classification of the data, synthesis means creation of the general view and presentation of the phenomena in new perspective. Procession of the data is described in figure 16. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2010, pp. 143-144.)

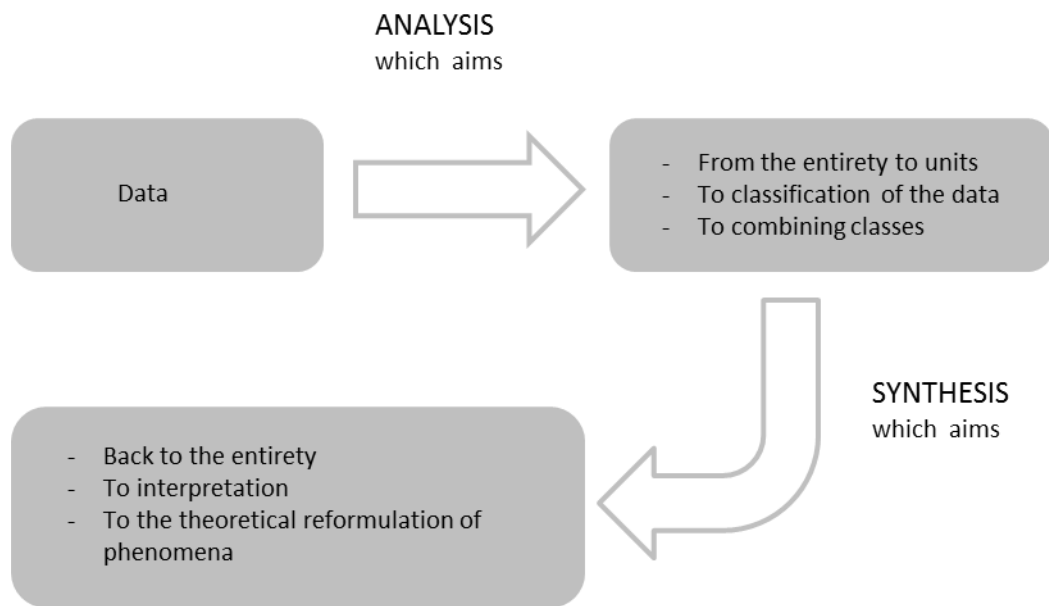


Figure 17. Procession of Data from Analysis to Synthesis. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2010, p. 144).

Objective description of material is basis for analysis (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2010, p. 145). In this research recorded material of interviews was lettered after interviews. This was accomplished without delay after the interview. Afterwards the data was classified. According to Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2010), classification is essential part of analysis. It allows interpretation and simplification of interview material. The research phenomenon is comprehended through classification and comparison of different section of the data. Combining these classes provides similarities or rules and exceptions of the phenomenon. The objective for the synthesis is the interpretation and the theoretical description of the phenomenon. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2010, pp. 144, 147, 149.)

7.10 Evaluation of the Research

Validity and reliability are classic evaluation criteria of the research. Terms reliability and validity of the research and measuring these are origin from the quantitative research. Reliability refers to repeatability of the research. The basic assumption of reliability is that another researcher is able to repeat the research and come up with similar conclusions. When research is focused on the human behaviour and accomplished with interview, affects changed situations which occur during time to

repeatability of research. (Erikson & Kovalainen 2008, p. 292: Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2010, p. 186.)

Validity refers to the extent how conclusions offers accurate description of what has happened. Validity defines weather the findings of the research are true and does these findings represent the phenomenon and are these grounded. (Erikson & Kovalainen 2010, p. 292.) The traditional evaluation of reliability and validity in the qualitative research is complicated and recommended with expectations because of the lack of proper methods. (Erikson & Kovalainen 2008, p. 292: Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2010, p. 186.)

Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2010) suggest evaluating reliability of the qualitative research by evaluating the quality of collected data. Reliability is related to actions of researcher rather than answers of interviewees. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2010, p. 189.) In this research evaluating reliability on the basis of repeatability of the research is irrelevant as situations evolve. Instead the evaluation of collected data is more proper method. The evaluation of the research and trustworthiness of the data collection was focused during the study. Especially internal interviews were arranged within the short period of time in order to develop data of respondents' interpretations of the current situations. The quality of the data collection is affected by planning of interviews, themes, questions and sub-questions (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2010, p. 184). In this research interviews were planned before and interviews proceeded according to these plans. The collected data was also lettered as whole immediately after interviews in order to avoid misunderstandings. The amount of the collected data seemed to be adequate in order to create assumptions of it. The results of interviews related to the subject of the research were described precisely. Although results of interviews in the qualitative research are developed in co-operation between researcher and respondent (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2010, p. 189) was aim to maintain objectivity to subject during collection and analysis of the data.

Instead of estimating the validity in the qualitative research, Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2010) and Erikson & Kovalainen (2008) suggest triangulation. Triangulation means a process where multiple perspectives are utilized in order to refine and clarify the findings (Erikson & Kovalainen 2008, p. 292). The researcher should evaluate the quality and the trustworthiness of sources of the data. Another method to evaluate the

validity is to indicate equivalence between interpretations of researcher and interpretations of examinees. The validity of research can be also indicated by referring to literature in the proper context. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2010, p. 189.) Analytic generalization means the comparison of empirical results of case study to developed theory (Erikson & Kovalainen 2008, p. 294).

In this research triangulation of the data and theories was utilized as the basis of the evaluation of the research. Both parties, internal and external were interviewed in order to develop a description of the current situation. Chosen respondents were considered to be most appropriate to answer to the questions considering the strategy implementation in the customer interface. The objective for theoretical framework was to create comprehension about the subject from different views. These perspectives and interpretations were linked to support results of the study.

8 RESULTS OF INTERNAL INTERVIEWS

In this research Sales Managers were chosen to represent the views of the b-to-b customer interface. Focus on evaluation the strategy was to evaluate strategic cornerstones of Company X instead of specific strategic objectives of the b-to-b sales department. However, these objectives are based on these strategic cornerstones of the organization. Decision to examine the strategy of the whole organization was also affected by the fact that customers chosen to interview are connected to different levels of Company X and not necessarily directly to Company X's b-to-b sales department. Strategic objectives of sales department are more internal directions for operations and in this case it is more essential to evaluate the whole organization's strategy and customer's views of it.

Results are analysed based on themes of interviews. First, analysis of the comprehension of the strategy is accomplished in order to examine the implementation of the strategy. Second chapter focuses on strategic dialogue and evaluating the communication and atmosphere of creation and updating the strategy. Finally respondents were able to evaluate how customer-driven Company X is and how strategy effects on customer encounters. Results are collected of main issues which aroused from interviews.

8.1 Comprehension of Strategy

Comprehension of the strategy was evaluated by asking descriptions of the strategy and its implications to practices and respondents' own work in order to evaluate how implementation of the strategy has succeeded and how the strategy appears in every day actions. All questions of internal interviews are shown in Appendix 1.

Interviewed Sales Managers were first asked to describe the strategy of Company X. Instead of memorizing the written strategy all respondents described own interpretations of the strategy. Descriptions of the strategy were based on values, strategic cornerstones of Company X, strategic goals of the sales department of Company X and one's own work experience.

Each respondent described important issues of the strategy reflecting them to own experiences. Locality, reliability, multimedia and will to serve local customers were

mentioned spontaneously in all interviews. Although strategic cornerstones were problematic to name, shows interpretations of the strategy that these are important issues in respondents own work.

Respondents felt that demand for the strategy is essential. Strategy is considered “direction”, “goal”, “vision”, “similar manner to operate”, “basis for all operations and profitable business”. The importance of strategy and common direction was highlighted especially considering operating in separate units and departments in order to achieve common goals.

The meaning of locality and reliability are highlighted as strengths when operating with b-to-b customers. Respondents also felt that strategic linings of Company X create the change in the business. The most significant change according to respondents is changes in the multimedia and digital business. All respondent saw that development has created changes in one’s own work. The change was considered positive and more customer-driven approach, which provides the additional value to customers.

Digital business was considered relatively new business to Company X and demand for developing it further and quick response in order to serve customers is essential. Respondents felt that this requires new kind of utilization of skills and roles of employees in the Company X’s sales department and in the whole organization. Interaction was also mentioned as an essential issue while interviews. Interaction was seen as interaction with b-to-b customer and internally between different departments of Company X. According to respondents, improvement of interaction is required. Suggestions for these improvements are described in following sections.

8.2 Strategic Dialogue

The second theme of interviews was about strategic dialogue. Instead of actual dialogue, the first questions of the interview reflected the more rational views of strategic management and respondents’ views of the nature and continuity of strategic communication accomplished in case organization as a part of launching process of strategy. After this, existence of strategic dialogue was asked through questions of common atmosphere, participation in strategic dialogue and actual possibilities to develop strategy based on signals of own experiences and from customer interface.

The launching story with penguins, Intranet, coaching, sales department's week meetings, development discussions and messages from cafeteria were mentioned as sources of receiving information of the strategy of Company X. The launching presentation with penguins was mentioned by all respondents who worked during the time when the strategy was launched. Other forms of receiving the strategic message were mentioned occasionally by some respondents.

The strategy process and continuousness of it were not visible to respondents. Respondents wished to obtain more information about the strategy. The importance of the strategy is comprehended and the fact that the strategy is related to every employee's own work in the whole organization was obvious. Respondents required more concrete and uncomplicated discussion of the strategy and how the strategy actually appears in all actions and decisions. The role of the middle management and supervisors was emphasized on these strategic discussions. Respondents felt that more strategy speech and maintenance of it should exist in everyday work, so that strategic objectives and appearance of the strategy are "crystal clear".

According to respondents, the strategy of Company X is produced and developed from the management point of view. Possibilities to participate in or to create strategic dialogue were considered limited. Respondents mentioned the supervisors as only channel to communicate about strategic issues in generally and also as the channel to provide information from the customer interface. Other channels or forums in order to develop discussion of the strategy and between departments of Company X were required.

Improving internal co-operation between departments was mentioned by all respondents in order to achieve strategic objectives. All respondents felt that there exists the lack of internal interaction. Comprehension and valuation each other's roles, positions and work in the organization are essential. As strategic objectives and effect of these were comprehended in one's own work, respondents felt that comprehension, co-operation and open discussion between other departments would assist to create genuine strategic dialogue in order to achieve common objectives and create customer satisfaction.

8.3 Customer-Driven Strategy

In order to evaluate customer-orientation of the strategic management of Company X respondent where asked to evaluate does the chosen strategy answer to customers' demands and their objectives. Respondents were also asked to suggest improvements for the strategic management of Company X in order to create more customer-orientated organization.

While discussing customer-driven strategy, Sales Managers of Company X were first asked to describe current changes in the customer's behaviour. Answers were unanimous. The economic situation, short-term decision-making and increased comprehension of the multimedia are features that effect on co-operation with customers. Customers highly appreciate and expect new ideas, especially of digital forms of advertising.

According to respondents, the strategy of Company X mainly supports the changes in the customer's behaviour and business environment. Locality and reliability are considered the basis to create long-term partnership. Especially developing digital business is considered an important issue in order to answer to customers' changing demands and to offer wider contacts. In this Company X has succeeded considering the customers' demands at current moment but new product solutions and ideas are required in order to maintain the development.

Interaction with customers considering the whole organization is seen as an objective for development. Ability to hear customers more and customer's participation in developing projects of Company X are required in order to produce a customer-driven organization. Signals from the customer interface should involve the whole organization. The development of the customer-driven strategy and products requires data from customers. The comprehension of customers' business environment, needs and challenges is essential in order to create media solutions that serve customers' business. The required data is achieved best by listening to the customers. Although the customer perspective was emphasized when the strategy of Company X was created, existence of it was considered to lack in actions. The aim to create the customer-driven organization could be one strategic objective for whole Company X for future according to respondents.

8.4 Customer Encounters

Customer encounters are significant in postmodern view of strategy for creating images and stories of organization. One objective for evaluating the strategy implementation in customer interface in this thesis was to evaluate the state of solution sales of Company X as a part of these customer encounters. Also respondents' description of the image which they wish to create when encountering the customers was asked as an essential part of postmodern view of strategy.

Development of model of solution sales is one strategic objective of the sales department of Company X. All respondents argued that the solution sales require wider knowledge of customers. This knowledge is received by listening to the customer. The trust is considered essential in the creation of partnership. The customer knowledge, trust and professional skills provide the basis for the comprehension of customer's demands. By solution sales and wider media range customer's needs are satisfied.

The most significant change in customer encounters is due to wider range of media. This is seen as a necessity in order to reach consumers of the area. The wider selection of media provides credibility, more effective solutions and better possibilities to create long-term partnerships in the current fragmented media environment. However, more solutions especially in digital business are required. The solution sales is considered customer-orientated manner to operate. Concrete example of changed behaviour is that customer encounters takes more time than before. Respondents felt that customer relationships should be developed and wider possibilities to co-operation should be created considering services in whole Company X.

Respondents' main message to customers is based on values and the strategy of Company X. All respondents wish to create the image of a reliable and local partner. Expertise, a modern media house together with wide total reach and effective media solutions are also issues which are emphasized when encountering the customers.

Summary of key findings of internal interviews is presented in figure 18.

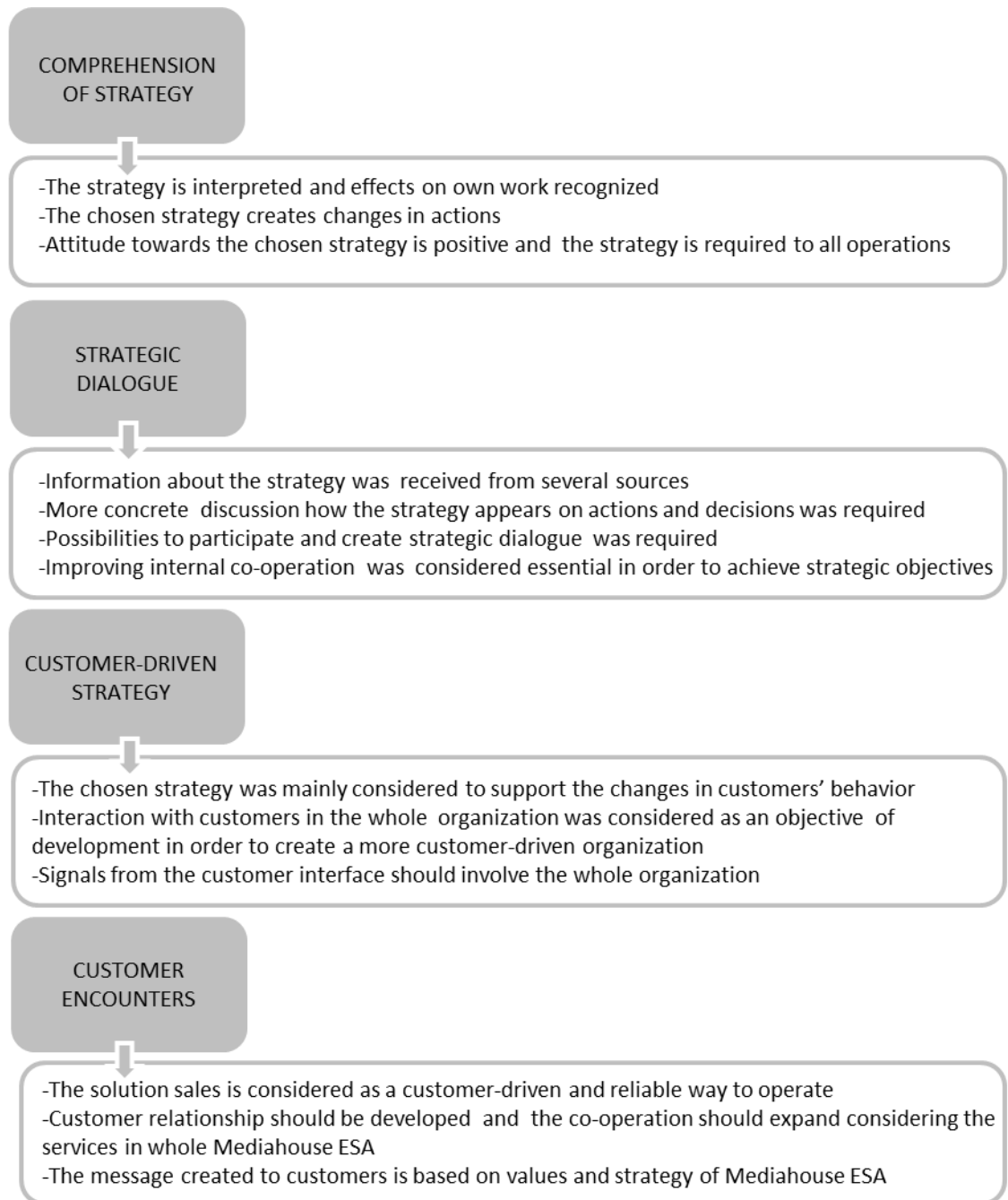


Figure 18: Summary of Key Findings of Internal Interviews

9 RESULTS OF EXTRERNAL INTERVIEWS

The external research was accomplished with strategically significant b-to-b customers of Company X. The analysis of the empirical data is introduced based on themes of the interview, which are also cornerstones of the strategy of Company X. Analysis of these cornerstones assists on the evaluation how Company X has succeeded to connect its strategy work with its b-to-b customers.

Providing additional value through locality is the first cornerstone of Company X's strategy. Locality has been a significant strength of media of Company X. Through local contacts Company X is able to offer media space to organizations of Päijät-Häme region. The aim is to evaluate meaning of local media in the current moment and also in the future.

The second section, factual Interaction, evaluates the co-operation of Company X with its strategically significant partners. The state of the current situation is evaluated and respondents were asked to describe how they see the role of Company X as a partner in the future and how they wishes to develop interaction.

The final theme of interview is about digital business. Rapid changes in the digital business environment challenge traditional media houses. Fragmentation and new forms of advertising challenges also our advertising customers. The whole operating environment is changing because of the digital development. The aim of this final section is to investigate views of respondents of Company X's digital business.

9.1 Additional Value through Locality

The importance and the value of locality to strategically significant customers of Company X was examined by asking the meaning of locality of Company X and the role of local media now and in future. Questions of external interviews are described in appendix 2.

Locality is a significant issue to all respondents. Organizations, customers and stakeholders of respondents are mainly local. Locality is also described in values of most interviewed organizations. Locality is also a feature which respondents highly associated spontaneously to Company X and its media.

The evaluation of a value of local media was dualistic. The importance of local media and local contents is significant because local news and information is seen valuable to users of Company X's media. Although the meaning of the value of local media is inevitable and remains, the form of local news, especially print, is questioned. The importance of digital forms of providing local contents is significant.

Respondents have also preferred operating with the local media organization as advertisers in the past and mainly wish to continue it in the future. Interests of respondents of the research and media's of Company X are the same: reaching the inhabitants of Päijät-Häme region. Locality provides good interaction, activity and quick response. In general, local partners are appreciated when choosing a partner. Although locality is an essential criterion it is not enough. Importance of reaching of customers and specific target groups efficient will be highlighted especially in the future.

9.2 Factual Interaction

The second theme of interviews was the factual interaction with Company X. First respondents were asked to describe what kind of connections they have to Company X. Then evaluation of co-operation and partnership was accomplished by asking questions concerning these issues. As respondents in internal interviews, also respondents of these external interviews were also asked to evaluate how customer-driven organization Company X is. Finally, respondents were asked to suggest how interaction with Company X could be developed.

Interaction between respondents and different levels of Company X varied. Respondents mainly operated with the top management, journalists, the sales director or sales managers of Company X depending on respondent's position. Also aspects of evaluation of co-operation with Company X varied. Despite of this fact views of the co-operation with Company X were quite similar.

Values of Company X were mentioned spontaneously during interviews. When respondents were asked to describe Company X reliability was mentioned and highly emphasized in most of interviews. In addition to these, responsibility, developing, innovative and interesting was mentioned severally. Also flexibility was appreciated. On the other hand, Company X was also considered negative and critical mainly

because of its journalistic view. Although respondents highly recognized the objectivity and the journalistic independency of Company X, positive view and co-operation in order to develop vitality of the area was wished.

In general, meaning of values and how these values are connected to respondent's organization's values is highly appreciated when choosing a partner. In some interviews also cost efficiency were mentioned although it was not the primary issue when choosing a partner. Importance of values and co-operation in different levels and associations was most significant.

All respondents considered Company X a very significant partner now and also in the future. Respondents were satisfied with the co-operation with Company X. Company X was also considered a customer-driven organization although the question was complex to analyse more specific.

Change in digital business and fragmentation of forms of advertising challenges also customers of Company X. In the future respondents considers the role of Company X to be an expertise of media solution. They trust that Company X has the most recent information about business. Demand is to produce specific data about forms and possibilities of the effective digital advertising, reaching various target groups and how to measure return on advertising investments. When possibilities to advertise increases, increases also confusion of customers. Outsourcing of this knowledge is what respondents wish from partnership with the local media house.

9.3 Digital Business

Questions of digital business were designed to estimate how strategic objectives of Company X are connected to customers' objectives. Based on this respondents were asked to describe their current objectives in general and as an advertiser. After this respondent were asked to evaluate digital media of Company X and how these media solutions support the objectives of respondents in the current moment and also in the future. Finally ideas for interesting digital contents and co-operation, which supports the respondents business, were asked.

Main drivers affecting changes on most respondent's business are current economic situation and digitalization. Drivers are the same compared to the media business.

Advertising in digital media challenges all respondents. All respondents admit that the role of digital media will be emphasized in the future media mix. Despite this fact, there were no clear visions of how the digital advertising should be accomplished and how should organizations develop its digital footprint. Fragmentation of media is confusing customers.

In general, respondents see Company X as a developing and regenerating organization when speaking of digital business. Digital business is seen as a challenge for media houses. Respondents were mainly satisfied with Company X's digital media as consumer but wish to have more possibilities, new ideas and up to date data as an advertiser.

According to respondents, Company X follows time and there exists variety of digital media solutions. Media solutions of Company X offer a channel to support strategic objectives of respondent's organizations. However, respondents wish to achieve more innovative solutions for digital advertising; banner advertising solely is not adequate in future. Although respondents considered the state of Company X's digital forms of advertising mainly positive, respondents felt that also other forms of advertising, which Company X is not able to offer, is required in order to reach consumers.

Respondents require consultative role, creativity and new ideas when operating with Company X. As mentioned in the previous chapter, producing the data of effective media solutions and reaching specific target groups is required. The importance of creativity and new ideas especially in digital business is significant. This is highly appreciated and expected and it is seen as a commercial possibility for Company X.

Respondents are also interested to participate in developing of new media solutions to their needs. This is seen as a good form of develop co-operation. However, time and lack of understanding the possibilities set limits to this kind of interaction.

Summary of key findings of external interviews is shown in figure 19.

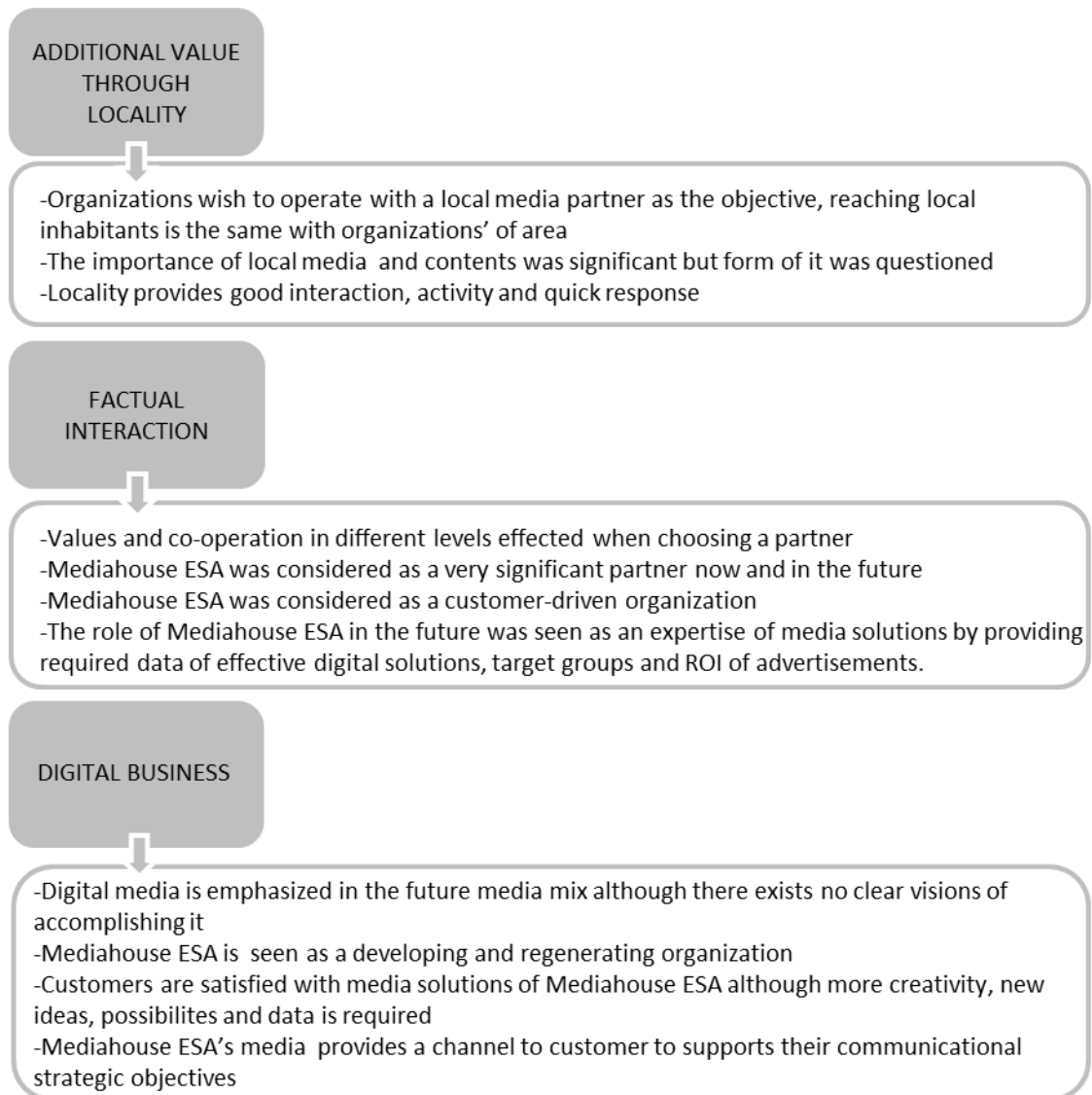


Figure 19: Key Findings of External Interviews

10 DISCUSSION

10.1 Discussion of Results

Juuti & Luoma (2009), describe levels from 0 to 5 considering the stages of organizations' strategic management (See figure 8). At this table the strategic management of Company X is considered to be mainly in level 3 where the management thinks strategic and utilizes proper strategy tools. Personnel participate in planning and the implementation of strategy. Appropriate methods, communication and group discussions are utilized in strategic management. In order to develop the strategic management it is essential to develop creativity and strategic dialogue between both management and personnel and organization and customers. Strategist on fifth level is actually an employee of organization who is genuinely able to listen to the customer and create positive images to them. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, p. 277.)

Theoretical framework of thesis is mainly based on more informal theories of strategy. Although modern theories of the strategic management vary significantly from traditional, rational views are some features still valid. Both perspectives are required (Juuti & Luoma 2009, pp. 256-257; Lynch 2009, p. 731; Barney, p. 114). In Company X strategy tools and formal processes of strategic management are utilized to produce comprehension of the strategy. Also respondents of internal interview considered and expect that the nature of strategy processes is rational. In addition, co-operation between departments and customers was considered fundamental for development. As boundaries of business units are lowered in order to gain competitive advantage, should also boundaries of spheres of responsibilities lower in order to aim to same objectives. Suggestions for developing strategic management for Company X is in addition to rational forms of strategic management to develop more informal processes of strategy creation which supports the creativity, co-operation and experiences of customers.

When the strategy of the organization utilized rational strategic management, strategy is created by the management and employees' role is to participate in strategy work in planned processes. When an organization wishes to develop its strategic management and answer to challenges of the postmodern world view, the emphasis of interaction between organization and its customers increases in the creation of strategy. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, p. 260). In this research internal respondent agree this, interaction with

customers should be highlighted in creation of the strategy. The strategy creation was considered to be created from the managerial point of view and possibilities to participate were considered limited. According to Johnson et al (2006)., traditional top-down view is no longer valid in rapidly changing business environments where employees possess the key knowledge (Johnson etc. 2006. p. 396). Interaction and strategic dialogue between employees, management, different departments and customers was suggested in order to develop strategic management.

The objective for strategic communication is to develop comprehension of the strategy (Lynch, 2009; Mantere etc. 2006). Comprehension of the strategy defines how implementation of strategy is succeeded. It is essential that employees understand the benefits of strategy process. The open and continuous strategy process supports comprehension of the strategy (Mantere etc. 2006, pp. 121-123.) Importance of common organization's strategy that effects actions was obvious according to respondents. Interviewed employees of Company X considered that they have obtained information about the strategy from several sources. Strategic objectives were not named spontaneously; instead comprehension of the strategy was described in actions. The active interpretation of strategy allows strategic actions in one's own operations. Strategic performance involves interpretation. (Vaara & Whittington 2012.) Interpretations of strategy are more significant than rote learning of strategy. The strategy is shown in continuous, conscious and unconscious choices and decisions in everyday actions (Mantere etc. 2006, p. 21).

Instead of communicating the strategy, dialogue is suggested as a method to create changes in action (Juuti & Luoma 2009, p. 245). Negotiation and discussion are more preferable and motivating methods to implement the strategy than instructing (Mantere 2005, 175). Internally in organizations dialogue between management and employees is essential when strategy is created, executed and aligned with practices (Mantere etc. 2006, p, 150). In this research possibilities to strategic dialogue were considered limited and supervisors as only channel. In addition respondents wish to obtain more information about strategy and discuss how it appears in everyday decisions. Middle management's role was highlighted also in this dialogue. Respectful interaction supports creativity and develops the change in postmodern organization (Lynch 2009, p. 496). According to Vaara & Mantere (2008), self-actualization,

dialogization and concretization are required to avoid passive resistance and withdrawal from strategy work.

As mentioned in theoretical framework Juuti & Luoma (2009) and Mantere et al. (2006) define objectives for adjusting the strategy of an organization and its customers. According to Juuti & Luoma (2009), the objective in postmodern view of strategy is to interpret customer's views of organizations and its products and services in the current moment. (Juuti & Luoma 2006, p. 271). Mantere et al. (2006) argues that essential in strategy work is that strategy is aligned with strategies of other organizations (Mantere et al. 2006, p. 175).

Customer encounters are the basis for the strategy creation in the postmodern view of the strategic management. Dialogue with customers is also required in order to inspire customers to interpret the situations in customer encounters (Juuti & Luoma 2009, p. 260, 271). Customer encounters are essential for Sales Managers of Company X. Encountering the customers personally creates images of the organization and its products. In this research respondents wish to create the image of the organization based on values and the strategy of Company X when encountering customers. When a customer creates images is every process, action and encountering important (Juuti & Luoma 2009. p. 223).

According to Juuti & Luoma (2009), the image of an organization is even more essential than its performance in real-life. The reality is created through images and repetition of these. Although meaning of these images is highlighted the strategic objective of the organization is to adjust the images to the reality. (Juuti & Luoma 2009, pp. 197-199, 222). Also Kamensky (2010) refers that the strategy and the image of organization should be equivalent to the reality (Kamensky 2010, p. 220). In this case research the image of the organization, its values and strategic objectives were aligned with the message of Sales Managers and customers' views. A long history of media house assures that some of these images, like locality and reliability, are very fundamental for operations and created during time. Although some images are created based on long history, images of developing and renewable media house exists based on current situation. This image creates trust to customers in order to answer the current challenges of both parties because of the changing business environment.

According to this research customers choose partners partly based on values that an organization presents. This supports the argument of Juuti & Luoma (2009) that images of the organization and its products create the identity to customers and possibilities to identify with an organization and its products (Juuti & Luoma 2009, 234-235). Organizations wish to connect values and images of partners to organizations' own image. This is significant especially when the image of the customer organization is visible to its own customer via media of Company X.

In addition to creation of images, aligning strategic objectives of the organization with the customers' strategy is significant (Mantere etc. 2006, p. 175). In this case digitalization challenges both parties and is considered also a strategic issue in researched organizations. Media solutions of Company X were mainly considered to support strategic objectives of customer organizations but requirements for developing these solutions further are required. Customers expect the knowledge, data, visions and new ideas of the digital marketing from partnership with Company X. Producing this data for customers was considered possibility to create the competitive advantage to Company X.

In this research there exists a gap between internally interviewed and externally interviewed respondents when asked about customer-driven approach of Company X. Customers considered Company X mainly customer-driven while Sales Managers considered this as an objective for development. According to Lynch, strategy is customer-driven when every function of an organization is directed towards customer satisfaction. The customer-driven strategy is aimed to identify future needs of customers. These future needs may offer new strategic opportunities and competitive advantage. (Lynch 2009, p. 527). Based on these views, although customers considered Company X as a customer-driven organization, focus to create a more customer driven strategy may enable to develop new possibilities based on customers' needs. This requires both internal and external co-operation between separate spheres of responsibilities of Company X and its customers.

10.2 Discussion of Methodological Choices

The subject of the research was valid to case organization. The topic was chosen already in spring 2012 but writing began in summer 2013. The perspective of the research varied during the process. The topic of research was specified during actual

writing of the thesis and interviews. Implementation strategy in the customer interface provided an interesting perspective for strategic management to explore. The aim for the research was to provide comprehension of effective strategy implementation in the customer interface.

This research was a qualitative case study and the data was collected by interviewing chosen respondents. The choice of the qualitative interview was obvious. The qualitative research was utilized to evaluate interpretation and create comprehension about a complex subject. As Erikson & Kovalainen (2008) describe, qualitative research produces the data about the appearance of a phenomenon in a real-life context (Erikson & Kovalainen 2008, 3). The objective of the research was to produce a wide perception of the subject and qualitative research and interviews was considered to provide this comprehension. Quantitative research would not have produced adequate data of the subject. As the subject of the research and the theoretical framework referred to the implementation of the strategy in the customer interface, qualitative research and interviews as a research method with customers and employees was justified.

Erikson & Kovalainen argued that the qualitative research is a circular process (Erikson & Kovalainen 2008, 31). This feature was also distinctive for this research. The general topic of the research was decided beforehand but the whole research evolved during the process. Also the formulation of research questions was phased. This research required back-and-forth movement between theory, analysis and findings in order to produce the explicit entity of the subject.

The data of study was collected by thematic semi-structured interviews. Interviews were accomplished in interaction with respondents. Interviews were planned before and these proceeded quite fluent although more precise questions would have been more effective in order to avoid data which was not directly related to the subject. Minor experience of the researcher complicated the planning of these interviews. Although interviews followed the certain structure it was interesting to notice that same issues aroused without actually asking those. The amount of interviews was adequate in order to make assumptions of it.

The feature of the thematic interview is that researcher has knowledge and theories of phenomenon (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2012, pp. 47-48). In this research theoretical

framework was finished before interviews and because of comprehension of the subject themes of interviews aroused from theory effortlessly. Also the knowledge of the context in the case organization provided views to the subject which aroused interest to research more specific. According to Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2010), in thematic interviews interest is on the feature of the phenomena and finding the hypothesis. In this research focus is more on the feature of the phenomena than a creation of a hypothesis of the subject.

Interviews were open and confidential. Respondents' attitude to interviews was positive and co-operative. This assisted collection of data. As phase of analysis in qualitative research often begins during interviews (Erikson & Kovalainen, 2008, p. 299; Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2010, p. 136) appeared this feature also in this study.

Answers of interviewees, theory and own observations of subject was processed and classified from begin of the interviews.

As traditional evaluation of validity and reliability of the research are inadequate in qualitative research other suggested forms of evaluating trustworthiness of the research were utilized. In this research for example repeatability of the research in exactly same context with same results would be impossible human behavior and situations changes rapidly. Suggestions of Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2010) and Erikson & Kovalainen (2008) about evaluating the quality of collected data, sources of data and several theories of the subject was considered most appropriate methods to assure the reliability and validity of the data.

11 CONCLUSIONS

11.1 Summary of Results and Managerial Implications

The aim of this research was to provide comprehension about the effective implementation of the strategy. Focus was on the strategy implementation in the customer interface. The objective was to assist the management of the case organization Company X on evaluating the strategy implementation in b-to-b customer interface and provide suggestions to develop the strategy implementation further. The research question was “How the strategy implementation has succeeded in customer interface in Company X?”

Based on results on this research the effective implementation of strategy requires both formal and informal processes of strategic management. Basis of the strategy work is still considered to be rational but importance of effective utilization of more informal strategy processes is essential in rapidly changing business environment. Strategy is still often considered a common direction for organization which evolves every member of organization. Employees also wish that appearance of the strategy in the every action is shown concrete.

Comprehension of strategy and its effects is essential. Instead of memorizing the strategy it appears through interpretations and actions of employees. Members of the organization in the customer interface apply strategy to own work based on own experiences and create stories and images to customers. Strategy also considered to create changes one's work and in whole organization. The importance of the strategy is acknowledged.

Instead of top-down communication is the strategic dialogue preferable method to implement the strategy as employees of the organization possess the key knowledge. The dialogue is required between management and employees, different spheres of responsibilities and between customers and organization. Open discussion creates acceptance of strategic objectives, reformulation of the strategy and customer satisfaction.

In the postmodern view of strategy, the strategy is created in interaction with the organization and its customers (Juuti & Luoma 2009, p. 260). The significance of

customer encounters is highlighted. Listening to the customers and creation of images to them is an essential part of the strategy work. Importance of connecting strategy to customers' strategic objectives is also inevitable; Strategic choices of the organization must answer to requirements of customers in order to produce value added and competitive advantage. This research also indicates that values and images of organization effect on customers' preferences to choose the partners. The whole organization should be able to listen to the customers.

Developing the more customer-driven strategy requires co-operation internally and externally. The aim in customer-driven strategy is to create organization where the objective of all actions is to satisfy needs of customers in order to develop new competitive advantage. This involves also operations which are not directly connected with customers. As the business environment of an organization and its customers is changing, is quick response expected in order to satisfy customers' changed demands. Co-operation between departments of an organization is essential in order to answer these requirements. Demand for quick response also diminishes the view of the strategy as long-term plan. Focus is more on the current situation.

In general as shown in results of the research the strategy implementation in Company X's b-to-b customer interface was mainly succeeded as the strategy was comprehended and its effects on one's own work were recognized. Also the strategy and created images of Company X was mainly connected to customers' views. Customers also considered Company X as significant partner to them

Based on this research, managerial suggestions in order to improve the strategic management from the view of the customer interface are

- Improving communication and strategic dialogue
- Improving co-operation internally and externally
- Utilization of signals from customer interface
- Noticing the customers' demands for digital businesses

Although the message of the strategy was received through several sources respondents still felt that there existed the lack of communication. The appearance of strategy in every action of the organization should be concretely indicated. This is mainly considered to be responsibility for the middle management and supervisors.

Instead of communication, several sources of literature suggest strategic dialogue. In Company X possibilities to strategic dialogue in b-to-b sales department were considered to be limited and supervisors as an only channel. The creation of formal and informal process of dialogue between employees from different spheres of responsibilities, management and customers would be recommended.

Improving possibilities to the strategic dialogue is linked with improving co-operation internally and externally. Internally it is essential to develop forms of co-operation between spheres of responsibilities in order to comprehend and value each other's roles and positions and to operate towards common goals. Increasing interaction between departments was considered highly important. Also forms of actual listening to the customers widely in organization were required. Customers' participation in development of new possibilities of advertising was considered positive form of co-operation.

Focus on digital business was considered the significant strategic objective of Company X by both employees and customers. Customers require and employees of b-to-b customer interface acknowledge these requirements of new ideas and possibilities for the digital advertising. Views of both interviewed parties were quite similar about the future possibilities of Company X. The utilization of this knowledge from the customer interface is important when new solutions, possibilities or strategic objectives are developed.

Current demands from the customer interface are innovative solutions for digital advertising in addition to display advertisements. The importance of reaching specific target groups will be highlighted and measurement of campaigns return on investment is important. Customers also expect Company X to be an expertise in advertising. As the current situation of digital business is confusing, Company X's opportunity is to provide knowledge and the data of advertising to its partners. Creativity and consultative role was emphasized. Focus should be on developing the required data

and knowledge within the organization and offering it to customers in order to deepen the customer relationships.

11.2 Evaluation of Thesis as Part of Professional Development

For me as an author processing of this thesis has provided wider comprehension of the strategic management especially noticing the features of current time. Evaluating the strategy implementation in the customer interface was an interesting and close angle for the subject.

This view is important for me because I also work as a Sales Manager of Company X and acknowledge the meanings of customers' views and experiences. Based on my own work, the postmodern features of the strategy are important to me. Focus on my own operation is to create these experiences and images of Company X to b-to-b customers. Also the current rapid change in media business due to the development of digital forms of advertising and consumers changed behaviour offered an ideal context to utilize these more modern views of the strategic management.

I work in a digital sales group so it was especially interesting to examine the customer's views of Company X's digital media solutions. Customers' valuation to creativity and new ideas was encouraging considering my own work. Customers also expected us to be expertise digital media, so importance of developing own knowledge is essential.

Processing the theoretical framework provided amount of new information and challenged the thinking. The journey during writing of thesis has also provided perspective for me to strategic issues of Company X. This appears by questioning some views and developing own actions. Overall it was interesting to notice that the strategy work in Company X was mainly aligned with customers' expectation but I hope these angles presented in this thesis will improve the strategic management of Company X towards the more customer-centric approach in the future.

The theoretical framework of thesis provided a wide view to subject. In order to comprehend the complex subject of the strategy it was essential to explore the subject from different perspectives. The postmodern view of the strategy provides interesting features in current time but understanding the rational nature of strategy is still

required. The basis of strategy is still often considered quite rational although more informal processes of the strategy are required especially in nowadays organizations where employees possess the key knowledge. Combining these views effectively in order to respond the challenges of the business environment would be recommendable. In order to develop own comprehension and justifiable suggestions of subject in this thesis it was essential to create wide perspective of topic.

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Appendix 1: Questions of Interviews

INTERNAL INTERVIEWS

COMPREHENSION OF STRATEGY

- What is strategy of Company X?
- Why strategy is required in Company X?
- How strategy appears in practices?
- What effects of strategy are considering one's own work?
- What has changed considering one's own work and whole organization?

STRATEGIC DIALOGUE

- Describe briefly how strategy is communicated to you?
- Have you got enough information?
- Do you consider strategy process and communication of it continuous?
- What kind of atmosphere for strategic dialogue is created?
- How have you participate on discussion of strategy?
- What kind of possibilities do you have in order to develop the strategy?

CUSTOMER-DRIVEN STRATEGY

- What has changed in customer behavior recently?
- Does the chosen strategy reply to customer's demands and behavior now or in future in your opinion? Why or Why not?
- Do the customer's demands effect on the strategy work in Company X? Why or why not?
- How organization supports working with customers?
- What kind of support is required in order to create more customer-driven organization?
- What kind of customer information is required and how it should be collected in order to develop customer-driven strategy?

CUSTOMER ENCOUNTERS

- What are main features how solution sale is accomplished in your own practices?
- What has changed compared to previous?
- What is the main image or message you wish to create when you encounter the customer?
- What else than offering wider range of products solution sales requires from you and whole organization?

Appendix 2: Questions of External Interviews

EXTERNAL INTERVIEWS

BACKGROUND / WARMING QUESTIONS

- Discussion about interviewee's business, experience, challenges and drivers for change
- With what adjective would you describe Company X?
- Strengths and weakness of Company X?

ADDITIONAL VALUE THROUGH LOCALITY

- What is the meaning of locality of Company X?
- What is the role of local media now and in future?

FACTUAL INTERACTION

- What kind of connections do you have with Company X?
- What significance Company X has as a partner now and in future?
- What issues do you appreciate when choosing a partner in generally and for advertising?
- Evaluate cooperation with Company X (at different levels)?
- Do you consider Company X as customer driven organization? Why?
- How would you develop interaction with Company X?

MULTIMEDIA PRACTICES AND DIGITAL BUSINESS

- What kind of objectives do you have now and in future?
- What kind of objectives as an advertiser do you have now and in future?
- How would you evaluate our media, and especially our digital business?
- Does our media solution support your objectives now and in future?
- What kind of digital contents or cooperation would you be interested now and in future in order to support your own business?