

Scenario-based strategy choice recommendations for social media development in Kazakhstan.

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<p>The world around us is changing faster than ever before. This fact might be hard to acknowledge for companies as it means a lot of uncertainty in the upcoming future, but something that is called “an ostrich politics” in Russia is not an alternative, it does not make sense hiding one’s head in the sand at the sight of something scary approaching. Natural and business environments are often compared, natural selection is the key to survival in both, and it is not always the strongest who survives, but rather it is the one better prepared and equipped.</p> <p>Worldwide Partners Inc. (WPI) is one of the biggest networks of advertising and marketing agencies in the world. They are determined to keep their supremacy, and are, therefore, looking for new pastures. Digital and social media marketing, as well as emerging markets, are their strategic aims. Although it is a known fact, that new opportunities usually come with unknown threats, which is why WPI has asked for a thesis that would tackle the problem of the unknown on the Kazakhstan digital marketing field and suggest the best ways to deal with it.</p> <p>Scenario building is the approach that suited the best for the assigned problem. It gives the outlook of plausible futures at their extremes, so the company could make several tactics and be equipped for this now-rehearsed unknown.</p> <p>Scenarios for the future development of social media in Kazakhstan were created based on the already existing World Economic Forum’s scenarios of global development. Qualitative research has helped to prioritise and make strategic suggestions for the case company.</p> <p>Recommendations for this creative thesis are based on the newest theories and methods, such as TOWS analysis and emergent strategic approaches. These can be used to create a strategy to act in the event of the occurrence of the least plausible scenarios. For the main strategy, the classical prescriptive approach is better to be used.</p>	
<p>Keywords Codified knowledge, intuitive knowledge, war gaming, scaffolding, crowd sourcing, digital ecosystem</p>	

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Scenario building is a part of the strategic planning process. Its importance is highly underestimated, considering that this approach has been around for over 30 years now. Still, many companies find it unnecessary waste of time and resources to develop scenarios of the futures, which they firmly believe, based on their past experiences, will never happen. Therefore, when the unexpected change comes, they stand unprepared, lost and panicking, trying to figure out the best way of acting in the new situation, most often than not settling for short-sighted decisions.

Founded over 70 years ago, Worldwide Partners Inc. was one of the first companies which saw the upcoming need in the international cooperation. The company always strived to stay ahead of its time and to seek the opportunities only then developing in the business field. That is why in the era of business globalization and marketing localization WPI offers an opportunity to act as a global conglomerate to the local privately owned ad agencies. This gives the necessary edge for pitching clients, where Partners can offer local and very individual approach of a privately owned regional agency, but on a global level.

There is a growing momentum on the Eastern side of the world. Post-Soviet republics, now independent countries, are full of great opportunities and dangers. The limited information available in the West makes it difficult to evaluate their risk and potential, therefore scenarios, based on the information available, creative thinking and polar possibilities can bring the necessary clarification.

1.2 Research Problem, IQs and overlay matrix

RP: Suggest strategy creation recommendations based on scenarios for social media development in Kazakhstan by the year 2017 (in marketing/for marketing purposes only).

IQs:

- In which areas changes of country's development are most likely to affect social media in Kazakhstan?
- How would those changes affect social media in Kazakhstan?
- What would be the best way for the case company to prepare for the possible futures?

Settings for the research are presented in the overlay matrix (Attachment 1).

1.3 Demarcation

The CIO of the case company has asked for a thesis which would explore the possibilities and the future of the digital and social media marketing in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan areas. Worldwide Partners Inc. is planning to expand to these countries and they would be interested to learn more about the market.

During the process of demarcation, I have decided to narrow the scope of my thesis to the geographic region of Kazakhstan and the development of a social media there in particular. Demarcation was performed based on, first of all, availability of data in the region and its speed of the economic development. Also the important role was given to a personal interest.

The approach to this topic was also chosen for several reasons. One of them is the fact, that scenario building is one of the hottest trends in strategic development and marketing at the moment. It allows company to be better prepared for different turns of events, reacting immediately and in the most effective way. Also, it is an interesting and entertaining way to communicate and "rehearse" plausible futures with the employees. Finally, the creative aspect of this work suits my own preferences much better, than a commonplace theoretical thesis.

The final demarcation states that this thesis was developed for marketing purposes only. This means that everything that is done and recommended here is oriented to be used by marketing professionals, to make decisions directly related to their area of expertise.

1.4 Key concepts

According to Van der Heijden (2011), **codified knowledge** – is well-articulated information, well-known by the strategy developers and used in strategic planning. Unlike the **intuitive knowledge** which combines separated observations that happen to have value and meaning, but are not articulated and associated with the codified knowledge. These are the pieces of information, which are not used in the strategic planning.

Scaffolding – is a process, which connects seemingly isolated pieces of knowledge. Term war gaming is used throughout several sources and is a way to refer to scenario building. Similar strategic scenario planning has been used in military throughout the history. (Van der Heijden, 2011)

Crowd sourcing is another commonly used term. It uses the same principle as outsourcing, but the task or a problem is outsourced to unidentified public, and not a paid employees. (Ratcliffe, 2007)

Digital ecosystem – combines IT, media and telecom industries in the same space. (World Economic Forum, 2007).

Abbreviations I mostly used: **WPI** – Worldwide Partners, Inc. the case company.

WEF – World Economic Forum, an independent international organization committed to improving the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas.

(www.weforum.org)

1.5 Case company

According to the website (www.worldwidepartners.com), Worldwide Partners Inc. is one of the biggest in the world networks of owner-operated advertising and marketing agencies and tenth largest network overall. It is operating in 53 countries around the globe and has over 90 partners in those countries. There are three main divisions in the company: EMEA region, North and South America.

The company was founded in 1938 and has headquarters in Denver, Colorado. The company's turnover is USD 3.9 billion in billings.

At the moment, Worldwide Partners Inc. is looking to expand its Partner network into post-Soviet countries in the Asian area. The most interesting business areas to be considered by the company at the moment are the ones related to digital and social media.

1.6 Report structure

This report has started with the request from the case company to research Kazakhstan social media future and potential from the marketing point of view.

The theoretical part consists of business scenario building part and the definition of digital and social media. In the Context part of the report reader can find an overview of Kazakhstan. The third chapter describes my scenario building process and the recommendations to the company I give. Finally, in the last chapter the questions of the validity of this report and my own learning are discussed.

For the purpose of achieving the maximum level of validity, I have asked for advice from one of the employees of Finpro, a Finnish internationalization consulting company. He has commented on my progress throughout the thesis writing and has helped me with his knowledge and information available. Further in my work he is referred to as the “facilitator”.

I have chosen qualitative method of research. It is better suited for the purposes of my work than quantitative method. After creating the case-specific scenarios for the development of social media in Kazakhstan, I have conducted the qualitative research in order to collect a variety of trustworthy opinions. My interviewees included the mentioned above the facilitator and the director of EMEA Collaborations of WPI Lisa Kettman-Kervinen. They were chosen for the possession of the needed knowledge about the area and the experience through his work; Haaga-Helia teacher, Madeleine Vakkuri, whose area of expertise includes thorough knowledge both about emerging and developing markets and the scenario building. Finally, a friend, a young marketing professional from Kazakhstan, was chosen to give insights about the country and its

social media development. She is in the age group, which uses the social media the most, which brings further validity to this research.

1.7 Report writing process

The writing process started with the Thesis workshop, where I have formulated the Research problem and Investigative Questions.

First step was to find out the information about the main topics, discussed in this thesis, and summarize it in the Theory part. This is the basis, which provided me with the framework to follow in this work.

In the **step 2** I have chosen a number of scenarios, which could have been used as a basis for the creation of my own scenarios. This was a necessary measure, as the building scenarios from scratch is an intricate and time consuming work, which must be performed by several professionals in different areas of expertise. Therefore, it was done in order to enhance the validity of my work (by including opinions of the other professionals) and staying in the time and workload frames of this thesis.

Step 3 provided me with the STEEP analysis, which is often used in creation of business scenarios. I presented current trends from the macro environment of this research in one table. This made it easier to see the hidden signs, which might have a significant impact of the future development of social media in Kazakhstan.

The **4th step** was a transitional one from theoretical part to the empirical one. On the ground of the STEEP analysis results I have made my choices of the scenarios. First of all, I have chosen a full set of 4 scenarios from World Economic Forum (WEF) as a basis for my own scenarios. Secondly, I have chosen one scenario about digital and social media development from another set on WEF. This became a variable to be added to each of the basis scenarios.

At this point I have met the facilitator, through discussion with whom I validated my choices. He has also equipped me with some of the insider information about the topic. This allowed for the further demarcation of my research problem.

In **step 5** I created my own scenarios. I used my creativity to imagine the path the social media in Kazakhstan would have been developing in each of the basic scenarios, which I have chosen in the previous step. This was also the stage when I developed my interview framework.

Step 6 is an interview stage. I performed qualitative research based on my creative scenarios to find out which one of these scenarios is the most plausible one. The aim was to get a variety of valid opinions for the Recommendation stage (step 8).

Step 7 is an analytical part, where I gathered together, analyzed and interpreted the information received from the interviewees.

Step 8 consists of the recommendations to the case company on how to use the acquired knowledge in the best way.

Figure 1 visualizes the process of my thesis writing step by step. Steps 1 through 4 (green) compose the Theory and the Context parts, which are close to each other, being based on the secondary information; steps 5 and 6 (orange) are the empirical stage and steps 7 and 8 (oxblood) are the outcome.

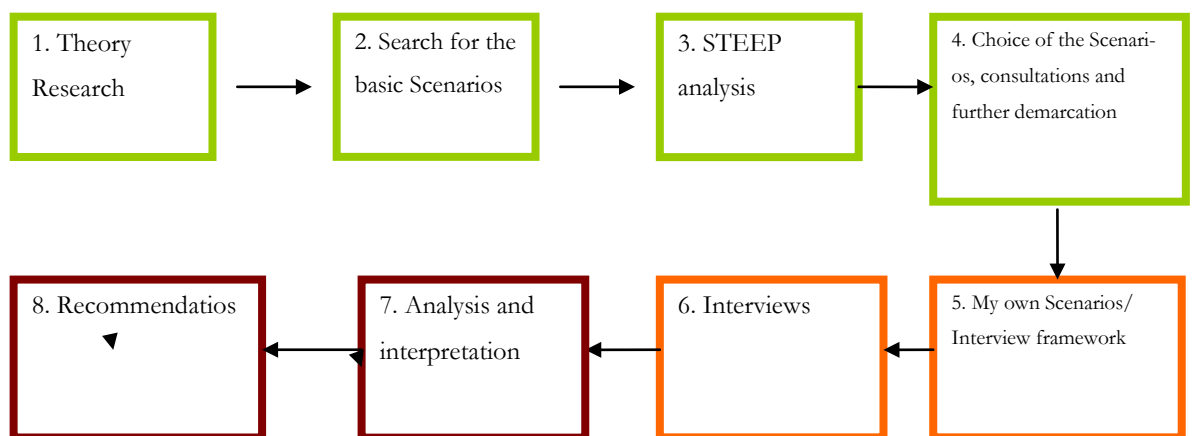


Figure 1. Thesis writing process in details.

2 Theory

2.1 Scenarios in the business world

“Scenarios are a process tool, not just an analytical device.” (Van der Heijden, 2010, x.) There are myriads of weak signals all around us. Some of them seem to be completely irrelevant to the organization, which strategic future is being decided on. Nevertheless, those seemingly insignificant changes and developing trends might have a fatal effect on the organizational future if not taken into account and acted upon fast enough. Moreover, not only should those signals be noticed and interpreted, but this must also be done from the multiple points of view, by versatile range of professionals in different fields.

One of the definitions of the scenario building is “a deep thinking and research of the underlying systems that gradually emerge.” (Van der Heijden, 2010, xiv.) That being the opposite of the locked-up thinking many managers are suffering from in their everyday work. After some time people get so used to the routine of their work, their perception of changes becomes almost completely insensitive. Managers are growing used to look only into the specific, limited to the direct closeness to the organization’s business, influences. Therefore, they start to overlook the signs of the emerging and growing new influences, which bring new threats, as well as opportunities. According to Kavanagh (2006), managers tend to believe that their past experience is more important than war gaming. They prefer to simply project the status quo, based on the previous experiences, to the years ahead.

The scenarios are taking into account the crucial uncertainties developing in the areas which can make an impact on the organizational well-being. It is important to understand that uncertainties tend to make people anxious and willing to overlook them altogether in order to have the picture of the world more clear and structured. That is a dangerous approach, which might and will cause undesirable consequences. According to Pierre Wack, uncertainty is not “just an occasional, temporary deviation from a reasonable predictability; it is a basic structural feature of the business environment.” (Van der Heijden, 2011, 151.) These upcoming changes and influences must be considered

and taken into account. This, according to Tenaglia (1992), is the fundament which accelerates the process of the company's competitive advantage development.

2.1.1 Use of the scenarios

“Here's the key question to ask yourself: Is there a plausible possibility of this happening (say 10% or greater)? If your answer is yes, then shouldn't you be prepared for this?” (Richards, 2002)

In Figure 2 the use and the process of the scenario creation is visualized. Process 1 is called “Option generation”, which is, in essence, the scenario building. The only difference is that in the actual scenarios those options are put in the form of the easy to remember and interesting stories. Process 2 is the empirical part, where generated options are analyzed and used in the strategic planning.

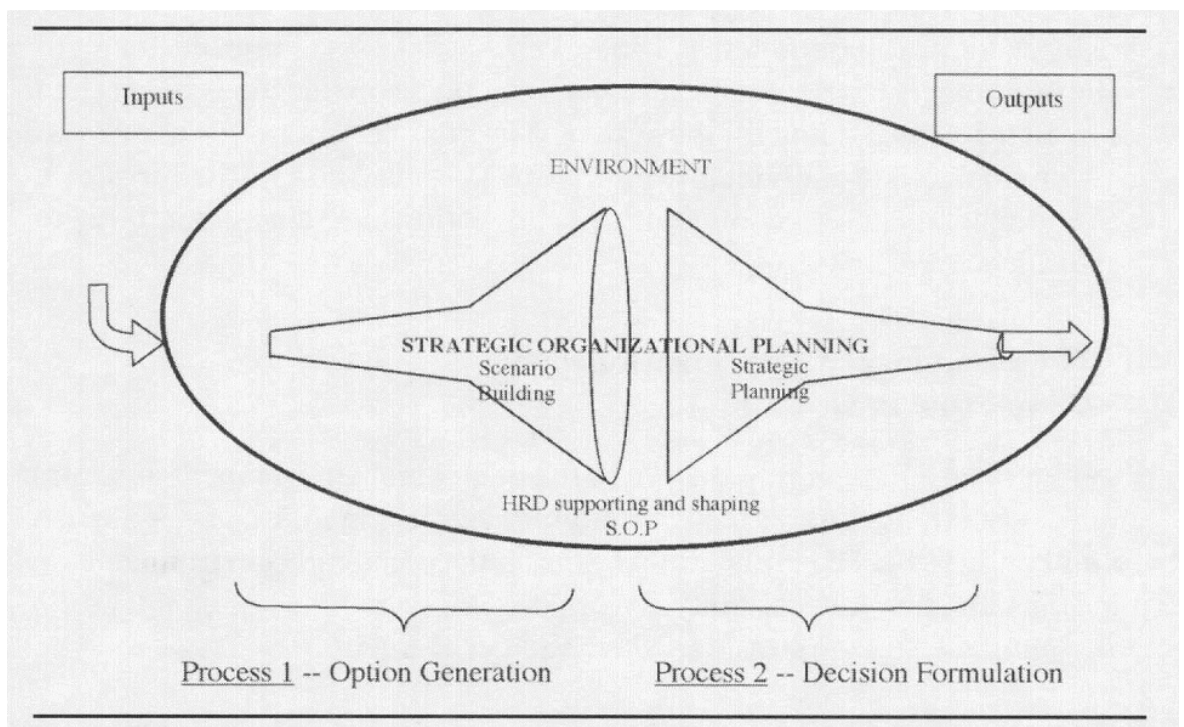


Figure 2. Scenario-building process, Chermack (2004)

The main benefit of using the scenario approach is in its highly customized nature. Van der Heijden (2011) emphasizes, that the sense of purpose must be kept in mind at all

times. The main objective is usually to achieve adaptive organizational learning skills in the organization at large.

According to Radcliff (2000), scenarios should be seen as experimental thinking, to picture the behaviour of a company in different situations which might unfold in the future.

Scenarios can be looked at as a basis for organizational strategy. “Strategizing [can be seen as] thinking about how we can intervene in the hustle and bustle of the evolutionary process that organizations are subjected to.” (Van der Heijden, 2010, xv.) There are three schools of thoughts, according to Van der Heijden, which can help to divide the existing approaches to the strategy development and differentiation from the competitors:

- Rationalist (aimed at finding the “optimal strategy”, e.g. Michael Porter).
- Evolutionary (assuming that strategy emerges and can only be understood in retrospect, e.g. Henri Mintzberg).
- Processual.

(Van der Heijden, 2011)

This last one adapts the main characteristics of the first two. It combines the feeling of the control over things, given by the Rationalist approach, with the fast moving and changing reality of the Evolutionary one. This Processual way of thinking is implemented through the scenario building techniques.

It must be kept in mind that the scenario building is in no way a predictive work. Moreover, thinking of them as the future predictions can be dangerous, as it puts limitations and locks the developer’s mind into specific prophecy, making the organization’s strategy inflexible and therefore vulnerable. Scenario building implies the ability to see diversity of trends, signs and opinions, different perspectives to complex and ambiguous business challenges. They are pen-pictures of a range of the plausible futures.

2.1.2 Scenario building

Unlike the conventional methods of strategic planning, scenarios are built with the inclusion of a range of the so-called “crucial uncertainties”. Those are meant to unveil the underlying trends, which might have an impact on the organizational future. The main focus in this process lays in how future can evolve in the particular time range. According to Van der Heijden (2011), the process of the scenario building must take into consideration the relationship between the critical uncertainties (as they resolve themselves), important predetermined trends (such as demographics etc.) and the behaviour of actors who have a stake in the particular future.

STEEP analysis is a common approach to developing organizational strategy. It is an acronym for an analysis of the Societal, Technological, Economic, Ecological and Political variables. Same as with all the other commonly known similar analyses, it is meant to draw a picture of the overall contextual environment. Its use for the scenario building purposes is in unearthing the trends and putting them clearly in the same graph.

The challenge in the actual scenario building, according to Van der Heijden (2011), would be to combine seemingly isolated signs, which make their appearance in different areas, and to see the discreet relationships between them. The tricky part is to make the right choice of variables and pick the most influential and ultimately important ones. The essence of the uncertainty, understandable and useful for the strategy developers, must be captured. In complex systems with a lot of choices, it is executed through creation of a few plausible scenarios, which would reflect the “systematic relationships, but also the irreducible uncertainty in the relevant domain” (Van der Heijden, 2011, 157). In this case each scenario is providing a context for these relationships to take place.

Often the facts that were not considered very important, or not taken into consideration at all before (some parts of STEEP analysis, which were not seen as influential or relevant, for example), in the new approach come out in a new light. Those facts might have hidden relationships, which directly affect, or will be affecting in the future, the

organizational performance. Van der Heijden (2011) emphasizes, that in order to bring such heterodox influences to the light during the scenario building process, the developer must question himself constantly. He must attempt to find other ways of seeing the situation, its driving forces, the assumptions made through the conventional way of thinking and the invisible changes unveiling (or possibly doing that in the nearest future) in the environment in question. These are meant to shift the developer's mind from the *things we know well to the things we do not know we know*.

According to Van der Heijden (2011), in the scenario building few steps must be followed:

Surfacing the mental models

In order to improve the organizational performance and to make it more skillful in developing the strategy, the mental models of its management must be uncovered. This is done through the interview, or several of them, of a client group. The primary purpose of this action is to unveil the trends and elements of the current and future business environments, which are the most concern to the client. The summarized scope of those concerns will present the scenario agenda.

Eliciting the agenda

Different departments of an organization might have very peculiar visions of the situation and business environment. Those visions tend to be grounded to each department's own area of expertise. Agenda elicitation process is a tool, which allows different departments of the organization to share their views and opinions. This helps to establish what exactly is believed to be relevant and important in the strategic context and to unveil the dominant mental model of the company.

Activating and integrating intuitive knowledge

Unlike the codified knowledge, which is well-articulated and known by the decision maker, the intuitive knowledge consists of hidden observations and relationships, which are not well understood and therefore are not used in the strategic planning. This is where process of establishing relationships between isolated observations and insights starts. This process is also known as *scaffolding*.

Validation to the achieved results might be done through the performance of the qualitative research. There are different ways to start collecting qualitative data. For example, just walk around and ask the important questions about places of interest along the way (Spradley, 1979, 86). Gall, Gall and Borg (2003, in Turner, W., 2010) suggest the following formats of interview design: informal conversational interview, general interview guide approach and standardized open-ended interview.

Informal conversational interview stands for a free flowing conversation with unstructured questions, which are just following the natural flow of the conversation. According to McNamara (2008, in Turner, W. 2010), with this approach the researcher does not have a specific set of questions, but rather relies on the interaction with the participants to guide the interview process. Flexibility of this kind of interview is its strongest point.

General interview guide approach can be described as semi-structured, comparing to an informal interview. There is a certain structure in the questions, but it still allows for some flexibility. An ability to adapt wise structured questions to personalize the interview can come handy in certain researches. The downside of this approach might be the lack of consistency due to the not-so-hard structure of the interview.

The standardized open-ended interview is extremely structured in terms of the wording of the questions. Participants are always asked identical questions. The questions must be worded as open-ended (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). This kind of interview encourages the participants to express as many opinions as they would like, which makes it very representative. Yet, according to Turner (2010), for the same reason it is difficult to code.

“The qualitative research interview seeks to describe the meanings of central themes in the life world of the subjects. The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say.”
(Kvale, 1996)

Analyzing driving forces

This can be done through the so-called Iceberg analysis. First of all, the huge mass of knowledge is broken into different categories. On the “peak” of the “iceberg” are the events which are easy to identify and observe. Hidden trends and patterns are developing the “under the water” part. Usually the deeper you dig into the “iceberg”, the more obvious it becomes that seemingly unrelated events from the surface tend to display an organized behaviour and form internal trends. Later on they form patterns of the relationships between those trends. As the events, which will have the most influence on the organization in the future, are hard to determine, it is the key driving forces, which have to be unveiled. Only then the plausible future scenarios, based on the multiple relationship structures, are built.

Scenario telling

The process of actually writing and telling the scenarios can be seen as a communication tool. It transfers the integrated and codified intuitive knowledge in a simple and memorable way to a wide stakeholder group. The recommended number of the scenarios, in which scaffolded knowledge is embedded, is two to maximum number of ten. They provide an umbrella concept for the people in the organization, allowing them to use the same vocabulary.

“Scenario stories that are original, compelling, provocative, memorable and that are elicit a rich imagery, help to engage the minds of individuals and intricate a strategic conversation within the organization.”

(Van der Heijden, 2011, 171)

2.1.3 Typical outcome of the scenarios

Scenarios are an easy way to communicate to all the organizational stakeholders the potential events, which might unfold over time. Once seen and read, they become the “rehearsed” future and in the event of the first signs of this scenario coming true, the decision maker has a better understanding of how this future might unfold. As Hamel, G. & Prahalad (1994) emphasize, these events can actually be seen as information, ra-

ther than just a flow of data. This saves valuable time and gives a range of suggestions for appropriate and timely actions, which might be executed at this point.

Therefore, there are some typical outcomes of the scenario awareness of the future. They include, for example, the confirmation of the current strategy's efficiency or its rapid obsolescence; recognition of the emerging opportunities and threats; unveiling the potential strengths and weaknesses caused by the upcoming changes.

Lynch (2012) suggests differentiation between prescriptive and emerging strategies. Prescriptive strategy development is considered to be classical one, and involves “slow, steady circumstances which are easy to predict.” (Lynch, 2012, 418). The prescriptive approach is visualized step by step in Figure 3.

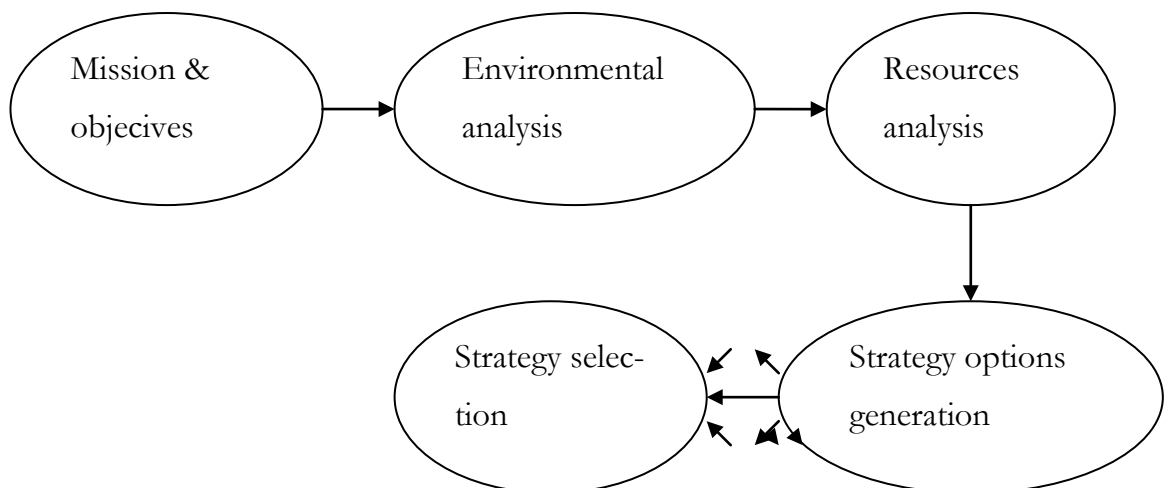


Figure 3. Prescriptive model in the strategic management process (Lynch, 2012)

The prescriptive approach is a simplified one, considering that in real life things rarely go in a stable, predictable way. Therefore, the emerging approaches were developed, in order to adjust the context of the strategy to the developing uncertainties. They tackle the weaknesses associated with the classic prescriptive approach.

The emerging approaches, according to Lynch (2012), can be divided into four main routes:

Survival-based.

In a highly competitive environment this strategy is seeking to give company a competitive advantage. This is done through the opportunities, which are just occurring and are yet unexploited by the others.

Chaos (uncertainty)-based.

Key idea of this approach lays in the necessity of the innovation and transformation of the organizations itself.

Network-based.

This approach is concentrating on the inside and outside relationships of the organization. The main idea here is to define the networks, which can bring an additional value to the company. Then reinforce the relationships with them.

Learning-based.

A company has to put a high emphasis on feedback and learning, both from the past and the current processes. This allows for developing a more flexible, emergent strategy.

The choice of the strategic approach can be justified based on one of the typical analysis, such as SWOT (a micro environment analyses, aimed to determine the main Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). Another option, which might be even more suitable for this purpose is to use SWOT's variation, TOWS.

TOWS matrix makes possible to methodically recognize relationships between S-W-O-T. T and O in these analysis describe the external environment, whilst S and W – the internal one. According to Wehrich, TOWS analysis gives answers to the questions such as how to:

- Make the most of the firms' strengths? } Internal
- Bypass the firms' weaknesses? } Internal
- Capitalize on the opportunities? } External
- Manage threats? } External

This is performed through matching each of the external indicators to each of the internal ones. TOWS can be considered the Resource analysis in the strategic management process.

2.2 Digital and social media

Digital Media is a digitized content (text, graphic, audio and video) or any data in a binary form that can be transmitted between computers. (Tuten, 2012).

One of many definitions for social media is an array of the Internet tools and platforms that increase and enhance the sharing and searching for information. (Social media Defined, 2007). It enables an interactive dialogue of the users through the digitalized content.

2.3 Summary of theory

In a nutshell, business scenarios are the tool which provides a company with a “tangible ground” in the ocean of uncertainty future tends to bring us. By having them written down, analyzed and communicated to the stakeholders, company gets an advantage of being prepared to the unknown.

The process of building scenarios is a complicated one. It starts with formulating the agenda of the scenario building. For this purpose the proper understanding of the biggest concern to the company’s management is needed. The summarized scope of the trends and elements, which are the biggest concern to the client, will be the scenario agenda.

This can be continued with the further investigation of the already existing mental models inside of the organizations. Different departments might have contrary visions on the company’s strategy choice, usually based on their own area of expertise.

STEEP or any other macro environment analysis will provide the researcher with comprehensive information about the existing situation and upcoming changes in it.

The main attention should be paid to the hidden trends, which are developing in a close proximity to the company's environment. In other words, they are not important enough to be taken into consideration during the strategic planning of the company, but are already relevant and will have an impact in the near future. At this point scaffolding is performed to establish the relationships between seemingly isolated observations.

Finally, the scope of the hidden trends and relationships between them must be carefully accessed. It is impossible to handpick each of them, which would be the most important, as they are still too translunary. Instead, in order to create the scenarios, researcher has to decide about main driving forces of the upcoming changes. It is important to stay relevant to the scenario agenda and company context at all times.

The scenarios are an innovative and interesting tool to communicate the company's strategy to a wide variety of stakeholders. This brings the sense of preparedness and security, as people start to see a wider picture and that company is prepared for the changes. Moreover, it is willing and working on being the first and the best, and therefore is worth sticking to.

Different strategy choice approaches are also supporting this sense of relevancy and security towards the future. They provide an opportunity to handle different situations before they even started to appear. And moreover, do it with the most suitable approach. By preparing the strategies to grasp the opportunities before they are even known to the rest of the industry, or deal with the threats the second they appear company can insure itself a place in the future.

3 Context

Kazakhstan

The following information is based on the data posted on the Central Intelligence Agency Factbook. It gives an overview on the case country and the conditions of the most important for this study facilities, such as telecommunication systems.

3.1 Overview

Never a united single nation, Kazakhstan was conquered by Russia in 18th century and in 1936 became a Soviet Republic, which added up to the diversity of population. It is now about 17.5 million citizens, 71% of which are age 15-64; urban population is 59%.

Due to its vast natural resources, at the moment Kazakhstan has larger economy than any of the other Central Asia states and it continues to develop quickly. Territory-wise it is the 9th biggest country in the World. Major cities are Almaty (1 383 000 citizens) and country's capital Astana (650 000 citizens).

Kazakh (Qazaq), the state language, is spoken by 64.4% of population. Russian (official, used in everyday business, is designated the "language of interethnic communication") is spoken by 95%.

Kazakhstan is suffering from the so-called "Dutch disease", which comes from overreliance on oil and extractive industries. Tackling this issue, Kazakhstan has started an aspiring diversification program. The aim is to develop target sectors like transport, pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, petrochemicals and food processing.

In 2010 Kazakhstan joined the Belarus-Kazakhstan-Russia Customs Union. This way they are planning to attract foreign investment and improve trade relationships. Kazakhstan is set to join the World Trade Organization in 2012. This should also help to develop the manufacturing and service sector base.

GDP Purchasing Power Parity was \$216.4 billion, per capita - \$ 13,000 in 2011. Unemployment rate 5.4%; population below poverty line 8.2%.

3.2 Communications

Telecoms are currently improving, but require considerable investment, as does the information technology base.

Telephones

Main lines in use – 4.011 million (2010); mobile cellular – 19.768 million (2010). Telephone system is inherited out-of-date telecommunications network from the Soviet times and requires modification.

The quantity of fixed-line connections is slowly growing and fixed-line teledensity at the moment is about 25 per 100 persons; mobile-cellular usage was increasing fast and the user base today goes beyond 100 per 100 persons.

Broadcast media

Almost all the radio and TV transmission facilities belong to the state. Government also owns most of the nationwide TV networks. An access to foreign media is available through satellite dishes. The most recent law obliges all media outlets to register with the government and all TV providers to broadcast in digital format by 2015.

Internet country code: .kz, Internet hosts - 65,988 (2011), rated place 88 in the world, Internet users 5.299 million (2009), ranking 44 in the world.

4 Scenario building process and recommendations

This chapter describes the empirical part of my research. After studying the theoretical background, I implemented the achieved knowledge in order to create my own scenarios at first. After that, I conducted the qualitative research in order to determine the most plausible scenario of all. Finally, I created a set of recommendations for the case company to follow while building the corporate strategy.

4.1 Relevant scenarios to base the research

In this chapter I am describing the two sets of the scenarios I have chosen to base my own ones onto. Initially I have found a number of the scenarios, which could have been used for this purpose. Then, based on the results of STEEP analysis (and validating my choices with the facilitator), I have chosen two sets. One set is meant to be the main one – it describes four plausible ways of the global development. For each of its scenarios, which describe the global picture of the world, I created my own, constructing the Kazakhstan’s position in this world.

From the second set of the scenarios, which describes possible scenarios of digital and social media development, I have chosen only one scenario. This became a “variable” to add to each of my scenarios in order to make them more descriptive of Kazakh social media in each of these imaginary “worlds”.

Both of the scenario sets happened to be taken from the World Economic Forum. This was not done on any specific purpose, they just happened to be the most suitable for my purposes.

4.1.1 The future of the global financial system

This set of the scenarios (Figure 4), taken from the World Economic Forum, describes the global development in a long-term. It addresses possible changes in the pace of geo-economic power shifts and the degree of international coordination on financial policy.

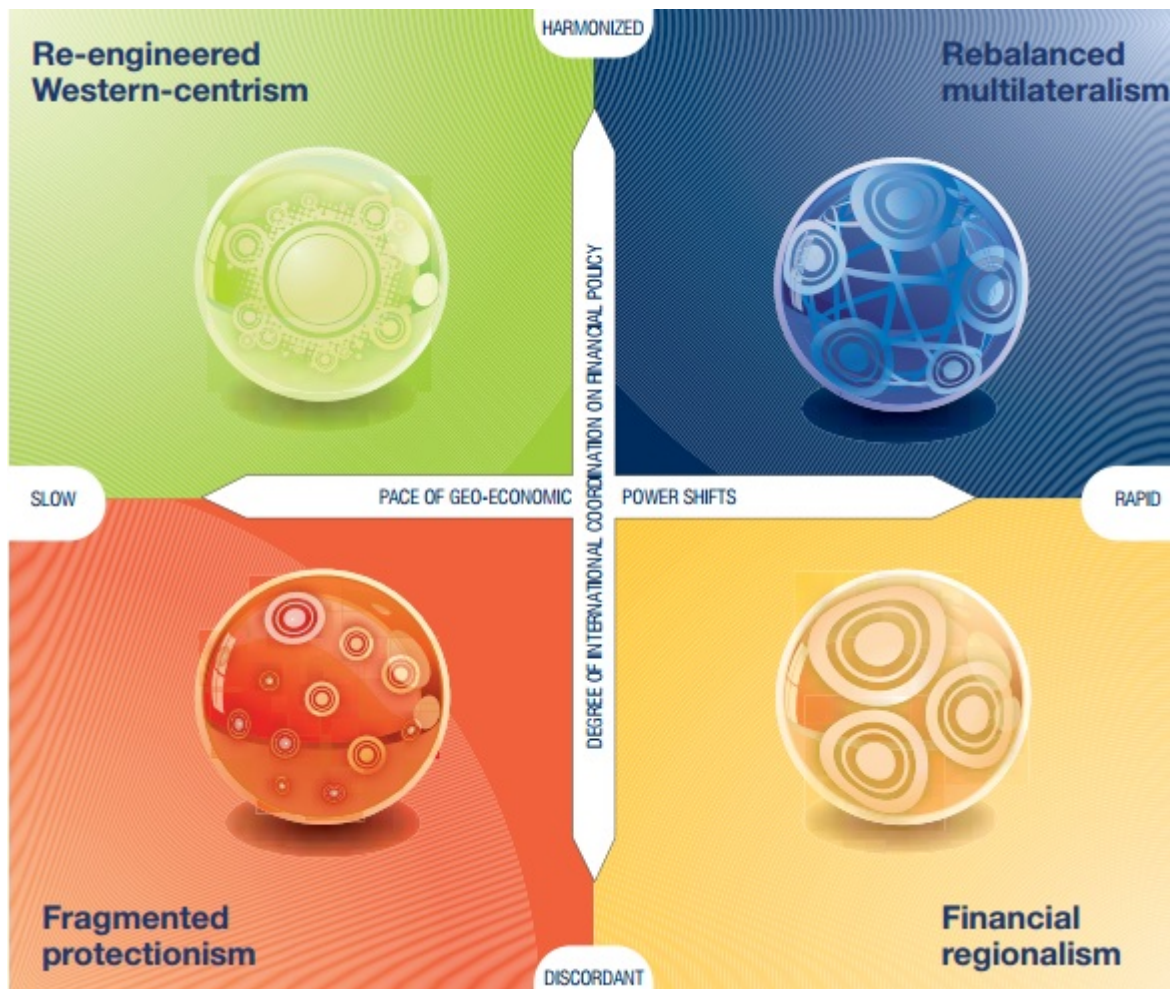


Figure 4. The future of the global financial system (World Economic Forum, 2010)

Re-engineered Western-centrism

Swift coordination restored confidence and liquidity in global markets, allowing the US and EU quick recovery. Although emerging economies took longer to bounce back, this financially homogenous world is still to face the reality of the power shifting towards the East. Despite the fact that the institutional reforms have given the developing countries an international financial policy, the leaders of the emerging powers are still arguing that their “presence at the table” is still far too ceremonial, as the West maintains an economic and moral primacy. The growth in emerging economies is slowing down, allowing to unwind the situation of global imbalance with Western countries catching up by exporting highly innovative products and services.

Fragmented protectionism

US fell deeper into the recession, became increasingly opposed to globalization and free trade, and more inwardly oriented, causing a wave of new regulations around the world, along with new restrictions on the ownership and currency controls. Euro zone fell apart, only few countries retaining euro, while others across the Globe establish capital control and severe restrictions on the movement of goods and people. Wars over territories and natural resources only work to worsen the situation. Stately growth in China provoked huge internal unrest. International institutions are overwhelmed and cross-border trade is mostly within bi-lateral agreements for natural resources, food and medical products, which are increasingly linked to minority alliances. Financial regulations are inflexed and extremely intrusive in the most domestic markets, currency controls are back, all of which means very little cooperation between countries. Race-to-the-bottom is deepening the existing crisis, while economies fight against each other with the populist, protectionist policies. That, in its turn, encourages the growth of nationalism.

Rebalanced multilateralism

The global financial ecosystem has finally evolved. New Eastern Powers won the battle for the ideas regarding financial regulations. The increasingly aggressive re-inflationary policies, which Western leaders pursued in the face of recession, did little to restore confidence or ignite growth. Emerging economies are building domestic demand and learning a lesson from the crisis. The west is talking about coordination. Emerging economies are working together, producing new multilateral agreements and improved financial and macroeconomic risk management. Western economies reached new economic crisis in 2017, which brought about the East's new financial agenda – harmonization in regulations and financial coordination, which ends up in a more resilient global financial system. This all leads to the environment, which is better suited for the complex and interdependent world around. There is a greater focus on systematic risk control, executed by the means of applied economic policies, confidence-building measures and contingency plans.

Financial regionalism

In financial and economic terms the world is divided into 3 regional blocks:

- Expanded EU area
- Democratic trade alliance. (USA-based, free markets and financial innovation)
- Eastern international economic community (emerging powers with governmental interventions), they refuse western models and ideas.

Goods and services are flowing freely within blocks, barriers between them – high. Global firms operate as tri-regional entities due to the difference in regulations. In terms of size, the global markets are dominated by the third block, with China acting as a leader in Asia. Laws and regulations are done on the regional level, which increases the costs for global players, and there is very little regulatory and monetary convergence. US is continuing its strategy of minimum regulation, whereas EU has turned inward, regulating financial institutions heavily, its nationalized champions and protectionist policies against eastern block distort market. Eastern block has adopted a “controlled openness” strategy, when state keeps a close eye on all the market circles and capital adequacy ratios. Yet it is still looked at as a source of stability and yield by the companies. Multilateral agreements across blocks cease to exist and are being replaced by regional development bodies, trade agreements and central bank accords.

4.1.2 Digital Ecosystem Convergence between IT, Telecoms, Media and Entertainment.

The set consists of three scenarios (Figure 5), each of them describing the way digital and social media might be developed. As we are currently in the middle of the time period they were made for (developed in 2007 with a view to 2015), I have chosen, and validated my choice with the facilitator, only one of them. It shall be used as the descriptive one for the social media development my own scenarios.

Digital ecosystem consists of users, companies and governments in the space of IT, telecommunications and media & entertainment industries. A healthy digital media must create an economic and social value.

Therefore, this set of the scenarios deals with the two main questions:

- Will the digital business environment evolve towards a more open or a more closed system?
- Will social and economic value creation become controlled by established players or by grass-roots communities?

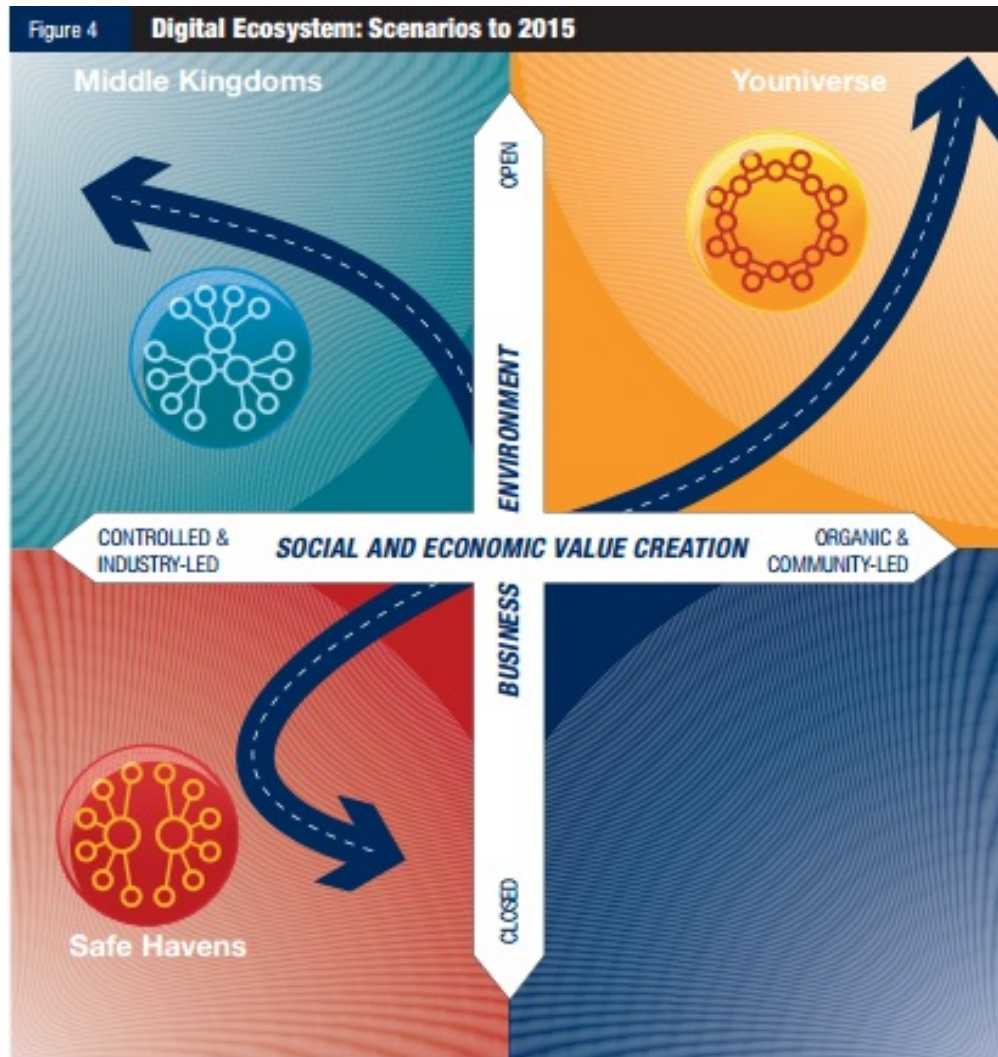


Figure 5. Digital Ecosystem Convergence between IT, Telecoms, Media and Entertainment (World Economic Forum, 2007)

Safe Heavens

Digital business environment is closed, social and economic value creation lies within established players.

This scenario describes a digital world heavily controlled by the governments. Users are locked in within a small number of similar digital platforms. Value lays in providing content packages. By the year 2015 young tech-savvy users attempt to establish independent online communities. They are fought in courts by the conglomerates.

Middle Kingdoms

Digital business environment is more open, than in a previous scenario. Social and economic value creation is shared between service providers and intermediaries.

In a stable geo-political environment users demand interoperable and open devices and services. Common standard for privacy and security are established on the governmental level, openness and competition are supported. Network is dominated by a few powerful intermediaries – middle kingdoms, which are using powerful systems, with even the ability to contextualize the information. Towards 2015 it becomes easier for the users to execute and protect their Intellectual property Rights, which creates a boost in the digital business.

Youniverse

Digital business environment is open, social and economic value creation lays within grass-root communities.

In a stable geopolitical environment users want to take control of their digital experience. In this imagined Youniverse new organizational structures grow. Grass-root communities grow in power, distributed innovation models become mainstream for products, services, technologies and business models. Established businesses have to find ways to become a significant part of this new digital ecosystem by attracting communities or they might become obsolete.

Traditional aggregators are replaced by Personal Digital Agents, which are highly customized personal software tools that manage user profiles and allow users to navigate the array of offerings and find what they want. The joined actions of all players lead to a new equilibrium, which is based on interoperability, open systems and common standards. Open self-supporting software and collaborative community structures be-

come more sophisticated and back-office support services reduce transaction costs. There is a value shift to hardware and software providers as users invest in tools they need to manage the myriads of new connections.

4.2 Developing scenario agenda and unveiling the hidden trends.

Even though I did not prepare my own scenarios from scratch, during the process of their building I was still following the steps of scenario building, described in chapter 2.1.2. In the following chapters I have described the pattern of my thinking step by step.

4.2.1 Surfacing the mental models

I have started the collection of the information from the secondary sources, such as articles, official web pages and books. As the time scope assigned for this work is not big enough to conduct a full-scale scenario research and development, I have decided to base my creative scenarios on the ones which were already created by the group of the professionals in the relevant fields. I have found several sets of the appropriate scenarios on WEF.

After that, a meeting with the facilitator has provided me with some primary information, as well as some secondary one, which is not available for public use. Through this consultations the hidden trends and intuitive knowledge was disclosed. They can be summarized as following:

- Kazakhstan is growing close to Russian Federation, it builds close relationships, both political and economic, with it;
- Kazakhstan belongs to the emerging markets and to the Asian block of the development, when looked from the point of global view;
- Social media in the area, including the one found in the closest and most powerful neighbours, i.e. Russia and China, is established in a different way from the Western countries. That includes different market leaders in search segment, as well as localized social media networks and almost exclusive use of local language;

- Local communication systems are poorly developed, limiting the usage of social media both from the creators' and users' sides;
- The interest in social media in the more developed neighbouring areas is extremely high. According to the Finpro research from June 2010, "Russia boasts the most engaged social media audience that on average spends 9,8h per month (vs. 4,5h globally), followed by users from Israel and Turkey";
- Kazakhstan is and quite likely will continue to be the country with tyrannical governance;
- The Future of the Global Financial System scenarios from WEF are descriptive and relevant enough to be chosen as a basis for creation of my own scenarios.
- The Youniverse scenario from WEF is the one, which seems to be the closest to the existing and developing reality.

The last three points are extremely important for my research, as through them I have further demarcated the scope of this work. First of all, my own scenarios will be created on the basis of the economic and financial scenario set from WEF. Then, the Youniverse scenario from WEF will be used to describe the path of development of digital and social media in each of my own scenarios. And finally, it will be assumed in my own scenarios that the governmental model in Kazakhstan will continue to be tyrannical. Also, based on the information collected I have performed the STEEP analysis (Attachment 2).

4.2.2 Eliciting agenda

I decided to choose The Future of the Global Financial System as a basis for my work for several reasons. First of all, the high speed of globalization, which can be seen at the moment, and which, after all, makes the emerging Kazakhstan market interesting for the case company. Due to the vast reserves of natural resources and the rapidly globalizing market place with growing demand for them, the economic boom in Kazakhstan is inevitable. This is bringing the country closer to the other emerging Asian markets, such as China and India. In the chosen scenarios there is a clear demarcation

of the Asian block as a growing power of its own, and Kazakhstan seems to become a well-contributing part of it.

The second reason is the consideration, which is given in this set of scenarios to the recent economic crisis. It had a big effect on the global business environment, first of all from the economic point of view. Therefore the scenarios, which are based on the financial considerations, seem to be the most logical to become the base for the social media development ones. This is due to the fact, that social media is a product of technological and social advancement, which, in turn, is highly affected by the economic performance of the region.

Other reasons included: the limited amount of the ready-to-use scenarios, which would be suitable for my purposes; my own vision, which is described in this set in the best way out of all the available scenarios; the facilitator's agreement with me about this choice; etc.

The digital scenario choice was determined by the nature of my research. It is aiming to provide creative, yet containing as full-scale observations, as possible, about the plausible futures of the social media development in the region. As social media is a beloved child in the marriage of digital media and social development, me and the facilitator found it appropriate to use the scenario, which is created with the view of plausible changes within these two parameters. The scenario set I have chosen was created in 2007 with a view to 2015, which makes it possible, now that we are being in the middle of this time period, to evaluate each of the scenarios individually and choose the one which seems to be the closest to the existing reality.

The Youniverse scenario lies in the dimension, which presumes the growth of power and influence of the grass-root communities and evolvement towards a more open digital business system. This seems to be the course the digital development is taking at the moment, especially with the current growth of social media, which promotes the strength of both parts.

4.2.3 Activating and integrating intuitive knowledge

As work for the basic scenarios creation has already been done, I concentrated on finding the “hidden” information, trends which are not visible or commonly known yet, but which are highly likely to have an effect on the future development of the social media in Kazakhstan.

I started this with an analysis of the collected primary and secondary data. One has to keep in mind that the secondary data available on the Internet is mostly from the Russian language sources (such as Eschment, (1999) and Kislov (2007)). The reliability of this data is to be questioned, as the media sources might be under political influence and even pressure. Nevertheless, it helps to create a certain picture of the events happening in Kazakhstan now or brewing up to surface in the visible future.

Finally, personal interviews were conducted in order to integrate the hidden knowledge into the chosen scenarios in the most reliable way.

4.2.4 Analyzing driving forces

After the available data was collected and categorized, I started to look for a way to break the mass of the received information into more digestible chunks. As my scenarios are based on the already existing on the WEF ones, my choice of categories was limited to the availability of the existing scenarios. I have chosen the most relevant to the topic factors, which are the geo-economic situation, the pace of globalization and the development of the digital space. Those were the three main driving forces which I identified in the relation to the topic in hand.

4.2.5 Scenario telling

In order to keep it simple and reliable, I decided to keep the original names of the scenarios, as they describe their main content in the best way. Being an entirely creative product, which is using the available data only as a basis for the inventive future vision, my scenarios contain a healthy dose of humour, which is intended to make them more memorable.

4.3 Creation of the scenarios for WPI and their testing.

To create my scenarios, I described each of the basic scenarios from the WEF with the inclusion of the trends in development of social media based on the Youniverse scenario and from the Kazakhstan's point of view.

While creating my scenarios, I have made an interview frame for my qualitative research. I have chosen a general interview guide approach, described in chapter 2.5. The questions my interviewees were discussing are:

- Which of the scenarios looks the most plausible to you and why?
- How would each of them affect marketing and ad agencies in Kazakhstan?
- What would be the best course of actions for marketing and ad agencies in Kazakhstan already now to be prepared for each of them?

I have asked interviewees to elaborate answering each of the questions in order to get more precise results. I conducted the pilot interview with the facilitator in order to bring to light the possible flows.

4.3.1 Re-engineered Western-centrism (WPI)

Western economies have recovered from the economic and financial crises and are working towards more integrated West. This slows down the power shift to the East, where integrating processes are taking significantly longer to materialize. Close relationship with Russia has enabled Kazakhstan to enjoy the fast economic growth. Also, the World's greediness for natural resources and the new institutional reforms, undertaken by the country, have proven beneficial.

Politically, Kazakhstan is feeling safe, being sandwiched between the Russian Federation, with its democratic tyranny, and still relatively closed Chinese superpower. It is being tyrannically controlled by the President of all Kazakh, Mr. Nazarbayev.

In the race for developing new technologies and implementing existing ones, the Kazakh Government was forced to make a democratic face and somewhat open the digi-

tal borders, as the population is unavoidably growing aware and demand the control of their digital experience. The Government has implemented and promoted the Western-like local social media, and allows access to the Russian-speaking ones, which are still fairly well controlled by the government in place in the Russian Federation. Grass-root independent digital communities are still weak due to the controlled access to the Western media, language barriers and brain washing activities. This in turn slowed down the digital innovation and the penetration of modern digital distribution models in the region.

In her novel “2048”, a Russian journalist Zhenya Orbad satirically describes a completely digitalized homogenous World, controlled by the one party system, which can do anything - from transferring people digitally from one place of the Earth to another, to removing them completely from the System.

In the present world, most of the economic activities are executed through the well-developed homogenous digital ecosystems, with companies easily moving goods from one place of the world to another with the minimum bureaucracy involved. Open self-supporting software and collaborative community structures become more sophisticated and back-office support services reduce transaction costs. Only the companies, which found their ways into digital space in time, survive the competition, provided by the easiness of establishing and running the business in the digital area. That dependence on digital increases the demand for digital professionals. In turn, the whole system of Academic education in the world must restructure to answer the demands of this new world.

The West maintains an economic and moral supremacy, with the biggest achievement being the creation of a “Digital Bretton Woods” – a reform of existing financial institutions and the creation of supranational regulatory authority controlling the new digital era. This reform mostly forgets the needs of the emerging markets, but this might primarily be the result of Eastern unwillingness to open its digital borders to free information flows.

The growth in emerging economies is slowing down. This loosens up the global imbalance. Western countries catch up by exporting highly innovative products and services. One of the main ones is a highly customized personal software tool that manages user profiles and allows users to navigate an array of offerings in order to find precisely what they want.

The joined actions of all players lead to a new equilibrium, which is based on interoperability, open systems and common standards in the Western world and Government-controlled, semi-open systems of the Eastern economies, including Kazakhstan. The digital environment is open in a highly controlled way.

4.3.2 Financial regionalism (WPI)

The world consists of the three major blocks: US-based, EU and the Eastern block. All three are self-efficient, and closed to international cooperation. The idea of globalization is in the history books and multilateral agreements ceased to exist. The only way for companies to operate globally is to do it via tri-regional system, based on difference in regulations.

Kazakhstan is a valuable member of the Eastern block, providing natural resources and technological innovations, boosting progress of the region. From the financial point of view, state executes the “controlled openness” strategy. Kazakhstan is a fast growing “state within a state”, as the internal boundaries within blocks are almost completely removed, and the country enjoys a high level of the digital development and approval of population. New business models are quickly emerging as the external competition is eliminated. All of them are partly or completely digital, exploring the potential of the newly developed local social media and the endless possibilities of doing business in a highly internally competitive, yet greedy for the new and exciting experiences, world of the digital users.

Grass-root communities are a powerful digital force within each block. There is a heavy resistance from the eastern digital users to the control and closeness of the western digital space. Despite of all the attempts of the government to execute the brain

washing activities and use social media as a manipulation tool, users demand the control more than ever.

The Eastern digital ecosystem is quickly becoming a homogenized platform with common language, which is a mixture of Chinese and English, and locally for Kazakhstan and other post-soviet states – Russian.

4.3.3 Rebalanced multilateralism (WPI)

Global digital and financial ecosystems have finally advanced. The world is more homogenous than it has ever been before. The new Eastern Power created through coordination of the former emerging and now developing Eastern economies, is based on multilateral agreements, common monetary policy, prioritization of domestic demand, as well as tightly controlled financial and macroeconomic risk management.

The jump-start to this coordination came out of the 2017 recession, faced by Western economies, which unveiled the need for harmonization regulations and financial coordination for mutual integration. Catching up the wind of change, Kazakhstan is quick to join this emerging superpower, although still not forgetting its loyalty to Russia.

“Caring” tyranny is the political style adopted by most of the member countries of this new Eastern Empire. It is characterized by centralized governance, organized on trias politica principle, allowing certain democratic freedoms which are implemented within general tight rule and control. People are enjoying an unprecedented life quality growth.

With only a generation gap, from being the third world economies, this system is easy to maintain and promote as the only right one. Chinese slowly becomes the common language within the area, and spreads all over the world, replacing English, which will become the “other” must-know language in the World. Eastern Union develops a 2-layer digital ecosystem: one is for the domestic use, with grass-root communities having a significant power in controlling their own digital experiences within the limited space of localized social media and with controlled access to the Western websites.

Outer layer is mostly economical and is a part of the global financial ecosystem. The companies, which were fast to act and first saw almost endless opportunities provided by the digital platforms and use of grass-root communities, are flourishing, even in the highly competitive environment of the easy-to-do-business times with significantly lowered restrictions and cross-countries borders.

Grass-root communities have a significant influence on the new distribution innovation models for products, services, technologies and business models. They demand increasingly more control over their digital experience and use highly customized personal software tools, which allow them navigate the digital ocean of offerings in the most productive and useful way.

4.3.4 Fragmented protectionism (WPI)

The globalization plan has fallen apart, leaving the USA in an ever-so-deep recession. The European Union has restored local currencies and what was once common freedom is now becoming a heavily regulated area with closely enforced restrictions.

The uneven distribution of natural resources and their consumption, multiplied by the lack of international cooperation, are causing wars over resource-rich territories.

Slow growth in China has provoked huge internal unrest. Emerging Eastern economies are working in a high rivalry environment, full of mutual suspicion. Kazakhstan is struggling. Pressures from China and Russia are trying to rip the country apart in order to access its natural resources. Keeping a good face with bad cards, Kazakhstan is negotiating the possibility of becoming an “independent republic” linked to its northern neighbour, Russia.

Kazakhstan’s digital ecosystem has evolved slightly and people are struggling with everyday activities, which have finally become a big part of the country’s economic and social life. The digital ecosystem is partly closed from western influence; the main natural barrier still remains the lack of foreign language skill. There is more initiative for social media to grow around the activities of a ru-net - a heavily-controlled and cen-

sored by the state, as well as secured from the most influences of the west. This leads to a race-to-the-bottom, which is deepening the existing crisis and affects the digital space, where heavy protectionist policies are implemented by the state, which prevents the growth.

Grass-root communities are weak and guerrilla-like. They are fighting for the digital space to open up globally, but the progress is slow and resisted heavily by the state.

4.4 Qualitative research results

The qualitative research performed showed that interviewees have unanimously agreed that the *Re-balanced multilateralism (WPI)* scenario is the one, which describes the way events are most likely to unfold. Despite the shared belief that the world will develop along the more open fashion, *Re-engineered western-centrism (WPI)* was described as “too rosy”. This way of thinking is also supported by the “continuing growth of the New Eastern Power”, as was elaborated.

As for the performance of the marketing and advertising agencies in the region of Kazakhstan, that would vary greatly in each scenario. According to the interviews, the environment in Asia is “highly competitive and grass-root communities have a significant influence”. The demand of services will grow in the future. Advertisement agencies should build their position along with the slow opening of the society and growth of the competitiveness and use the growing entities as their “advisors” (Crowd-sourcing principles). If agencies can involve the grass-root communities and bring them added value, when they are participating, they are creating a positive attitude and atmosphere. This will improve the companies’ position on the market.

That is in the situation, where government intervention doesn’t stop companies from the international and thus general growth, as it is happening at the moment in Belarus, for example. Agencies could learn from the West and then adapt digital practices for their own culture. This cultural relevancy will make the grass-root communities embrace digital communication even more and find ways to overcome the government control. They will need to be “creative to manoeuvre around the government control

— but surely there are ways to do it”. Kazakhstan should also look towards Ukraine and take digital examples from her.

4.5 Recommendations to WPI

As the outcome for this work I have prepared the recommendations for the case company about how to plan the corporate strategy in the most efficient way. For this purpose the following measures can be implemented:

First of all, the company should perform the TOWS analysis, described in details in chapter 2.1.3. That would give WPI a clear idea about its strengths and weaknesses and how to handle them in the best way, in coordination with the opportunities and threats of its environment. This is the resource analysis needed for the strategic planning.

For each of the scenarios the TOWS analysis will be different, as the environment described in them changes dramatically. This means new threats and opportunities are arising for the businesses.

Secondly, the research results showed that *Re-balanced multilateralism (WPI)* scenario should be prioritized as the most plausible one. Therefore, it can be recommended that different strategy creation approaches can be used in relation to it and the other scenarios.

The strategic method for the scenario *Re-balanced multilateralism (WPI)* can be the classical prescriptive one. The strategy built on the assumptions that the global business environment will develop in the ways, similar to the ones described in this scenario can be a long-term and relatively inflexible. These are the common characteristics of the prescriptive strategizing.

Whereas for the other three scenarios the emergent approaches, described in chapter 2.1.3, might be more valid. These approaches are much more flexible and keep the orientation on the ability to adapt fast.

Overall, it would be wise to have a strategy ready for each of the scenarios, so in the event of the sharp change in the business environment WPI had a path to follow. This would also bring a competitive advantage of fast and thought through reaction to the change.

5 Discussion

5.1 Brief summary of the research process and the results

In the process of the thesis writing I was following the steps of business scenario building, described in the chapter 2.1.2. After theoretical research and data collection I have built my own scenarios. Then I conducted a qualitative research, analyzed the results and created the recommendations for the case company in corporate strategy development.

5.2 Validity and reliability of the research results

The validity of the results can be a matter of discussion, as the work, presented in this paper is, in parts, highly creative and therefore prone to the personal mistakes in judgment. This can be due to the insufficient information, my personal lack of experience and skills, or the unpredictable changes in the macro- and micro- environments of the topic.

As mentioned above, the scenario building is a highly creative process; therefore the validity of the scenarios created by me might be a subject of discussion. The limited access to local information, strict time frames, together with my inexperience in the field, might lead to the false assumptions in scenarios. Moreover, the basic scenarios I have used are the product of the creative thinking of the other people, which might also mislead from the actual path the future will unfold in. To tackle this problem I have asked for the help of the facilitator, who supervised the process of my thesis writing and therefore increased the reliability of this study.

All in all, the creative scenarios, developed during the process of writing this work, are in no way to be seen as an actual prediction for the future of social media development in Kazakhstan. They shall be seen as a pen pictures of the possible futures, and are meant to encourage the strategic thinking to take into consideration the weak signals in the macro- and micro environment, which normally might not be acknowledged, or even deliberately ignored.

Therefore, the reliability of the scenarios, developed during this research, can be described as sufficient, as by default they are by no means intended to illustrate the actual future.

For the qualitative research I have chosen only four interviewees, and this might affect the reliability of its results. I have tried to choose people relevant to the topic in hand. They are all closely familiar with the marketing business and Kazakhstan as an emerging market. The problem with a small number of interviewees I tackled by choosing the ones, who could give views from the different perspectives, while staying relevant. Therefore, the reliability of the qualitative research is relatively high, as it combines the perspectives of the professionals in the field.

The recommendations given in the final part of the research I would describe as highly reliable, as they are all based on the study books, widely acknowledged specialist literature and theories, and therefore can be relied upon.

5.3 Company feedback

During the face to face discussion with EMEA Collaborations director of Worldwide Partners, Inc., Lisa Kettman-Kervinen, the thesis received high evaluation. The findings and recommendations were described as “valuable” and the ones, which company can make a use of. Also, the case company has issued an official statement, which can be found in the Attachment 3.

5.4 My own learning

This research has provided me with a lot of new information, which I am hoping will be very useful in my work life. First, and most of all, I have gained a comprehensive knowledge about the scenario building. This is an approach, which is still very rarely used, but also the one, which can bring a lot of value to the company implementing it. Therefore, the theoretical knowledge about the process of building it and some practical experience are adding a lot value to my personal skills profile.

Another important aspect of my learning from this research is a very important in marketing and communications skill of keeping it relevant to the case company and its needs. I have been taught a lot about the importance of this, and finally had a chance to implement it in a real work. In my opinion, the skills like this one are very important to train, so that in a work life it comes automatically. Forgetting about this seemingly small fact can get to the mistakes in judgment, which would have a huge impact on the company.

I enhanced my creative skills while working on the scenarios I based my recommendation on. During the preparation stage I had to read a number of similar works, where scenarios were created for different topics and companies. This provided me with the insights on how it should be done in the best way. Different ways of scenario telling have pushed my imagination on how to make my scenarios more readable. This, in turn, would make it easier to communicate them to the potential stakeholders of the case company.

Finally, during the process of the thesis writing I have made a few very important connections. Hopefully, they will be also useful for me in my work life.

Overall, the experience was useful and the process – interesting. There are many things I would have changed if I were to start it all over again, but I am taking it as positive outcome of my learning process. Next time, when I have to do a job, in some way similar to this, I would know the best approach to it.

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Attachment 1. Overlay matrix

IQs	Theory chapter	Approach	Results
In which areas changes of country's development are most likely to affect Social media in Kazakhstan?	Chapters 2.3 Digital and Social media, 3.1 Kazakhstan, 3.2 and 3.3 Scenarios from WEF	STEEP analysis	All the areas of the analysis will have direct or indirect influence on social media development in Kazakhstan
How would those changes affect Social media in Kazakhstan?	Chapter 2.1 Scenario building	Scenarios for WPI	Can not be described individually, each of the scenarios tackles different set of changes
What would be the best way for the case company to prepare for the possible futures?	Chapter 2.1.3 Typical outcome of the scenarios	Qualitative research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perform TOWS analysis - Use both prescriptive and emergent strategic approaches - Make strategic planning for each of the scenarios

Attachment 2. STEEP framework

Social	Technological	Economic (+Globalization)	Environmental	Political
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Regional population distribution -Nationalism -Russian language vs. Kazakh language as the State language fight -A lot of Russian societies and groups, but all independent and ambitious -Soviet system of hierarchy -Not cohesive national identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Development of the infrastructure -Cloud computing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Slow growth of the PPP -Economic inequality -Lack of the work places due to the structure of economy -Little FDI - Still developing export-import global relationships - Need to diversify the economy outside the oil, gas and mining sectors -Necessity to enhance the economic competitiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - radioactive or toxic chemical sites associated with former defense industries and test ranges scattered throughout the country pose health risks for humans and animals; - industrial pollution is severe in some cities; - because the two main rivers that flowed into the Aral Sea have been diverted for irrigation, it is drying up and leaving behind a harmful layer of chemical pesticides and natural salts; - these substances are then picked up by the wind and blown into noxious dust storms; - pollution in the Caspian Sea; - soil pollution from overuse of agricultural chemicals and salivation from poor infrastructure and wasteful irrigation practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Governmental control over SM and Internet in general -Tyranny (need in a multiparty parliament) - Corruption -Internal anti Russian-speaking politics -National polarization -Lessening pro-Russia government support -Integration with Russia -Pressure from Russia

Attachment 3. Worldwide Partners, Inc. feedback

The thesis by Daria Chakraborty, “Scenarios for the development of Social media in Kazakhstan by the year 2017”, helps give Worldwide Partners, Inc., a much better view of the possibilities for digital and social communications in the Kazakhstan market. It provides a framework for evaluating the threats and opportunities that we may face when trying to recruit new digital or social media agencies from that market. And it helps us gain a more thorough understanding of how digital and social media consumption stands to evolve in the market as well as the region as a whole, given the scenarios that are outlined in the thesis. We look forward to soon start finding possible candidates in this market now knowing better what to expect.