



**Understanding and usefulness of S Group's travel industry
strategy on a subsidiary chief operating officer level**

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Degree programme in Leading Business Transformation

Strategic Thinking and Management

Thesis

2025

Abstract

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Degree Master of Business Administration
Report/thesis title Understanding and usefulness of S Group's travel industry strategy on a subsidiary chief operating officer level
Number of pages and appendix pages 70 + 1
<p>This master's thesis examined how the S Group's travel industry strategy supported the work of Chief Operating Officers (COOs) within Sokotel Ltd, one of the Group's subsidiaries operating in the hotel and restaurant sector, and how that support could be further enhanced. The study investigated how the strategy was understood and applied in practice, focusing on its clarity, usability, and value as a managerial tool. It also analysed how the COOs operated within a multi-strategy environment that combined the objectives of the parent organisation, Sokotel's own operational priorities, and those of an international franchise component of the business.</p> <p>The theoretical framework integrated established and contemporary perspectives on strategic management and implementation. Models such as the Balanced Scorecard, OGSM, and the McKinsey 7S framework were considered alongside process- and practice-based approaches, providing insight into how strategic intent becomes embedded in daily leadership and communication within service-oriented settings.</p> <p>A qualitative single-case study design was adopted. Empirical material was gathered through semi-structured interviews with all three COOs of Sokotel and analysed thematically to identify recurring patterns in strategic interpretation, alignment, and development. The material was gathered in June of 2025.</p> <p>The findings indicated that the travel industry strategy provided a clear and meaningful framework that effectively linked organisational purpose with everyday management. The COOs regarded it as both practical and relevant, helping to align leadership and decision-making across diverse operations. At the same time, the study showed that future strategic strength depends on more dynamic two-way communication between chain management and operations, on deeper use of data and analytics to inform service development and customer-focused innovation, and on maintaining flexibility within the complex, multi-strategy environment in which Sokotel operates.</p> <p>Overall, the results suggest that lasting strategic effectiveness arises not only from clarity and structure but also from continuous learning, open dialogue, and the capacity to adapt as organisational contexts evolve.</p>
Keywords Strategic management, strategy implementation, leadership, multi-strategy environment, hospitality

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1 Introduction

Strategy has long been recognised as a defining element of organisational success. It offers a compass—a way to connect ambition with action and to ensure that people, resources, and processes pull in the same direction. In both private companies and cooperative enterprises, strategy is the bridge between aspiration and achievement. Yet behind that simplicity lies complexity. Formulating strategy calls for foresight and a grasp of the competitive environment, but turning those ideas into lived results demands leadership, communication, and perseverance. The challenge is rarely in the planning itself; it lies in making strategy mean something in everyday work.

Change now moves faster than most organisations can comfortably handle. Digitalisation, shifting markets, environmental pressures, and changing customer expectations all test how quickly managers can adapt. Strategies that once endured for several years may need revisiting within months. In this context, a good strategy is not defined solely by what it says but by how usable it is—how clearly people can understand it and apply it. A document on a shelf achieves little; value emerges when a strategy shapes daily decisions and creates a shared sense of direction.

Leadership becomes the hinge between plans and practice. Boards may set broad ambitions, but it is senior executives—and in particular Chief Operating Officers (COO)—who turn intent into coordinated action. Their task is both interpretive and operational: making sense of abstract goals and ensuring they make sense to others. Strategy does not communicate itself; it must be translated and retold through the language of priorities, targets, and behaviours. From this perspective, COOs act as integrators, connecting vision with process and people with performance.

Whether that translation succeeds often determines the fate of the strategy. When intent and execution drift apart, even the most elegant plan loses its force. When they align, the organisation begins to move as one. That connection between vision and action sits at the core of strategic management. It reminds us to look not only at what a strategy contains, but also at how it is interpreted, communicated, and enacted within specific organisational settings.

The hospitality and service industries make this dynamic particularly visible. They depend on the constant interaction between planning and doing—between the promise made to customers and the experiences actually delivered. Shifting consumer expectations and new technologies keep this balance in flux. Organisations that succeed here tend to treat strategy as a living process, open to adjustment and shared learning, rather than as a fixed document. Flexibility and participation become as important as precision.

This thesis approaches strategy in that same spirit: as both a conceptual framework and a human practice. It begins from the view that success arises not simply from well-designed plans but from how those plans empower the people who carry them out. The chapters that follow introduce the specific organisational context in which this relationship between strategy and leadership is explored and outline the purpose, objectives, and research questions guiding the study.

1.1 Overview of SOK and Sokotel Ltd

The S Group is one of Finland's largest and most established cooperative enterprises, spanning retail, service stations, travel, and hospitality. Unlike traditional corporations driven by shareholder profit, its ownership model is rooted in local cooperatives that together form a nationwide network serving millions of members. This cooperative foundation gives the S Group a distinctive identity: it emphasises shared benefit over short-term gain, long-term value creation over quarterly results, and a customer orientation embedded in community membership. Managing strategy in such a structure requires a delicate balance—aligning collective objectives with local autonomy so that national directions resonate with the practical realities of member cooperatives and customers in diverse regions.

At the centre of this network stands Suomen Osuuskauppojen Keskuskunta (SOK), the group's central organisation responsible for strategic coordination, procurement, and shared service provision. SOK's role is to ensure that local cooperatives benefit from unified frameworks, systems, and strategic guidance while retaining enough flexibility to address regional needs. Among its divisions, the travel and hospitality sector holds particular visibility. It shapes how the cooperative is perceived by the public, strengthens brand recognition, and serves as a laboratory for service innovation. Through subsidiaries such as Sokotel Ltd (Sokotel), SOK oversees the design and coordination of hotel and restaurant operations, ensuring that the cooperative remains competitive and customer-oriented within Finland's dynamic hospitality market.

Sokotel operates as a hotel and restaurant company in Finland and Estonia, employing roughly 1000 professionals. It manages 23 hotels under two key brands—Sokos Hotels and Radisson Hotels—alongside an extensive portfolio of restaurants integrated within its hotels. While Sokotel functions as a subsidiary of SOK, specialising in travel and hospitality services, it maintains a notable degree of operational independence. The company draws on shared central resources such as information systems, marketing, and strategic support while managing its own business decisions locally. This hybrid arrangement—autonomous yet integrated—allows Sokotel to adapt quickly to operational demands while remaining aligned with the S Group's broader strategic framework.

A defining characteristic of Sokotel's model is its dual-brand structure. The Sokos Hotels chain, owned and operated entirely within the S Group, embodies the cooperative's core values of customer focus, Finnish hospitality, and social responsibility. The Radisson Hotels, by contrast, operate under a franchise agreement, bringing an international brand into Sokotel's portfolio and subjecting its operations to global quality standards. The coexistence of these domestic and international brands creates a complex managerial landscape where global systems meet local cooperative values. This duality exemplifies how SOK balances alignment with autonomy—ensuring that local identity flourishes within a cohesive strategic framework.

The distinctive configuration of SOK and Sokotel provides an especially relevant context for studying strategy as a managerial and leadership tool. The tension between centralised guidance and decentralised execution requires strategies and communications that are both coherent and adaptable. SOK may formulate the overarching strategy for the travel and hospitality sector, but it is the responsibility of operational leaders—particularly Sokotel's COOs—to interpret, translate, and implement that strategy in practice. Their success depends on how clearly the strategy communicates purpose, how usable it is in decision-making, and how well it aligns with the daily realities of running hotels and restaurants.

Accordingly, this thesis examines how Sokotel's COOs perceive, interpret, and apply the travel industry strategy developed by SOK. It explores the extent to which the strategy provides actionable guidance, how it fits within the wider set of strategies they must consider, and whether it enables or constrains their leadership work. The insights derived from this analysis extend beyond Sokotel, offering broader implications for how multi-strategy organisations manage alignment and implementation in systems characterised by shared ownership, distributed decision-making, and dual accountability—to both central governance and local stakeholders.

Thus, SOK and Sokotel are not viewed merely as corporate entities to be analysed but as the living organisational context through which the practical role of strategy can be understood. In this sense, the study investigates strategy not only as a document or plan but as a social instrument—a tool that enables leaders to give shape and meaning to collective action. The following section sets out the specific objectives of the thesis and clarifies how the research contributes to both theoretical understanding and practical improvement within this cooperative framework.

1.2 Objectives of the thesis

The main purpose of this thesis is to explore how the SOK travel industry strategy supports the daily work of COOs within Sokotel, and how that support could be strengthened. In simple terms, the study looks at what happens when strategy leaves the page and enters real leadership

practice. The aim is to understand how a strategy designed at the central level actually works in the hands of those responsible for turning it into action.

To reach this goal, the research follows three connected objectives.

The first is to examine how COOs perceive, interpret, and use the travel industry strategy created by SOK. This includes exploring whether the strategy provides enough clarity and relevance, and whether it genuinely helps them make decisions in their everyday work. The focus is not only on what the strategy says, but also on how it is understood and applied in practice—how it lives in the organisation rather than just being read.

The second objective is to identify areas where the strategic materials and communication coming from SOK could be improved. This part of the study asks how these tools might become more practical, more consistent, and easier to adapt to different operational contexts. Cooperative organisations like the S Group face an ongoing challenge: how to combine centralised direction with local flexibility. This balance is at the core of effective strategy implementation in an organisation that values both shared ownership and local autonomy.

The third objective is to deepen the understanding of how strategy operates as both a managerial tool and a way of making sense of complex organisational realities. By looking at strategy from the perspective of COOs, the study sheds light on a leadership level that is crucial for success but often overlooked. These leaders stand at the crossroads of strategic design and operational execution, and their experiences offer a unique view of how strategy becomes practice.

Together, these objectives have a clear developmental purpose. The goal is to help ensure that strategic planning within SOK's travel and hospitality division continues to function as a living, evolving framework—one that genuinely supports those responsible for implementation. The broader intention is to narrow the gap between strategic formulation and everyday management, generating insights that improve both organisational performance and the professional experience of its leaders.

The next section introduces the research questions that arise from these objectives and explains how they guide the direction and focus of this study.

1.3 Research questions

The formulation of the research questions follows naturally from the objectives outlined in the previous section. These questions translate the broader aims of the thesis into specific lines of inquiry that guide both the theoretical discussion and the empirical investigation. Because the study is

developmental rather than evaluative, the emphasis is placed on understanding and experience rather than on measurement or performance outcomes. The intention is to explore how the COOs of Sokotel interpret and use the SOK travel industry strategy in their leadership work, and how this process might be strengthened to enhance both effectiveness and alignment.

The central research question guiding the study is:

- How does the SOK travel industry strategy support the work of Chief Operating Officers within Sokotel, and in what ways could it be improved to strengthen that support?

This main question reflects the core purpose of the thesis—to understand and develop the strategy’s usefulness as a managerial and leadership tool. It also underlines the practical nature of the research: to examine how strategic materials and communication can be refined so that the strategy remains a relevant, motivating, and actionable framework for operational leaders.

To address this overarching question, the research is structured around three interrelated sub-questions, each corresponding to one of the main analytical themes explored in the study:

1. Current role and utilisation

- How do the COOs interpret and apply the SOK travel industry strategy in their daily and long-term leadership work?
- To what extent does the strategy provide clarity, direction, and motivation for operational decision-making?

2. Challenges in a multi-strategy environment

- How do COOs experience and manage the coexistence of multiple strategic frameworks—those of SOK, Sokotel, and the Radisson franchise?
- In what ways do these overlapping strategies interact, reinforce, or conflict in practice?

3. Reflection and improvement

- How do COOs evaluate the success of the current strategy in supporting their objectives and leadership responsibilities?
- What opportunities do they identify for refining the strategy to make it more coherent, relevant, and effective as a leadership and management tool?

These sub-questions were explored through qualitative, semi-structured interviews conducted with all three COOs at Sokotel. The approach ensured consistent coverage of the main topics while allowing flexibility to probe emerging insights. Together, the three thematic areas form the analytical backbone of the thesis and are revisited in the findings and analysis chapters, where they are interpreted in light of both the interview data and the theoretical perspectives introduced in chapter 2.

In summary, this thematic framework provides a coherent path for addressing the central research question. It supports a comprehensive understanding of how the SOK travel industry strategy functions at the level of operational leadership within Sokotel, and how it can be further developed to bridge the gap between strategic formulation and practical implementation.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is organised into five main chapters, each building on the previous one to form a coherent progression from context and motivation through theoretical discussion, empirical investigation, and concluding reflection. The structure is designed to take the reader from an understanding of the research background and aims toward the practical and conceptual implications that emerge from the findings.

Chapter 1, the present chapter, introduces the study by outlining its background, purpose, and objectives. It describes the organisational context of SOK and Sokotel and explains why the SOK travel industry strategy is examined from the perspective of Sokotel's COOs. It also presents the research questions that guide the investigation and introduces the thematic areas through which these questions are explored.

Chapter 2 provides the theoretical foundation for the research. It reviews key concepts and frameworks in strategic management and implementation, with particular attention to how strategies are translated into action within service-oriented organisations. The discussion includes established strategic tools and models—such as the Balanced Scorecard, OGSM, the McKinsey 7S framework, Blue Ocean Strategy, and the VRIO model—and considers their relevance for leadership and operational management. In doing so, the chapter establishes the conceptual basis for interpreting the empirical results presented later in the thesis.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approach of the study. It explains the qualitative research design and justifies the choice of semi-structured interviews as the primary method of data collection. The chapter describes how participants were selected, how data were analysed, and how ethical standards and reliability were ensured throughout the process. Together, these elements form the methodological framework that underpins the credibility and trustworthiness of the study's findings.

Chapter 4 presents the empirical findings and analysis. The results are organised around the three thematic areas introduced earlier: the current role of the strategy, the challenges of working in a multi-strategy environment, and the reflections and improvement opportunities identified by the COOs. These findings are discussed in relation to the theoretical perspectives outlined in chapter 2, providing an integrated interpretation of how the SOK travel industry strategy is understood and applied within Sokotel.

Chapter 5 concludes the thesis by synthesising the key findings and drawing broader conclusions. It compares the empirical insights with the theoretical framework, discusses their implications for strategic leadership and communication, and offers recommendations for strengthening strategy implementation within Sokotel. The chapter also reflects on the study's limitations and proposes directions for future research.

Overall, the structure of the thesis follows a clear movement from the general to the specific and back again—from introducing the wider field of strategic management, to analysing the lived experiences of operational leaders, and finally to reflecting on what these findings contribute to both theory and practice. This progression ensures that the reader can follow the development of the research in a logical and connected way from start to finish.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 What is strategy?

The notion of strategy has been debated, refined, and reinterpreted for decades in the field of strategic management. At its core, the term describes how organisations plan and act to shape their future, yet its precise meaning shifts according to theoretical perspective, historical period, and the turbulence of the environment in question.

One of the earliest formal definitions came from Alfred D. Chandler, who argued that strategy concerns the long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise—and, crucially, the internal allocation of resources to realise those goals (Chandler 1962, 13). In Chandler's view, strategy is a deliberate plan created by senior management and executed through the organisation's structure. His conception rests on assumptions of rationality, predictability, and managerial control.

Kenneth Andrews (1980, 18) later broadened this thinking by placing greater emphasis on the interaction between the organisation and its environment. He saw strategy as the alignment of internal strengths with external opportunities and threats. Although this introduced a stronger external orientation, it still portrayed strategy as a formal and top-down process. For much of the twentieth century, this deliberate and planned view dominated management thinking, reinforcing the image of strategy as a blueprint conceived at the top.

Henry Mintzberg (1978, 935) marked a turning point by challenging the idea that all strategies must be planned in advance. He introduced the concept of emergent strategy, suggesting that organisational actions and adaptations create patterns over time that may diverge from initial intentions. Mintzberg thus brought behavioural realism into strategy, acknowledging that decision-making is often incremental and constrained. Together with Waters (1985, 257), he distinguished between deliberate and emergent strategies: deliberate ones where intentions and outcomes coincide, and emergent ones that arise despite or without original intention. This opened the way to understanding strategy not merely as design but as an evolving pattern shaped by experience and feedback.

This reorientation laid the foundation for later approaches that emphasised strategy as process and as practice (Jarzabkowski 2005, 2; Johnson, Melin and Whittington 2007, 7). Rather than treating strategy as an abstract plan, the practice perspective views it as something enacted through everyday activities and interactions. Strategy takes shape in meetings, conversations, and sense-making across the organisation (Whittington 2006, 619). Jarzabkowski (2005, 3) describes it as a collective activity embedded in tools, routines, and social relations. In this view, strategy is

both outcome and process—something simultaneously analytical, behavioural, and interpretive (Johnson, Scholes and Whittington 2017, 10; Weick 1995, 11).

Around the same time, Miles and Snow (1978, 546–562) offered a complementary behavioural framework by identifying four strategic types—defenders, prospectors, analysers, and reactors—each representing a characteristic way of responding to environmental change. Their typology underscored that strategy is as much about consistent patterns of behaviour as it is about formal planning.

While these behavioural and interpretive perspectives were developing, Michael E. Porter introduced a structural approach that redefined competitive strategy. Porter (1996, 61–78) argued that competitive advantage stems from choosing a unique market position and aligning activities in ways that reinforce one another. Strategy, in his view, is about making deliberate trade-offs and achieving fit between activities to deliver value that rivals cannot easily replicate. Yet Porter's model was soon criticised for being too static in volatile environments. D'Aveni (1994, 5), for example, introduced the concept of hypercompetition, arguing that advantage is temporary and firms must continuously disrupt rather than defend established positions.

The resource-based view (RBV) shifted attention inward. Jay Barney (1991, 102) proposed that sustained competitive advantage arises from firm-specific resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable. Strategy, from this angle, becomes the craft of developing and protecting these resources. However, critics such as Priem and Butler (2001, 27) noted that RBV can appear overly static, overlooking how resources lose value or are replicated over time.

To connect the internal focus of RBV with the realities of change, Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997, 509–533) developed the concept of dynamic capabilities—the organisation's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure resources to match shifting environments. These capabilities enable firms to sense opportunities, seize them, and transform their resource base. Eisenhardt and Martin (2000, 1107–1111) further refined this idea by showing that dynamic capabilities differ across contexts: they may be structured and analytical in stable sectors, yet fluid and experiential in fast-moving ones. In essence, strategy becomes a series of informed experiments.

Later reviews reaffirmed the importance of this dynamic perspective. Wilden et al. (2013, 991–1018) traced the evolution of the concept and called for clearer boundaries, while Wang and Ahmed (2007, 256–273) highlighted innovation and learning as central to sustaining advantage. Both emphasise that capabilities must themselves adapt and renew if organisations are to remain competitive.

The core competences view advanced by Prahalad and Hamel (1990, 79–91) adds another internal dimension. They argued that embedded skills and coordination across units allow firms to enter multiple markets and resist imitation. This shifts attention from individual resources to the collective capabilities that define a company's identity. Richard Rumelt (2011, 79–91) complements this logic by stressing the importance of coherence and discipline. His “kernel” of good strategy—diagnosis, guiding policy, and coherent action—serves as a reminder that real strategy demands focus and clarity, not lists of goals or vague aspirations (Rumelt 2011, 21).

Given these varied perspectives, recent scholarship has sought synthesis. Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel (2005, 10) describe strategy as a “pattern in a stream of decisions,” integrating deliberate intention with adaptive learning. Similarly, Johnson, Scholes and Whittington (2017, 10) define it as the overall direction and scope of an organisation over the long term, encompassing decision-making and resource allocation. The practice and process traditions bring these together, presenting strategy as an ongoing, socially embedded activity (Whittington 2006, 620; Jarzabkowski 2005, 4).

In parallel, attention has turned to execution. As Hrebiniak (2005, 15) observed, “formulating strategy is difficult—making it work throughout the organisation is even more difficult”. Strategy only becomes real when it is implemented, questioned, adapted, and sustained—an insight central to the role of COOs in translating plans into action.

The digital era adds further complexity. Platform ecosystems demand strategies that span internal capabilities and external partnerships. Gawer and Cusumano (2014, 418) describe how value creation now depends on complementarity, interoperability, and co-innovation across networks. Similarly, Chen, Wang and Sun (2019, 247–263) show that digitalisation enhances organisational agility, which in turn accelerates renewal and innovation.

A more fine-grained view considers the human element—what Adner and Helfat (2003, 99–120) term dynamic managerial capabilities. These are the cognitive and relational skills of leaders that allow them to sense change and reconfigure organisational pathways. Strategic advantage, therefore, depends not only on structures or resources but also on the adaptive capabilities of individuals.

Bringing these threads together, strategy can be understood as a long-term orientation that blends deliberate intent with emergent adaptation. It is enacted through the continual orchestration and renewal of resources, both internal and external, with the aim of creating distinctive value and sustaining advantage. Strategy involves both formulation—diagnosing situations, setting direction,

choosing—and execution—acting, learning, adjusting. It lives in organisational routines, leadership decisions, and interactions with the wider ecosystem.

This definition seeks to capture the richness of contemporary strategy by integrating the rational planning of Chandler and Andrews, the adaptive realism of Mintzberg, the positional logic of Porter, the resource and capability perspectives of Barney, Teece, and Prahalad, and the interpretive and practice-based insights of Weick, Jarzabkowski, and Whittington. As the following chapters will demonstrate, this integrated understanding provides a robust foundation for analysing how strategy is enacted and experienced in real organisations.

2.2 Strategic management frameworks and tools

Turning strategy from an abstract vision into coordinated organisational action has long been one of management's most persistent challenges. Formulation gives direction, but implementation decides whether intent becomes reality. Many scholars have observed that even sophisticated strategies often stumble at this stage. Hrebiniak (2005, 17) notes that designing a strategy may be intellectually demanding, yet “making strategy work” within the social and political realities of organisations is the greater test. Noble (1999, 119) makes a similar point, arguing that implementation is not the mechanical continuation of planning but a behavioural and cultural process that depends on alignment among leadership, systems, and motivation. Okumus (2001b, 327–338) extends this view, identifying structure, culture, resources, and managerial commitment as interdependent contextual variables shaping outcomes. Taken together, these perspectives underline that implementation requires more than analytical clarity: it calls for structured mechanisms that can turn conceptual ambition into adaptive, observable action.

In dynamic fields such as hospitality and services—where technology, markets, and customer expectations evolve constantly—implementation tools serve as the bridge between strategic intent and operational practice. They provide the architecture that links ideas to execution, helping managers to visualise cause-and-effect relationships, assign accountability, and remain agile amid uncertainty. By embedding feedback and performance measurement into daily routines, these tools create conditions for organisational learning and incremental adjustment—capabilities now seen as core sources of competitive advantage in turbulent environments (Wang and Ahmed 2007, 256–273). Understanding these tools, and how they interact, is essential for closing the gap between aspiration and performance.

Among the most influential of these mechanisms is the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) developed by Kaplan and Norton (1996a, 53–79). The BSC converts high-level objectives into measurable key performance indicators (KPIs) grouped across four perspectives: financial, customer, internal

processes, and learning and growth. By balancing financial results with the drivers of long-term capability, it broadens control beyond short-term metrics. The accompanying “strategy map” illustrates causal links between objectives—how investment in learning or process efficiency eventually feeds customer and financial outcomes. In doing so, the BSC promotes systemic thinking and supports alignment across units.

Within hospitality, performance measurement must account for both tangible and intangible outcomes. Louvieris and Phillips (2005, 206–208) demonstrate that a Balanced Scorecard approach helps small and medium-sized enterprises connect financial results with customer and process indicators, ensuring that operational actions remain tied to strategic priorities.

Despite its influence, the BSC has attracted criticism. Norreklit (2000, 65–68) argues that it assumes a linear, rather than circular, model of organisational learning, while Speckbacher, Bischof and Pfeiffer (2003, 367) emphasise that its value depends on managerial interpretation. When used as an interactive learning system—where assumptions are debated and causal logic tested—the BSC stimulates dialogue and adaptability (Malina and Selto 2001, 54). Used rigidly, however, it risks promoting compliance instead of insight. The framework is therefore best understood not as a mechanistic reporting device but as a living model linking vision, metrics, and reflection.

A more compact but conceptually related tool is the Objectives, Goals, Strategies and Measures (OGSM) framework, which condenses strategic logic onto a single page. Daft (2015, 224–227) explains that OGSM connects broad objectives to quantifiable goals, supporting strategies, and measures of success. Its strength lies in clarity and communicability: it enables executives to cascade consistent priorities throughout the organisation. According to Lafley and Martin (2013, 101–103), this transparency fosters accountability by tying intention to measurable responsibility. Yet its simplicity can also be limiting. Daft (2015, 225) observes that OGSM’s linear format may understate the iterative nature of adaptation, while Hill and Jones (2012, 314) suggest that it overlooks feedback loops essential for organisational learning. When combined with more diagnostic systems such as the Balanced Scorecard or the McKinsey 7S framework, however, OGSM can provide accessible coordination without unnecessary complexity.

The McKinsey 7S framework offers a broader diagnostic lens for assessing organisational alignment. Waterman, Peters and Phillips (1980, 14) proposed that effective implementation depends on the interplay among seven elements—strategy, structure, systems, shared values, skills, staff, and style. Unlike quantitative measurement tools, 7S foregrounds the social architecture that underpins performance. It invites managers to ask whether culture, leadership behaviour, and systems reinforce each other. O’Reilly and Tushman (2019, 129) emphasise that this balance between “hard” and “soft” dimensions is especially critical during transformation, when misalignment

can derail change. The 7S model is difficult to measure precisely, yet this very subjectivity makes it valuable as a reflective framework for surfacing tensions and guiding systemic adaptation.

Gap Analysis builds on this diagnostic logic by examining the distance between current and desired performance. Jackson (2010, 27) defines it as a disciplined process of assessing present capability, setting targets, and identifying interventions—such as training, restructuring, or process redesign—to close the gap. Phillips and Louvieris (2005, 319) add that such clarity helps managers allocate resources effectively and maintain strategic alignment. Still, its inward focus can encourage a deficit mindset, emphasising what is lacking rather than what can be leveraged (Jackson 2010, 17). To offset this, contemporary practice often couples Gap Analysis with environmental scanning or scenario planning, combining internal reflection with external intelligence (Grant 2016, 68). In this hybrid form, it functions both as a control mechanism and a catalyst for strategic learning.

Where diagnostic models stress alignment and improvement, Blue Ocean Strategy invites organisations to rethink market boundaries altogether. Kim and Mauborgne (2005, 39–42) propose the “four actions framework”—raise, eliminate, reduce, and create—as a method for reconstructing markets and generating value innovation. The aim is to pursue differentiation and cost leadership simultaneously. Successful application, however, demands significant resource redeployment and cultural readiness for experimentation. As Kim and Mauborgne (2005, 65–68) acknowledge, empirical evidence remains uneven, and Markides (2008, 14) warns that competitors can quickly imitate such moves. Subsequent studies suggest that firms often gain more from the innovative mindset the framework encourages than from the model itself (Chung and Kim 2018, 94). In this sense, its enduring value may lie in changing how managers think about opportunity creation.

The VRIO (value, rarity, imitability, and organization) framework—an extension of the resource-based view—shifts the analysis inward once again. Barney (1991, 99) argues that sustained advantage arises when resources are valuable, rare, inimitable, and organised to capture value. Grant (1991, 115) highlights VRIO’s utility in identifying strategic assets and guiding investment toward their development. Critics, however, note that its static assumptions overlook how resources must evolve. Peteraf and Barney (2003, 313) demonstrate that maintaining advantage requires continual reconfiguration of capabilities, linking VRIO to the dynamic-capabilities perspective (Teece, Pisano and Shuen 1997, 509–533). Later research extends this logic to leadership itself: Adner and Helfat (2003, 101) argue that the ability of managers to sense and seize opportunities constitutes a meta-capability that shapes all others. Seen this way, VRIO becomes less a diagnostic checklist and more a developmental framework for ongoing renewal.

Taken together, these frameworks demonstrate that implementation is neither purely technical nor purely behavioural. It is an evolving interplay among structure, culture, measurement, and learning. Each tool contributes a distinct lens: the Balanced Scorecard quantifies strategic logic; OGSM sharpens communication; 7S reveals systemic alignment; Gap Analysis focuses on capability growth; Blue Ocean Strategy fosters innovation; and VRIO anchors reflection in resources and competencies. When used interactively, they form a versatile toolkit linking intention to execution and supporting both efficiency and adaptability. As Hrebiniak (2005, 41) reminds us, the true test of implementation lies not in following a plan to the letter but in the organisation's capacity to learn and adjust strategically. In practice, effective organisations blend measurement with interpretation, structure with flexibility—creating a self-correcting strategic process.

Building on this synthesis, it becomes clear that no single framework can capture the full dynamics of strategy implementation. Their value lies in complementarity: together they illuminate how strategy connects design with action and stability with renewal. This integrative understanding provides the theoretical foundation for analysing real-world strategy work as a process of alignment, adaptability, and continuous improvement within complex organisational settings.

The concept of strategy and strategic management has deep historical roots in the art of warfare, where it referred to the planning and deployment of resources to secure advantage amid uncertainty. From the teachings of Sun Tzu to the doctrines of Clausewitz, strategy was conceived as a disciplined effort to impose order on complexity. As industrialisation and large-scale organisation transformed economic life, this logic found resonance in management thinking. The First World War marked a pivotal transition: coordinating vast resources across multiple theatres demonstrated the value of structured planning, division of labour, and clear objectives—principles later adapted to managerial strategy (Freedman 2017, 16).

In subsequent decades, business scholars refined these ideas for corporate contexts. Steiner (1979, 348) defined strategy as an orientation answering two questions: what an organisation seeks to achieve and how it intends to do so. This dual focus on ends and means laid the foundation for strategic management as a discipline. Andrews (1980, 18) later distinguished between corporate and business strategy, highlighting the layered nature of strategic choice—corporate strategy defining arenas of competition, business strategy determining how to compete within them. This hierarchy underscored the need for coherence between long-term direction and operational action.

By the late twentieth century, strategy evolved from prescriptive planning into a more interpretive discipline. Mintzberg (1994, 23–27) challenged assumptions of rational control, portraying strategy as both deliberate and emergent. His typology of strategy as plan, pattern, position, and

perspective broadened the field's scope by linking strategic outcomes to cognition, culture, and context. At the same time, Porter (1996, 61–78) defined strategy through competitive positioning, emphasising unique activity configurations that deliver superior value. While his approach brought analytical rigour, critics such as D'Aveni (1994, 5) warned that hypercompetition requires constant renewal. Strategic management thus came to embody a tension between structure and flexibility—a balance that continues to shape contemporary theory.

Tregoe and Zimmerman (1980, 17) added that strategy serves as a framework for coherent choice, guiding organisations to identify a dominant driver—market orientation, technology, or finance—that aligns decisions across levels. Robert (1993, 41) reinforced the need for a unifying focus to channel resources and avoid fragmentation. Treacy and Wiersema (1993, 84–93; 1994, 10–15) operationalised this principle through their value disciplines of operational excellence, customer intimacy, and product leadership. Their model argues that firms should excel in one discipline while maintaining threshold standards in others, linking strategic focus to organisational self-knowledge and sustained advantage.

From these classical foundations, the field expanded to include dynamic and learning-based perspectives. The resource-based view and the dynamic capabilities approach re-positioned strategic advantage as emerging from unique internal competences and from the capacity to reconfigure them as conditions change (Teece, Pisano & Shuen 1997, 509–533). Strategic management thus became less about fixed plans and more about continuous renewal. Managers appear both as analysts and learners—interpreting signals, fostering experimentation, and orchestrating adaptation across the organisation.

The strategy-as-practice perspective extends this evolution by examining how strategy is enacted through everyday managerial activity. Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009, 69–72) argue that strategizing is a situated process involving discourse, tools, and routines. From this vantage point, strategic management is not solely the domain of top executives; it is a collective, socially embedded practice connecting macro-level objectives with the micro-level actions that realise them. This theoretical broadening is especially relevant in service industries, where customer interaction, frontline empowerment, and cultural alignment decisively shape execution.

Strategic management's importance, therefore, reaches far beyond formulation: it provides the structure through which intention becomes coordinated action. Hrebiniak (2005, 15) observed that implementing strategy is often more difficult than devising it because it requires integration across multiple organisational subsystems. The value of strategic management lies precisely in bridging this gap—linking vision and operations, long-term direction and short-term adaptation. In practical

terms, it ensures that resources, capabilities, and incentives are aligned with objectives so organisations can respond coherently to both opportunity and threat.

In hospitality, these principles become particularly vivid. The sector's exposure to external shocks and fast-moving shifts in consumer expectations demands vigilance and agility. Olsen (2004, 113–115) characterises hospitality strategy as a continuous process of sensing and responding to environmental change, while Enz (2010a, 4) identifies globalisation, digital transformation, and sustainability as enduring forces reshaping the industry. The COVID-19 pandemic underlined this reality: strategic resilience—rapid decision-making, resource flexibility, and learning—could determine survival. Such experiences reinforce that strategic management is not periodic but ongoing, woven into daily operations.

Within this dynamic environment, leadership roles such as the COO become central. Lockwood and Medlik (2001, 34) emphasise that COOs provide the vital link between high-level strategy and operational execution, translating organisational purpose into practical outcomes. Their responsibility for coordinating resources, maintaining quality, and balancing efficiency with innovation shows how strategic management is enacted through managerial agency. In many respects, the COO embodies the synthesis of planning and doing—the essence of strategic management in action.

Strategic management, then, represents both an intellectual tradition and a managerial imperative. Its evolution from military doctrine to a multifaceted organisational science reflects a persistent concern with aligning purpose, knowledge, and action to produce sustained success. It integrates analysis with creativity, control with flexibility, central direction with distributed learning. Ultimately, strategic management matters because it turns the abstract pursuit of advantage into a disciplined yet adaptive process of organisational sense-making.

While the traditions outlined here provide conceptual clarity, their significance lies in application. How strategy is implemented, monitored, and evaluated determines whether it remains rhetoric or becomes a living process that guides behaviour and shapes outcomes. These issues of execution and usefulness form the focus of the next chapter, which examines the mechanisms through which strategy can be translated effectively into practice.

2.3 Strategy implementation in service industries

As noted earlier, the service industry—including the hospitality sector—is particularly exposed to constant and rapid shifts in its operating environment. The ability to adapt quickly to changing market conditions, customer expectations, and technological developments is not a luxury but a precondition for survival and long-term growth in this volatile field. Gryczka (2016, 188) argues that “the higher the level of innovation in a society, the greater the contribution of the service sector to

the economy,” a statement that captures the service industry’s inherent capacity for ongoing adaptation and reinvention. Nowhere is this adaptive quality more visible than in hospitality, where businesses must continually respond to new social trends, shifting guest expectations, and evolving competitive dynamics.

Hospitality organisations, in particular, must strike a careful balance between managing financial realities and meeting non-financial demands such as service quality, guest satisfaction, and brand reputation. Mongiello et al. (2006, 145) point out that revenue streams in hospitality are intimately tied to intangible and emotional factors—experiences, perceptions, and human interactions—that make purely financial strategies insufficient. Consequently, strategy implementation in service contexts must reach beyond conventional financial metrics to incorporate softer, yet equally critical, dimensions of performance. The art of management in hospitality lies in reconciling numbers with narratives—ensuring that profitability and customer delight reinforce rather than undermine each other.

Much of the existing research on strategy implementation in hospitality therefore focuses on how internal organisational factors interact with external pressures (Aladağ et al. 2020, 2–3). One of the core challenges is maintaining alignment between organisational culture and internal capabilities while responding to the volatility of the external environment (Olsen 2004, 120–122). Such alignment is vital because hospitality firms depend on discretionary spending: they must persuade customers to invest in experiences that are desirable rather than strictly necessary. This reality makes the industry particularly vulnerable to shifts in economic cycles and social sentiment. As a result, agility in both strategic formulation and implementation becomes a defining feature of competitiveness.

The role of the COO is especially critical in this process. Enz (2010b, 251) notes that successful execution “depends on managers’ ability to communicate a clear vision and inspire employees at all levels”. COOs must therefore do more than comprehend the strategic goals—they must internalise the reasoning behind them and translate that understanding into day-to-day practices. This translation involves articulating the strategic vision in a language that resonates with frontline teams and connects abstract ambitions with tangible service actions. In essence, the COO functions as both interpreter and integrator: ensuring that strategy makes sense not only on paper but in practice.

Heikkilä and Saranpää (2006, 28–31) extend this logic by linking strategic intent directly to the measurement of productivity in hospitality operations. They argue that productivity in restaurants cannot be captured by quantitative metrics alone, since performance encompasses both tangible outcomes and intangible experiences. Evaluating productivity, therefore, means assessing how

effectively resources are used to generate value for both customers and the organisation. This integrated approach mirrors the COO's daily challenge: operationalising strategy through coherent processes and multidimensional indicators that reflect the full scope of service performance (Heikkilä & Saranpää 2006, 33–34).

Communication, unsurprisingly, remains the cornerstone of effective implementation. Clear, consistent, and two-way communication ensures that strategy cascades through all organisational layers and becomes a shared frame of reference rather than a distant corporate narrative. Okumus (2001a, 262) highlights that insufficient managerial involvement at different levels is one of the main reasons strategies fail. In service industries, where employees on the front line directly shape the customer experience, this is especially critical. Engaging and motivating staff requires COOs to create meaning around the strategy—to show how individual actions contribute to the collective purpose.

Resource allocation represents another decisive dimension of strategy implementation. Davydenko et al. (2024, 39) argue that in service organisations, the success of strategic execution often depends on the quality of personal management within the company. COOs, sometimes described as “managers of managers,” play a central role in orchestrating not just budgets and systems but the human and relational resources that underpin service delivery. This orchestration involves balancing efficiency with empowerment, ensuring that teams have both the capacity and the autonomy to act strategically in real time. Effective resource management in this sense becomes a form of strategic leadership in itself.

Given the fluid nature of the service industry, strategy implementation also requires a mindset of continuous learning and adaptation. Rigid plans quickly become obsolete; flexibility and responsiveness are therefore vital. Aladağ et al. (2020, 6–7) emphasise that integrating feedback loops and cultivating a culture of responsiveness are key to narrowing the gap between strategic formulation and execution. Such an iterative process allows organisations to remain competitive in turbulent markets, ensuring that learning from both successes and setbacks feeds directly into future strategic cycles.

Equally important is the influence of organisational culture. A culture that rewards collaboration, curiosity, and customer-centric thinking provides fertile ground for effective strategy execution. Mongiello et al. (2006, 148) note that cultivating such a culture requires deliberate and sustained leadership efforts—often championed by the COO—to embed strategic values into daily routines and interactions. In this respect, leadership transcends formal hierarchy: it involves role-modelling behaviours, mentoring staff, and reinforcing shared norms that reflect the organisation's strategic

intent. A culture aligned with strategy does not emerge by accident; it is continuously shaped through leadership example and everyday communication.

In sum, implementing strategy in service industries is a complex and ongoing process, requiring leaders to balance speed with stability and structure with sensitivity. COOs must navigate an environment marked by volatility, intangible performance drivers, and the delicate interplay of financial and human factors. By fostering transparent communication, engaging all managerial levels, allocating resources wisely, encouraging adaptive learning, and nurturing a supportive culture, they significantly increase the likelihood that strategies will move beyond documentation to become lived organisational practice. In doing so, they ensure that the service sector's defining quality—its human element—remains at the heart of strategic success.

2.4 Measuring strategy success

A strategy has meaning only when it is sufficiently concrete to be applied in the management of an organisation's daily operations. It must provide measurable and actionable objectives so that decision-makers can evaluate whether their choices genuinely align with the strategic direction. At its best, strategy offers ongoing guidance and support throughout the strategic period, shaping managerial judgement rather than existing as a static declaration of intent—something read once and left to gather dust in a boardroom drawer.

One of the most critical determinants of strategic effectiveness is measurability. Without tangible targets or KPIs, a strategy risks becoming little more than an aspirational statement. Parmenter (2015, 10–14) underscores that measurable objectives translate abstract ambitions into concrete managerial actions, empowering leaders and employees alike to track progress and adjust course when necessary. Establishing clear performance metrics also creates what some scholars describe as a “line of sight” between high-level strategic goals and day-to-day activities. This connection allows individuals to see how their own work contributes to the broader organisational purpose, strengthening both engagement and accountability.

Performance assessment, however, extends beyond accountability. It also provides the vital feedback mechanism that allows organisations to learn, adapt, and refine their strategies over time. Among the most influential tools in this domain is the BSC developed by Kaplan and Norton (1996b, 75–85). By evaluating performance across four complementary perspectives—financial, customer, internal processes, and learning and growth—the BSC presents a multidimensional picture of organisational health. Tayler (2010, 324) notes that the framework helps firms benchmark their results against competitors, facilitating a process of ongoing improvement and adaptation in dynamic markets. In hospitality and tourism, where guest experience, service quality, and

reputation are central, such comprehensive tools enable managers to link strategic vision with operational execution in measurable ways.

Understanding how implementation unfolds is essential for closing the persistent gap between strategic plans and realised outcomes. Research by Mankins and Steele (2005, 66) found that, on average, companies achieve only about 63% of the financial results promised by their strategies—a striking statistic that highlights how execution, rather than design, is often the stumbling block. This performance shortfall frequently results from weak or absent feedback loops that prevent timely course correction. Crittenden and Crittenden (2008, 204) similarly warn that when evaluation is irregular or superficial, deviations go unnoticed until it is too late to intervene effectively. Measuring success, therefore, cannot be treated as an annual exercise; it must be an embedded, cyclical process within the organisation's management rhythm.

Bridging the divide between strategic aspiration and actual performance requires the establishment of robust, context-sensitive metrics. These should not only set targets but also monitor progress and promote iterative refinement (Phillips and Louvieris 2005, 319). Metrics must remain closely aligned with the organisation's strategic priorities and evolve as circumstances change. In the hospitality industry, this often means integrating both quantitative and qualitative indicators—guest satisfaction scores, online reputation ratings, employee turnover, and operational efficiency measures, alongside traditional financial ratios. Such blended evaluation systems ensure that the “human” dimensions of service, which drive long-term loyalty and brand strength, are valued as highly as short-term profitability.

Köseoglu, Mehraliyev, and Okumus (2020, 4) observe that much of the literature on hospitality strategy still focuses on linking different strategies to firm performance rather than examining how strategies are enacted in practice. They note that the voices of practitioners, particularly COOs who oversee day-to-day implementation, remain underrepresented. Gaining insight into how these operational leaders interpret, communicate, and adapt strategic directives is indispensable for understanding what makes implementation succeed or fail.

Recent research has also emphasised the need for adaptive measurement systems that can evolve with their environment. Simons (1995, 59–67) introduced the notion of “levers of control” to describe how diagnostic and interactive control systems enable leaders to maintain a balance between consistency and flexibility. In industries as fluid as hospitality, this adaptability is crucial. Measurement systems should not simply record outcomes but stimulate discussion, experimentation, and learning. They should serve as both mirrors and compasses—reflecting current performance while pointing toward future opportunity.

Technological advances have profoundly reshaped how such systems operate. The rise of digital dashboards, real-time analytics, and business intelligence platforms allows managers to track performance with far greater precision and immediacy than ever before. Parmenter (2015, 25–38) argues that integrating these tools enhances both the accuracy and the relevance of performance data, making it possible for executives to respond proactively rather than reactively. For COOs and senior leaders, this evolution means that performance monitoring is no longer an occasional review; it has become a continuous, data-driven conversation between strategy and action.

Equally, the cultural context of measurement determines whether metrics inspire improvement or simply compliance. Schein (2010, 220–223) reminds us that genuine accountability grows in a culture where feedback is encouraged and used constructively. Leaders must therefore nurture an atmosphere of transparency and trust, where data are not used to assign blame but to inform shared learning. When employees understand the purpose behind performance metrics and see how these measures link to collective success, evaluation becomes a participatory process—one that strengthens engagement rather than fear.

In conclusion, measuring strategic success is not merely about setting numerical goals or tracking indicators. It involves creating performance systems that are actionable, contextually relevant, and adaptable to change. It requires continuous feedback, informed leadership participation, and a culture that views measurement as a path to insight rather than a bureaucratic requirement. Only when these elements converge can organisations ensure that their strategies remain alive—guiding decisions, inspiring action, and generating sustained competitive advantage over time.

2.5 Role of executive leadership in strategy execution

The successful implementation of strategy depends on far more than the creation of a technically sound plan or the selection of the right analytical model. Its real test lies in the quality of leadership that interprets, communicates, and embodies strategic intent within daily organisational life. As Noble (1999, 120–124) points out, variables such as structure, control systems, and organisational culture shape execution, but none of them are effective in the absence of active and competent leadership. Hrebiniak (2006, 13) captures this tension succinctly when he calls execution “the great unaddressed issue in the business world today”, stressing that strategy succeeds only when leaders can align people, systems, and shared values behind common goals. While planning occurs in boardrooms, execution unfolds in the lived reality of the organisation—and it is leadership that turns theoretical direction into concrete behaviour.

At the centre of this process stands the COO, whose role links abstract strategic ambition with the practical world of operations. Research by Aladağ, Köseoğlu, King and Mehraliyev (2020, 1)

demonstrates that managerial capabilities and structural design directly influence strategic outcomes in the hospitality sector. Olsen (2004, 114–118) similarly emphasises that leadership wields a dual impact: it is essential in shaping strategy and equally decisive in embedding it through communication, role modelling, and consistent behaviour. In effect, the COO acts as both interpreter and integrator, translating organisational goals into meaningful actions while ensuring that these are understood across functional and hierarchical boundaries. How the leader frames and enacts strategy determines whether it becomes an inspiring organisational narrative or remains an administrative formality.

A crucial aspect of leadership in execution is what Noble (1999, 121–122) terms strategic consensus—a shared understanding and commitment to key priorities. Without this cognitive and emotional alignment, even the most carefully designed strategies can collapse in translation. To build such consensus, COOs must internalise the underlying logic of the strategy, grasp its trade-offs, and articulate its significance through dialogue rather than decree. Kellermanns, Walter, Lechner and Floyd (2005, 720–721) define genuine consensus as a collective interpretive frame that guides decision-making, not merely verbal agreement. Tools such as cascading scorecards and strategy maps, described by Kaplan and Norton (2001, 220–225), can assist by making strategic linkages transparent. Yet these mechanisms only have value when executives personally engage with them and model their use; otherwise, they risk degenerating into bureaucratic checklists.

Leadership also functions as the organisation's sense-making engine. Weick (1995, 4–8) characterises leadership as the continuous creation of meaning within uncertain or changing environments. When external conditions shift, employees look to senior leaders for interpretation and reassurance. This interpretive role is particularly visible in hospitality and service industries, where staff at every level must align behaviour with customer-facing values. By framing change as purposeful and achievable, COOs transform anxiety into motivation and redirect attention toward adaptive solutions. This process corresponds closely to the principles of transformational leadership proposed by Bass (1999, 11–15), which highlight inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration as mechanisms for generating commitment beyond compliance.

Theories of adaptive leadership further illuminate this dynamic. Heifetz and Laurie (1997, 124–127) argue that adaptive leaders mobilise people to confront challenges for which no clear technical answers exist, creating space for experimentation and organisational learning. In this view, execution is not a linear sequence of steps but an evolving cycle of feedback and adjustment. Executives must therefore act less as commanders and more as catalysts—defining direction while leaving room for emergence. Hrebiniak (2005, 15) reinforces this by describing execution as a discipline

that “demands both discipline and adaptability”. The art of leadership lies in maintaining equilibrium between these two forces: preserving coherence while allowing flexibility.

Another vital contribution of executive leadership concerns the shaping of organisational culture. Schein (2010, 219–230) portrays culture as the invisible infrastructure that determines how individuals interpret and respond to strategic change. Culture can enable or obstruct execution depending on whether it supports or contradicts strategic goals. Higgins (2005, 5–8) insists that successful organisations ensure alignment between cultural values, structural systems, and managerial behaviour. In hospitality settings, where service quality and customer satisfaction hinge on employee engagement, this alignment often makes the difference between consistent performance and fragmented effort. Leadership, by modelling appropriate attitudes and reinforcing shared values, embeds strategic intent into the routines of everyday work.

Communication, too, is inseparable from leadership in execution. Enz (2010a, 148–155) highlights that in high-contact service industries, leaders must continuously bridge the distance between long-term strategic priorities and the immediacy of daily customer interactions. This requires not only clarity but constancy—an ongoing conversation linking operational results to strategic meaning. Effective leaders use communication not as one-way transmission but as dialogue: a process that encourages feedback, questions, and ownership. When employees understand why certain actions matter, compliance evolves into commitment, and strategy becomes embedded in organisational behaviour.

Measurement and feedback represent the closing stage of this leadership cycle. Parmenter (2015, 101–120) shows that well-constructed KPIs give visibility to strategic progress and behavioural alignment. Simons (1995, 59–80) adds that control systems act as “levers” through which executives can maintain balance between creativity and discipline. The challenge for leadership is to use these instruments interpretively rather than mechanically—transforming them into learning tools that encourage reflection rather than fear. When measurement becomes part of a shared conversation about improvement, it nourishes both accountability and innovation.

In synthesis, executive leadership in strategy execution encompasses far more than oversight or supervision. It involves translating strategic abstractions into a shared organisational language, coordinating structures and resources, cultivating a supportive culture, and sustaining a sense of meaning amidst uncertainty. The COO personifies this integrative function, acting simultaneously as interpreter, facilitator, and custodian of strategic coherence. Through deliberate communication, cultural stewardship, and adaptive coordination, leaders transform strategy from a static plan into an evolving organisational capability.

Ultimately, successful execution depends on a leader's ability to combine analytical clarity with emotional intelligence—to manage systems without losing sight of people. As Aladağ et al. (2020, 1) suggest, understanding the leadership dimensions of strategy execution is essential in complex service environments, where responsiveness and engagement define competitiveness. Strategic success, therefore, is not achieved by planning alone but through sustained relational and interpretive work carried out by leaders who understand that strategy gains life only when it is led.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research approach

The methodological orientation of this study is grounded in a qualitative single-case study design, developed with a pragmatic and developmental purpose in mind. The research seeks to explore how the SOK travel industry strategy supports the work of COOs within Sokotel and to identify how that support might be enhanced in practical and conceptual terms. Adopting a pragmatic stance acknowledges that organisational phenomena are best understood through their practical consequences and lived experiences rather than through strict adherence to a single philosophical paradigm (Creswell 2014, 10; Morgan 2014, 71). This orientation reflects the spirit of this study: to generate insights that are useful to practitioners, yet rigorous enough to contribute meaningfully to academic dialogue. Pragmatism allows for methodological flexibility and for viewing knowledge as something that is created through engagement with real-world problems rather than detached observation.

A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for a close and context-sensitive exploration of complex managerial processes. Strategy, particularly in cooperative and service-based organisations, is not only about plans and documents—it is about interpretation, communication, and practice. Qualitative inquiry offers the tools to capture these subtleties. It enables the researcher to listen to participants' experiences in their own words, to trace meanings as they emerge, and to construct a nuanced understanding of how leaders give shape and direction to organisational strategy in their daily work (Denzin & Lincoln 2018, 43; Merriam & Tisdell 2016, 15). In the case of Sokotel, this approach provides a window into how COOs interpret and operationalise SOK's travel industry strategy, revealing both the cognitive and behavioural dimensions of their leadership.

The choice of a single-case study design reflects both methodological intent and contextual appropriateness. According to Yin (2018, 15–16), a case study is particularly suitable when the boundaries between the phenomenon under investigation and its real-life context are blurred—precisely the condition in which strategic leadership operates. Sokotel offers a distinctive organisational case where centralised strategy formulation meets decentralised implementation within the framework of a cooperative enterprise. This dynamic environment allows for a detailed examination of how strategy functions as both a managerial instrument and a leadership process.

The study employs a single embedded case, where the wider organisational entity—Sokotel—forms the case, and the COOs constitute the primary units of analysis. This design allows the study to focus simultaneously on individual perceptions and collective interpretations within a shared strategic framework (Stake 1995, 2–4). The COOs' position is especially revealing: they operate at

the critical junction between strategic design and operational execution. Their work translates central objectives into local actions, and their reflections provide a rare vantage point on how strategy lives within an organisation. This emphasis aligns with the interpretivist assumption that organisational realities are socially constructed through interaction, dialogue, and shared meaning (Schwandt 2007, 19).

While a single-case design naturally limits the generalisability of findings in a statistical sense, its strength lies in its capacity for analytical generalisation—the development of theoretical and practical insights that may transfer to similar contexts (Yin 2018, 38–39; Eisenhardt 1989, 546). The intention here is not to claim universal truths but to offer conceptual tools and grounded observations that others in comparable cooperative or service organisations might find useful. By analysing how senior leaders interpret and enact strategy, this research contributes to a growing understanding of the micro-level processes that underpin strategic effectiveness.

The developmental orientation of the study reinforces its pragmatic foundation. The research does not aim merely to diagnose existing practices but to generate insight that can inform future strategic communication and implementation within SOK and beyond. As Stake (2006, 8) and Patton (2015, 56, 264) suggest, qualitative case studies can serve as learning devices—vehicles through which organisations can reflect on their practices and enhance their collective capability. This dual orientation, balancing theoretical depth with applied usefulness, ensures that the study's outcomes can support both scholarly understanding and managerial decision-making.

Methodologically, the study draws on principles of triangulation and contextual sensitivity to strengthen its credibility. The primary empirical material consists of semi-structured interviews with the three COOs of Sokotel. However, these accounts are interpreted alongside organisational documentation and the formal strategic framework developed by SOK, allowing for multiple layers of evidence to interact. This approach builds coherence between what is written, what is said, and what is practiced, reflecting the holistic spirit of qualitative inquiry. As Stake (1995, 12) observes, qualitative case research values depth and complexity over reductionism, aiming to understand phenomena within the cultural and temporal fabric of their setting.

Overall, the research approach combines pragmatic realism with interpretive sensitivity. By adopting a qualitative single-case design, the study provides a structured yet flexible framework for exploring how strategy is experienced, communicated, and enacted at the executive level. This method supports the production of insights that are at once empirically grounded and practically meaningful, illuminating the human processes that give life to organisational strategy.

Finally, a note on authorship and research integrity is essential. The thesis has used the ChatGPT application as a supportive tool to help structure ideas and refine academic language. Portions of the text were developed iteratively with AI assistance and subsequently verified by me to ensure clarity, relevance, and accuracy. All academic sources have been correctly cited and independently verified. I used AI in accordance with ethical guidelines concerning data protection and intellectual property, and I retained full responsibility for the content and conclusions presented in this work.

3.2 Methods of data collection

Data collection forms one of the most critical stages of any qualitative research process because it directly determines the richness, credibility, and interpretive depth of the analysis that follows. In developmental research—particularly when the goal is to strengthen the practical usability of strategy—data collection must do more than gather information: it must create conditions for participants to share authentic experiences and reflections that reveal how organisational processes actually work in practice. To meet these aims, this study relied primarily on semi-structured, individual interviews with the COOs of Sokotel. This approach allowed me to explore how the SOK travel industry strategy supports their work, how they experience its implementation in daily management, and how it might be refined to provide clearer and more actionable guidance.

The decision to use semi-structured interviews is consistent with the study's qualitative, single-case design and its interpretivist orientation. As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, 3) describe, a qualitative interview is “a conversation with a purpose”. It creates a discursive space in which meaning is co-produced rather than extracted, enabling participants to express how they understand organisational life in their own words. The method's strength lies precisely in its conversational flexibility: it allows the researcher to address predetermined themes while also following new directions that emerge naturally in dialogue. Given that this research sought to understand the lived experience of COOs—senior leaders balancing multiple strategic and operational demands—such flexibility was indispensable.

Each interview was guided by a structured yet adaptable framework derived from the research questions. The discussion topics included the perceived clarity, relevance, and usability of the SOK travel industry strategy; the COOs' experiences of navigating overlapping strategic frameworks; and their reflections on potential improvements. At the same time, participants were encouraged to elaborate freely and to illustrate their perspectives with concrete examples drawn from their own management contexts. This dialogical format often led to insightful digressions, revealing how strategy is translated into managerial action through informal conversations, leadership routines, and day-to-day decision-making.

All three interviews were conducted individually—either face-to-face or via Microsoft Teams—depending on the participant’s schedule and geographic availability. This combination of in-person and virtual settings reflects the study’s pragmatic orientation and the realities of executive work. While online interviews may sometimes limit the researcher’s ability to observe subtle non-verbal cues, contemporary research (Archibald et al. 2019, 5) shows that well-managed virtual interactions can produce data of comparable quality to traditional face-to-face sessions. In this study, care was taken to create a relaxed, professional atmosphere in both modes, allowing participants to speak candidly about strategic challenges, organisational dynamics, and personal interpretations.

Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 50 minutes, a duration appropriate for senior-level participants whose time was constrained but whose insights were substantial. The focus was on depth rather than duration—eliciting rich, targeted reflections instead of lengthy, diffuse narratives. As I am an insider within Sokotel, particular attention was paid to maintaining professionalism and neutrality throughout the data collection process. Insider status carries both advantages and responsibilities: while it can facilitate trust and access to nuanced perspectives (Brannick & Coghlan 2007, 69), it also requires heightened reflexivity to ensure that interpretations remain grounded in the participants’ voices rather than the researcher’s preconceptions.

To respect participants’ comfort and confidentiality, audio recordings were not made. This decision was intentional, as open discussion of strategic practices can involve sensitive topics. Instead, I relied on comprehensive handwritten notes taken during and immediately after each interview. Although verbatim transcription from recordings is common in qualitative research (Silverman 2022, 82–83), note-based documentation can be equally valid when recording might inhibit openness (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2019, 525). Immediately following each interview, these notes were expanded, reviewed, and annotated with contextual details, ensuring that the essence of each response was preserved and that interpretive nuances were not lost.

The interviews explored three central dimensions aligned with the analytical framework of the study. First, the strategic guidance dimension examined how the SOK travel industry strategy informs the COOs’ leadership and decision-making. Second, the multi-strategy dimension explored the interplay between the central SOK framework, Sokotel’s internal strategy, and the Radisson franchise requirements—an environment that naturally creates overlapping strategic layers. Third, the developmental dimension invited participants to reflect on opportunities for improving the strategy’s clarity, accessibility, and long-term relevance to operational leadership. These areas collectively offered a structured yet flexible foundation for dialogue, allowing me to capture both converging and diverging experiences among the COOs.

The semi-structured format proved highly effective for this purpose. It supported iterative probing and allowed clarification of ambiguous points, resulting in a data set rich in both conceptual depth and practical insight (Flick 2018, 179). Although the three COOs shared similar positions and responsibilities, their accounts revealed meaningful variation in how they translated strategic intent into operational practice. By analysing both the shared patterns and subtle differences across these narratives, the study was able to form a more comprehensive understanding of how strategy functions within Sokotel as a dynamic managerial process rather than as a static document.

From a methodological perspective, semi-structured interviews have long been recognised as one of the most suitable tools for investigating interpretive aspects of leadership and organisational life (Tracy 2020, 134–135). They are particularly effective for studies exploring how managers construct meaning around formal strategies—how they understand, communicate, and apply them in everyday settings. Conducting individual rather than group interviews also helped reduce the risk of social desirability bias (Saunders et al. 2019, 504), allowing participants to express uncertainties, challenges, and personal reflections more freely.

Ethical integrity was treated as a central concern throughout data collection. Each participant was informed about the study's aims, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. Verbal informed consent was obtained prior to each interview, and all identifying details were anonymised in the final report. This approach aligns with the ethical principles outlined by Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden (2001, 93), which emphasise respect for autonomy, beneficence, and the protection of privacy—principles that are particularly important in research involving senior professionals whose roles make complete anonymity difficult to guarantee.

Despite its advantages, the interview method is not without limitations. Because the data rely on individual perceptions, they cannot fully capture collective or systemic processes. However, this limitation was mitigated through cross-case comparison, identifying recurring themes and variations across the three interviews in line with the techniques described by Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2019, 9–10). The convergence of perspectives among the COOs, each operating within the same organisational structure but with different responsibilities, enhanced the internal validity and developmental applicability of the findings.

The use of note-based documentation also carried the potential risk of selective recall or omission. To counter this, I immediately reviewed and expanded notes after each interview and compared emerging interpretations with organisational documents such as SOK's official strategy papers. This process of methodological triangulation reinforced the credibility of the data and reflected the study's pragmatic ethos—adapting methods to real-world conditions while upholding academic rigour (Morgan 2014, 1048).

In summary, the combination of semi-structured, individual interviews conducted in both face-to-face and virtual settings provided a flexible, ethically sound, and contextually sensitive method of gathering data. This approach yielded insights that were both detailed and directly relevant to the study's developmental aims. While acknowledging the limitations of a small sample size and non-recorded sessions, the depth and authenticity of the information gathered ensured a robust foundation for the subsequent stages of analysis. Ultimately, these interviews offered a rare and candid window into how strategy is perceived, communicated, and lived by senior leaders within a cooperative hospitality organisation.

3.3 Methods of data analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is fundamentally an interpretive process, one that seeks to uncover meaning and coherence within textual material rather than to quantify patterns or test predetermined hypotheses. As Braun and Clarke (2006, 79–80) explain, the task of the researcher is to identify recurring patterns, relationships, and underlying meanings that speak to the research objectives. In this study, the data consisted of detailed handwritten notes taken during semi-structured interviews with the three COOs of Sokotel. The analytical process followed the principles of thematic analysis, chosen for its ability to provide both structure and flexibility—qualities essential for exploring how organisational actors interpret, communicate, and apply strategy in real managerial contexts (Nowell et al. 2017, 2).

Thematic analysis was particularly suited to the exploratory and developmental purpose of this research. It allows for a close engagement with participants' words while supporting the abstraction of ideas into broader conceptual categories. Unlike methods that seek to impose rigid coding frames, thematic analysis accommodates complexity, contradiction, and nuance—qualities that are inherent in human accounts of leadership and strategy. In this sense, it serves both as an analytic technique and as a way of thinking about data: a means of identifying not just what was said, but how meaning was constructed through tone, emphasis, and narrative framing.

Because interviews were not audio-recorded, the analytical process began immediately after each session with the careful organisation and expansion of handwritten notes. I reviewed these notes in full to reconstruct the flow of conversation, clarify shorthand, and ensure the precision of phrasing. This first phase of immersion provided an opportunity to capture both the literal content and the interpretive tone of each discussion—what Braun and Clarke (2013, 206) refer to as familiarisation with the data. In qualitative work of this kind, early engagement with the material is not a preparatory step but the beginning of analysis itself. It is during this stage that initial impressions, tensions, and patterns begin to surface, often shaping the direction of deeper inquiry.

Following familiarisation, I moved into a phase of systematic thematic identification. The notes were read and re-read to locate recurring ideas, expressions, and reflections connected to the study's central questions: how COOs perceive the SOK travel industry strategy, how they navigate overlapping strategic frameworks, and how they believe the strategy could be improved. As the dataset was small and focused, the analysis was conducted manually rather than through computer-assisted software. Manual analysis enabled me to engage more intuitively with the material, preserving the context of each comment and the flow of meaning within and across interviews (Basil 2003, 144).

While no formal coding software was used, the process nonetheless followed the logic of qualitative coding. Each idea or observation was assigned a provisional label that captured its essence—such as “clarity of communication,” “alignment challenges,” or “local adaptation.” As similar reflections accumulated, these labels were grouped into broader thematic clusters. I then refined and merged these clusters through iterative comparison, moving back and forth between data and emerging themes until a coherent structure began to form. This cyclical process of refinement aligns with Braun and Clarke's (2006, 87) recommendation for recursive movement between data and interpretation, ensuring that themes remain anchored in the original material rather than imposed externally.

Throughout this process, reflexivity played a critical role. As an insider to the organisation, I maintained a reflective log to note possible biases or preconceptions that could colour interpretation. These reflexive notes helped to identify moments where familiarity with Sokotel's internal environment might influence analytical judgement, thereby promoting awareness and transparency in the interpretive process (Nowell et al. 2017, 4).

The next stage involved comparing and integrating themes across the three interviews. This cross-case comparison allowed me to examine both convergence and divergence in the COOs' experiences. Common themes—such as the value of strategic clarity and the tension between autonomy and alignment—revealed shared organisational realities, while differences illuminated the individual ways in which each COO made sense of strategy in their role. Such comparative analysis strengthens analytical validity by showing that findings are not idiosyncratic but grounded in recurrent patterns of experience (Patton 2015, 547).

Once the thematic structure was established, I examined how these empirical insights related to the theoretical frameworks introduced in chapter 2. This interpretive linking was not an exercise in forcing conformity but in exploring resonance: how the participants' accounts reflected or challenged established ideas such as the McKinsey 7S framework, the Balanced Scorecard, or the concept of strategy-as-practice. By situating the findings within these theoretical lenses, the

analysis highlighted how strategic frameworks are interpreted, adapted, and enacted within the real-world complexity of cooperative service organisations. In particular, the COOs' narratives illustrated the interplay between deliberate structure and emergent adaptation—a duality echoed in much of the strategy literature.

The analysis remained attentive to organisational context, recognising that the COOs' interpretations were shaped by their professional discourse, leadership experience, and position within Sokotel's hierarchy. In line with Braun and Clarke's (2013, 210) guidance, the analysis was therefore situated within the social and cultural realities of participants rather than abstracted into purely linguistic categories.

In summary, the thematic analysis employed in this study offered a rigorous yet humanly grounded approach to interpreting how Sokotel's COOs experience, communicate, and enact strategy. By combining manual theme identification with cross-case comparison and theoretical integration, I developed a coherent and contextually rich understanding of strategic interpretation at the executive level. Although the absence of recordings placed greater responsibility on careful note-taking and immediate reflection, this method preserved both the confidentiality of the participants and the authenticity of their voices. Overall, the analytical process reflects the study's developmental orientation: to move beyond description toward understanding how strategy becomes meaningful and actionable in the lived practice of leadership.

3.4 Evaluation of the development task

Establishing the reliability, validity, and overall trustworthiness of qualitative research is fundamental for demonstrating the credibility and usefulness of its findings. In development-oriented research such as this thesis, these criteria ensure that insights are not only contextually grounded but also analytically sound and transferable to comparable organisational settings. The present study seeks to evaluate and develop the practical usability of SOK's strategic communication at the COO level. Given its pragmatic orientation, methodological rigour is defined not by strict adherence to positivist standards but by the degree to which the findings are both theoretically justified and actionable within organisational practice (Morgan 2014, 1050).

In qualitative inquiry, reliability and validity are often reinterpreted through the lens of trustworthiness, a framework first articulated by Lincoln and Guba (1985, 290–327). They propose four inter-related criteria—credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability—that collectively demonstrate the soundness of qualitative research. These dimensions are particularly well suited to developmental and organisational studies, where the goal is to explore complex human processes rather than to test causal relationships. In this study, they form the foundation for evaluating

the development task: improving the practical alignment of SOK's travel industry strategy with the operational work of its COOs.

Credibility refers to the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the findings and their interpretation (Shenton 2004, 64). To ensure credibility, the study was designed to reflect as accurately as possible the lived experiences of the three participating COOs at Sokotel. The semi-structured interview format provided consistency across interviews while still allowing participants the freedom to highlight what they considered most significant. This flexibility gave space for authentic narratives and revealed how strategic communication is understood in practice. The questions deliberately addressed both the operational aspects of strategy implementation and the interpretive, sense-making work that leaders perform (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, 3).

I personally conducted all interviews—either in person or online, depending on the COO's availability. This direct engagement helped build rapport and contextual understanding while allowing spontaneous clarification of key points. Since the decision was made not to audio-record the interviews, I relied on meticulous handwritten notes, immediately expanded after each session. Although this approach trades verbatim precision for openness, credibility was safeguarded through immediate post-interview reflection and verification of meaning. Tracy (2010, 841) recognises such iterative reflexivity as a legitimate means of preserving fidelity to participants' voices when recording might inhibit candour.

In addition, credibility was reinforced through the comparative analysis of the three interviews. Examining both convergence and divergence among the COOs' perspectives ensured that conclusions rested on more than individual viewpoints. This triangulation of perspectives aligns with Patton's (2008, 150–151) notion of formative evaluation, where feedback from participants is actively integrated into interpretation. Consistency between empirical findings and the theoretical framework outlined in chapter 2 further strengthened internal coherence and interpretive validity.

Dependability concerns the stability and logical consistency of the research process over time (Lincoln & Guba 1985, 299). To achieve this, the study adhered to a transparent and well-documented methodology. Semi-structured interviews with a shared thematic focus provided a stable structure for data collection while still allowing individual expression. Every phase—from research design to analysis—was recorded and reflected upon, ensuring that methodological choices could be traced and assessed. While qualitative research does not seek replicability in the statistical sense, this transparency enables readers to follow the reasoning process and evaluate its soundness (Nowell et al. 2017, 3).

Confirmability relates to the degree to which findings reflect the participants' perspectives rather than the researcher's biases or expectations (Lincoln & Guba 1985, 302). In this research, confirmability was pursued through systematic reflexivity and disciplined documentation. I acknowledged a dual role as both insider and analyst—a position that provided contextual access but also demanded heightened awareness of interpretive influence. Reflexive notes were therefore used to monitor moments of potential bias and ensure that interpretations remained grounded in the COOs' expressed experiences. Tracy (2010, 843) similarly highlights that transparency about positionality enhances the authenticity of qualitative work.

To further reinforce confirmability, findings were compared with established theoretical perspectives on strategic communication and implementation (Hrebiniak 2005, 16; Jarzabkowski & Balogun 2009, 1255–1257). This theoretical triangulation acted as a consistency check, linking the empirical observations to recognised frameworks and thereby enhancing plausibility. Flyvbjerg (2006, 223) argues that such connections enable “analytical generalisation,” where insights derived from a single case contribute to broader theoretical understanding without claiming statistical representativeness.

Transferability concerns whether findings may hold relevance in other organisational contexts. Although the study focuses on a single case—Sokotel within the S Group cooperative—the results are presented through thick description, allowing readers to judge their applicability elsewhere (Shenton 2004, 69). By situating the findings within a richly detailed context of structure, culture, and leadership roles, the study facilitates informed comparison. These insights may be particularly relevant for service organisations operating within multi-strategy frameworks, where central coordination must coexist with local autonomy.

The developmental task that underpins this thesis—the enhancement of SOK's strategic communication and its alignment with COO leadership—provides a natural evaluative structure for assessing trustworthiness. The research incorporates both formative and summative evaluation (Patton 2008, 151). Formatively, the interviews served as diagnostic tools, revealing perceived strengths and weaknesses of current practices. Summatively, the analysis assessed how the existing strategy supports operational leadership and how it might be refined for greater clarity and usability. This dual-layer evaluation ensures that the findings inform both theory and practice, connecting conceptual development with real organisational improvement.

This distinction echoes Chen's (2005, 73) differentiation between process-based and outcome-based evaluation. Process evaluation explores how COOs engage with and interpret strategic materials, while outcome evaluation considers the practical implications of those interpretations for

execution and alignment. The combination of these approaches strengthens validity and ensures that results speak to both the “how” and the “why” of strategic communication in practice.

Furthermore, the evaluation approach was informed by stakeholder-centred perspectives on organisational learning (Bryson, Patton & Bowman 2011, 33–34). The research design treated the COOs not merely as informants but as co-creators of knowledge. Their experiential insights shaped both the analytical focus and the interpretive conclusions, echoing Lincoln and Guba’s (1985, 291, 304) principle that authentic qualitative inquiry arises from collaboration and shared meaning-making.

The developmental orientation of the study also reflects a preference for incremental refinement over radical redesign. As Bessant et al. (2005, 137) note, organisational innovation often occurs through small, evidence-based adjustments that gradually enhance effectiveness. In this spirit, the study’s evaluative framework emphasises practical improvement grounded in real-world conditions rather than abstract idealisation. Its validity therefore derives from the plausibility and usability of its recommendations rather than their universality.

Ethical and reflexive integrity provide the foundation for all these efforts. Participants were fully informed of the study’s purpose and assured that their contributions would remain anonymous, encouraging openness and reducing social desirability bias (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden 2001, 93). My previous professional engagement with SOK’s strategic operations was explicitly acknowledged to maintain transparency and self-awareness. Such reflexive honesty, as Tracy (2010, 842) contends, is essential for maintaining contextual sensitivity and analytical depth in qualitative research.

In summary, the methodological integrity of this study rests on the interconnected principles of trustworthiness. Credibility was established through engaged data collection and authentic participant narratives; dependability through transparent procedures; confirmability through reflexive neutrality and theoretical triangulation; and transferability through detailed contextualisation and analytical generalisation. The integration of formative and summative evaluation ensured that the results were not only rigorous but also practically meaningful. By uniting academic precision with applied relevance, the study contributes both to SOK’s ongoing strategic development and to the broader understanding of how organisational communication and leadership intersect in complex service environments.

3.5 Data management plan

Because this thesis was conducted entirely within the SOK organisation, its data management plan adhered closely to both the organisation's internal confidentiality policies and the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Although no personal or sensitive data were collected, the research followed the ethical principles of responsible conduct as set out in the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity. The empirical material consisted solely of semi-structured interviews with three COOs, whose insights formed the basis for analysing the practical usefulness of SOK's strategic communication framework.

The interviews were documented through handwritten notes taken by me during and immediately after each discussion. In line with the participants' preferences and the non-sensitive nature of the topics, no audio recordings were made. This choice reflected both ethical consideration and my insider position within the organisation: avoiding recording helped preserve trust and openness. Following each session, the handwritten notes were manually transcribed into digital format to ensure accuracy and to retain the nuance of participants' reflections. These digital versions were subsequently used for thematic analysis, while the original paper notes were securely stored throughout the project and will be destroyed once the thesis is finalised and published.

In accordance with GDPR principles, all data were anonymised to prevent identification of any individual participant. Each COO was assigned a neutral identifier (A, B, or C), and any contextual or role-specific details that might reveal personal identity were generalised during transcription. Anonymisation is a fundamental safeguard in qualitative research, ensuring participant privacy and reducing reputational or professional risks (Saunders, Kitzinger & Kitzinger 2015, 617). The anonymisation process in this study followed the principle of "functional anonymity" (Kaiser 2009, 1634), which balances the need to protect identity with the need to preserve the richness and interpretive integrity of the participants' contributions.

The handling and storage of research material were governed by strict confidentiality and limited access. Only I had access to both handwritten and digital data throughout the entire project. The digital notes were stored on my password-protected personal computer, and no copies were transmitted to SOK management or shared with third parties. This approach follows established ethical recommendations to minimise the circulation of identifiable information and to maintain data integrity across the research lifecycle (Israel & Hay 2006, 85–87).

Although SOK did not formally require a detailed data management plan due to the project's limited scope and absence of sensitive data, I voluntarily adopted best-practice principles of transparency, accountability, and informed consent. Before each interview, participants were fully briefed on the

purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the ways in which their contributions would be recorded, anonymised, and used exclusively for academic purposes. Verbal informed consent was obtained prior to data collection, consistent with recognised qualitative research ethics (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden 2001, 95). Participants were also informed that their anonymised data would not be reused in future studies without renewed consent, ensuring compliance with GDPR's principle of purpose limitation and fair processing.

Upon completion of the thesis, the original handwritten notes will be securely destroyed to eliminate any residual possibility of re-identification. No data will be used for future research unless additional ethical approval and participant consent are formally obtained. According to Bazeley (2013, 142), retaining or repurposing qualitative data beyond the scope of its initial intent requires clear justification, proportional safeguards, and explicit communication with both participants and organisational stakeholders. These conditions will guide any future use of the material.

The ethical foundation of this data management process also reflects my dual position as both employee and investigator within the SOK organisation. This insider role provided privileged access to strategic materials and participants but also demanded heightened reflexive awareness to maintain professional boundaries. Coghlan and Brannick (2014, 115) highlight that insider researchers must carefully balance engagement with detachment to avoid unconscious bias and to protect participant confidentiality.

Given the modest scale of data collection and the non-sensitive nature of its content, the risks associated with data management were minimal. Nonetheless, the consistent application of ethical principles—secure storage, anonymisation, restricted access, informed consent, and transparency—ensured the reliability and accountability of the entire process. These measures align closely with the principles of trustworthy qualitative research as articulated by Nowell et al. (2017, 4): credibility, dependability, and confirmability.

In conclusion, the data management plan developed for this thesis integrates both legal compliance and ethical responsibility. Through adherence to GDPR, application of anonymisation and consent procedures, and a reflexive awareness of my insider role, the study ensured that participants' rights, dignity, and privacy were respected throughout. At the same time, the chosen practices guaranteed the transparency and integrity of the empirical material, thereby supporting the study's broader aim—to generate organisational insights that are both ethically sound and practically valuable.

4 Findings

This chapter presents the empirical findings of the study, organised into three thematic areas developed during analysis: strategic guidance, the multi-strategy environment, and developmental reflection. Together, these themes describe how Sokotel's COOs understand and work with the S Group's travel-industry strategy in their day-to-day leadership. The focus here is on reporting what was said and how the COOs made sense of the strategy; the theoretical interpretation is discussed separately in chapter 5.

4.1 Strategic guidance

Across all interviews, the COOs described the S Group's travel-industry strategy in consistently similar terms. They each emphasised that the strategy is clear and coherent, and that this clarity supports their daily leadership work in a concrete way. Although their wording differed slightly, the overall view they expressed was remarkably aligned. COO A articulated this clearly by stating that the strategy "provides direction and boundaries – it gives the rules of the game." This expression captured their understanding that the framework offers both guidance and limits that help shape their everyday decision-making. COO B described the strategy in a similarly practical way, characterising it as "a tool that's part of everything we do," which highlighted how integrated the strategy is in daily operational activities rather than functioning as something separate. COO C also viewed the strategy as something that helps organise work, explaining that it offers priorities that support both planning and follow-up.

The COOs noted that the strategy reflects the wider context in which they operate. They referred to both the external operating environment and the cooperative setting, and they saw the strategy as taking these into account in a balanced way. While the COOs expressed this point in slightly different forms, the shared view was that such balance contributes to a sense of clarity. COO A conveyed this concretely by saying that "when targets are structured, you know the direction and the limits," which illustrated how the organisation of targets supports their orientation in daily work.

Data and follow-up were mentioned repeatedly as important parts of how the strategy is used. The COOs described the transition from the Data Warehouse to Power BI as a positive development. COO A stated that the transition had been well prepared and had improved visibility over performance, and COO B commented that transparency had improved collaboration. Across the interviews, the COOs indicated that having clearer and more accessible data supports their ability to align with the strategy and monitor progress in a straightforward way.

At the same time, the COOs noted that some organisational processes can be slow. COO A described SOK as “a stiff organisation,” referring to occasions when structures may feel heavy. COO C similarly mentioned that the hospitality field can be conservative, especially in relation to digital development. Despite these observations, all COOs underlined the positive nature of cooperation between chain management and operations. COO B summarised this shared sentiment by saying that “everyone moves in the same direction,” emphasising a sense of alignment and mutual understanding that supports their leadership work.

Overall, the COOs portrayed the strategy as a practical and stable framework that assists them in their responsibilities. They emphasised its clarity and usefulness and highlighted the importance of ongoing dialogue in ensuring that the strategy continues to support their everyday work effectively.

4.2 Multi-strategy environment

The COOs described their work as taking place within several strategic frameworks that exist at the same time. They noted that Sokotel operates with the SOK travel-industry strategy, its own internal priorities, and the requirements that come from the Radisson Hotel Group (RHG). These different strategic elements were mentioned across the interviews, and the COOs referred to them as part of the environment they work in. COO C expressed this particularly clearly by stating that there are “three layers of strategy that sometimes use different languages.” This comment reflected their description of the situation, and it appeared as one way of characterising how several strategic elements are present at once.

The COOs did not describe these strategic layers as conflicting. Instead, they spoke about cooperation as something that supports their ability to work with them. COO B mentioned the importance of cooperation between chain management and operations, and presented this cooperation as something that is part of how the different strategies are handled in practice. COO C also referred to cooperation and noted that having “constant dialogue” is important. These comments pointed to the way the COOs described communication as something that is relevant when several strategic elements are in use.

The COOs also discussed RHG. COO B noted that RHG understands the challenges within the field and expressed this in a positive tone. COO C, by contrast, stated that RHG’s digital capabilities have not yet been fully utilised within SOK. These two perspectives showed that the COOs viewed RHG from different angles, but both spoke about it directly and reflected on its role in their work.

Regional matters were mentioned as well. COO A observed that some regional challenges could receive more attention, and they noted that certain regional circumstances are not always fully

reflected in planning. COO B commented that “a regional division of goals could work better,” which indicated their view that differences between regions are relevant when goals are set. Both comments referred to regional variation as something that affects their work.

Data came up again in this section. The COOs noted that Power BI provides visibility and mentioned data in relation to discussions. COO C stated that customer-related data are underused. These comments indicated that the COOs see data as a part of how different strategic elements are followed and discussed.

The COOs also described the environment of several strategic layers as containing both demanding and positive aspects. COO B referred to it as “demanding yet rewarding.” This expression appeared in the interview as a direct way of characterising how the environment can include effort but also value. Across the interviews, the COOs spoke about multiple strategies as something present in their daily work, and they described cooperation and communication as relevant in this context

4.3 Developmental reflection

The COOs discussed how the strategy could be developed further and described several areas where they saw potential for improvement. Although the COOs expressed these reflections in different ways, their comments were consistent in highlighting aspects that relate to how the strategy may function in the future. At the same time, they all emphasised that the strategy is already useful in its current form. COO A described it as an “efficient reference point that saves time,” and this wording captured their view that the strategy is clear and practical. COO B referred to its structured nature, and COO C stated that the strategy is clear and easy to communicate to others. These remarks indicated that the COOs consider the strategy understandable and supportive as it stands.

The COOs also mentioned points that relate to development. COO A stated that faster decision-making could support outcomes. This was presented as a direct observation rather than a detailed explanation, but it indicated that speed can matter in certain situations. COO C commented on digital development and noted that the hospitality field can be slow in adopting digital solutions. This comment pointed to their view of the general pace of development within the field. These reflections appeared in the interviews as comments on areas where improvements could be made.

Regional matters were raised again. COO B remarked that regional variation is significant and stated that a uniform approach to goals may not always fit every region equally well. COO C also mentioned regional challenges and commented that local issues could be taken more into account. These statements showed that regional differences were seen as relevant in connection with the future development of the strategy.

Data were mentioned in relation to possible improvement. Although transparency has increased, the COOs stated that data are still used mainly for tracking. COO C commented that customer-related data could be used more effectively. These remarks indicated that the COOs saw potential in how data might support their work if used in additional ways.

The COOs also referred to RHG when discussing development. COO B questioned whether RHG's role had been fully utilised in strategic work. COO C expressed the view that RHG's digital advancements had not yet been fully integrated. These comments reflected their perspectives on how RHG might contribute further.

Cultural aspects were also mentioned. COO C noted that while consensus is valuable, it can sometimes reduce necessary challenge. COO B commented that cooperation works best when people feel free to question. These points appeared as part of the COOs' reflections on the interaction and communication that take place in their work environment.

Overall, the COOs conveyed that the strategy is clear and useful, while at the same time identifying potential areas for further development. They described aspects related to speed, digital development, regional differences, data use, the RHG partnership and cultural dynamics as areas that could be considered in future work.

4.4 Summary of findings

The findings showed that the COOs viewed the S Group's travel-industry strategy as clear, structured and useful in their daily work. Across the interviews, the COOs described the strategy in similar ways, and they emphasised that it provides direction and supports their responsibilities. They commented on how the strategy offers guidance, boundaries and priorities, and they stated that it is understandable and easy to communicate. These points appeared consistently and formed a shared view of the strategy as a practical framework.

The findings also indicated that the COOs operate within several strategic layers at the same time. They referred to the SOK travel-industry strategy, Sokotel's internal priorities and the requirements from RHG as elements that exist together in their work. The COOs expressed that cooperation and dialogue help them work with these different elements. They mentioned the importance of communication, and they stated that cooperation between chain management and operations supports their work. The COOs also commented on RHG and expressed both positive and reflective views about its role. In addition, regional matters were mentioned, and the COOs noted that regional variation is a relevant factor in their environment.

The findings further showed that the COOs identified several areas where the strategy could be developed. They referred to speed, regional differences, digital development, customer-related data, the RHG partnership and cultural aspects as points that could be considered in the future. While they emphasised that the strategy is clear and useful in its current form, they also stated that there are areas where improvement is possible. These reflections appeared across the interviews and formed the views the COOs expressed about potential development.

Overall, the findings presented in this chapter described how the COOs understand the strategy, how they work with different strategic elements and how they see opportunities for improvement. These points reflect the views shared by the COOs and summarise the themes that emerged from the interviews.

5 Analysis and conclusions

This chapter interprets the empirical findings presented in chapter 4 by situating them within the theoretical perspectives outlined earlier. The analysis returns to the central research question:

How does the SOK travel-industry strategy support the work of Chief Operating Officers within Sokotel, and in what ways could that support be strengthened?

To address this question, the discussion follows the three thematic areas that structure the findings: strategic guidance, multi-strategy coherence, and developmental reflection. Each section builds on the insights offered by the COOs and connects them to established theories of strategic management, cooperative governance, and strategy-as-practice. The chapter then moves toward broader implications, offering a synthesis in relation to the study's objectives, followed by limitations, directions for future research, and the overall conclusions of the thesis.

5.1 Strategic guidance and leadership alignment

The findings demonstrate that the S Group's travel-industry strategy functions as a coherent managerial framework that connects corporate intent with operational action across Sokotel. For the COOs, this framework translates an abstract organisational vision into a concrete set of priorities, clarifying both what must be achieved and how progress is assessed in practice. This outcome exemplifies Mintzberg's (1994, 24–27) view of strategy as both plan and pattern—a deliberate direction that becomes meaningful only when reinforced through consistent routines. The COOs' emphasis on clarity and consistency indicates that the strategy has become a stabilising pattern of behaviour rather than an occasional corporate initiative. Rumelt (2011, 77–82) similarly argues that effective strategy combines diagnosis, guiding policy, and coherent actions; Sokotel's system meets these criteria by defining priorities, outlining procedures, and aligning them with measurable outcomes that COOs can use in their daily leadership work.

Hrebiniak (2005, 41) maintains that successful implementation depends on communication and accountability mechanisms that secure undistorted information flow across organisational levels. This dynamic was reflected in the COOs' perceptions of internal communication as transparent and predictable. COO A stressed that the strategy establishes both limits and leeway, encapsulating what Noble (1999, 122) calls alignment through clarity: employees understand the boundaries within which they may innovate. Such clarity is vital in a cooperative organisation where authority relies on trust rather than on formal hierarchy alone. Schein (2010, 219–230) emphasises that culture translates abstract objectives into shared norms; the COOs' descriptions suggest that Sokotel's

collaborative ethos fulfils precisely this role by making the strategy feel both legitimate and workable.

Leadership communication emerged as the main channel through which alignment is sustained. Daft (2015, 322–324) notes that leaders act as sense-givers who interpret strategic messages so that they resonate with daily realities. The COOs perform this interpretive function, translating corporate priorities into narratives that make operational sense—a process consistent with Weick's (1995, 4–8) theory of sense-making as continuous interpretation. By clarifying why the strategy matters rather than merely what it requires, they help preserve engagement while maintaining coherence. This dynamic corresponds with Jarzabkowski's (2005, 29–31) and Whittington's (2006, 621) strategy-as-practice perspective, in which strategizing is enacted through social interaction rather than fixed planning documents. In Sokotel's case, strategy becomes visible in recurring conversations, meetings, and interpretations rather than only in formal texts.

Data-based management tools further reinforce alignment. The shift from the Data Warehouse to Power BI operationalised Kaplan and Norton's (1996a, 53–79) Balanced Scorecard logic, linking vision, objectives, measures, and initiatives in a more accessible way. COO B emphasised that decision-making consistently reflects strategic principles, illustrating what Simons (1995, 79–93) terms diagnostic precision. Yet, as Simons also cautions, control systems achieve their full potential only when used interactively. The COOs viewed numerical indicators as prompts for joint reflection rather than simple instruments of compliance, echoing Parmenter's (2015, 8–10) argument that measurement stimulates learning when it invites interpretation. Regular cross-level discussions of Power BI results transform data into a shared managerial language that supports coordination and collective sense-making.

This interactive use of data extends beyond monitoring to capability development. Teece, Pisano and Shuen (1997, 516–520) and Eisenhardt and Martin (2000, 1107–1108) define dynamic capabilities as routines that enable adaptation. When COOs interpret performance information collaboratively and adjust actions accordingly, they enact these sensing and seizing processes in a concrete way. Barney (1991, 105–112) stresses that relational assets—such as trust and shared understanding—underpin sustainable advantage. Sokotel's cooperative ownership appears to strengthen such relational foundations, allowing data systems to enhance rather than constrain managerial judgement and supporting a learning-oriented use of control mechanisms.

At the same time, the findings reveal a tension between structure and flexibility. COO A's observation that SOK can occasionally be rigid points to the risk that formalisation may inhibit initiative. Olsen (2004, 111–126) warns that excessive standardisation in service organisations can undermine responsiveness, while Hrebiniak (2006, 13–14) argues that over-structured processes reduce

feedback and slow learning. In Miles and Snow's (1978, 29–31) typology, Sokotel currently operates as an analyser—maintaining efficiency through routines while permitting selective experimentation. The challenge is to prevent this configuration from drifting towards a purely defensive stance that prioritises stability at the expense of adaptation.

The psychological dimension of alignment also deserves emphasis. The COOs found the strategy motivating because it links their work to the cooperative purpose and to a broader sense of meaning. This observation supports Jarzabkowski and Spee's (2009, 70–73) argument that strategizing involves emotional as well as cognitive engagement. When leaders internalise the organisation's values, they communicate them authentically, reinforcing Schein's (2010, 231–233) view that culture is maintained through congruence between belief and action. By fostering a sense of shared purpose, the COOs sustain what Whittington (2017, 386–387) calls open strategy—an inclusive process through which meaning is co-created rather than dictated. In this way, strategic guidance and leadership alignment at Sokotel rely not only on systems and structures but equally on continuous interpretation, participation and motivation.

Overall, the S Group's travel-industry strategy provides cognitive clarity, data-driven transparency, and cultural coherence for Sokotel's COOs. It translates cooperative values into measurable objectives while preserving managerial discretion in day-to-day operations. Yet the same systems that secure alignment may risk rigidity unless complemented by continuous dialogue. Embedding reflection and discussion within formal processes would help ensure that measurement functions as a mechanism of learning rather than control and that strategic guidance remains supportive as conditions evolve.

5.2 Multi-strategy coherence and complexity

The second analytical dimension explores how the COOs work within a setting where several strategic frameworks coexist and, at times, overlap. Their accounts show that this environment is not defined by contradiction but by the need for continual interpretation. Sokotel operates at the intersection of three strategic layers: the SOK travel-industry strategy, Sokotel's internal operational priorities, and the RHG franchise standards. Managing these layers requires leadership that is attuned to both structure and nuance.

The COOs consistently described this multi-strategy environment as coherent, yet demanding. COO B highlighted that alignment is maintained through close cooperation between chain management and operations, while COO C emphasised that such coherence “requires constant dialogue.” Their comments echo Jarzabkowski's (2004, 529–531) argument that in complex organisations strategy is achieved not through singular hierarchical control but through ongoing negotiation.

Similarly, Mintzberg's (1994, 174–178) distinction between deliberate and emergent strategy helps explain why written plans alone cannot guarantee coherence; meaning must be refreshed through interaction as circumstances evolve.

Within this interplay, the COOs act as mediators. They translate SOK's cooperative purpose, Sokotel's operational needs, and RHG's global brand standards into a shared narrative that hotel teams can use in daily decision-making. This work reflects Mantere and Vaara's (2008, 344–347) concept of strategic agency, where leaders interpret and adapt strategic messages rather than simply passing them downstream. Weick's (1995, 4–8) view of sense-making as a collective and continuous process is particularly visible here: rather than treating each strategic layer as fixed, the COOs frame them in ways that maintain direction while accommodating practical constraints.

The coexistence of cooperative and international brand logics requires especially careful interpretation. SOK's emphasis on member benefit and social responsibility differs in tone and orientation from RHG's global branding and digital standards. Yet, as COO A noted, the strategies remain aligned because their fundamental goals point in the same direction. This integrative stance resonates with Berger's (2015, 212–215) observation that pluralism can foster innovation when values are consciously connected instead of treated as competing. The COOs' descriptions suggest that such synthesis is not automatic but depends on relational qualities such as trust, openness, and shared understanding—hallmarks of cooperative governance (Lincoln & Guba 1985, 102–105).

Several mechanisms support this interpretive work. Structurally, joint planning sessions and steering groups function as what Star and Griesemer (1989, 393–396) call boundary objects: shared points of reference that different stakeholders can use without needing identical assumptions. Relationally, trust compensates for what might otherwise require heavier formal control. COO B noted that discussions between SOK and Sokotel are grounded in mutual respect rather than inspection. Daft's (2015, 354–356) notion of the ambidextrous organisation—a system that holds values centrally while enabling decentralised execution—captures this balance well.

Data systems again serve as an important bridging tool. Power BI provides shared visibility into the indicators that matter across organisational layers. Simons's (1995, 70–76) description of interactive control systems is reflected in how the COOs described using data not only to monitor performance but to prompt discussion about trends and priorities. Yet, COO C pointed out that customer data remain underutilised, hinting at a gap between available information and its interpretive use. Hrebiniak (2006, 13–14) warns that when data systems outpace interpretive routines, responsiveness may suffer—a theme that aligns with the COOs' collective reflections on the need for more dialogue around analytics.

Regional variation, both within Sokotel and S Group as a whole, introduces an additional layer of complexity. COO A and COO B both commented that broad, uniform targets do not always match local realities. Olsen (2004, 111–113) and Miles and Snow (1978, 54–57) similarly argue that service organisations benefit when central direction is balanced with local discretion. Within Sokotel, the COOs' calls for more regionally sensitive goals reflect a desire to maintain strategic coherence while improving contextual fit.

The RHG partnership illustrates how this multi-strategy environment can also serve as a source of learning. COO B described RHG as a cooperative partner facing similar challenges, while COO C expressed concern that RHG's digitalisation capabilities have not been fully leveraged. These views reflect Enz's (2010b, 249–255) insight that franchise relationships support innovation only when knowledge flows in both directions. From a dynamic-capabilities perspective (Teece 2007, 1323–1325; Eisenhardt & Martin 2000, 1107–1108), closer collaboration could enhance sensing and seizing opportunities, particularly in digital and analytic domains.

Across these dynamics, cultural cohesion remains a stabilising force. Schein (2010, 219–230) describes culture as the shared interpretive context that reduces uncertainty in complex settings. The COOs' emphasis on openness and trust mirrors this role. Whittington's (2017, 385–387) conception of open strategy—a process where multiple voices contribute to shared meaning—is visible in how Sokotel manages alignment: not through rigid procedures but through inclusive dialogue.

Taken together, the analysis shows that multi-strategy coherence at Sokotel is maintained through interpretive capability rather than structural uniformity. The COOs serve as boundary spanners who continuously translate, connect, and reconcile diverse strategic logics. Their work exemplifies dynamic capability in practice: ongoing reconfiguration through communication, reflection, and learning rather than mechanistic adherence to plans.

5.3 Developmental insights and improvement potential

The third analytical dimension focuses on how the COOs envision the further development of the S Group's travel-industry strategy. Their reflections reveal a notably constructive orientation: although they consider the strategic framework both useful and coherent, they also see clear opportunities to make it more agile, dialogical and sensitive to the realities of daily operational leadership. These insights suggest that the strategy is not viewed as something to be replaced but rather as a framework that needs to evolve alongside the organisation. This perspective aligns with Johnson, Scholes and Whittington's (2017, 10–11) idea that strategic coherence depends on continual recalibration rather than static design.

A recurring theme in the interviews was agility. The COOs appreciated the clarity and consistency of the existing framework, yet they also noted that decision-making processes can occasionally feel slower than the pace of the operating environment. COO A characterised SOK as structured but sometimes inflexible, while COO C described the hospitality field itself as conservative, especially in its digital development. Their observations mirror Hrebiniak's (2006, 13–14) caution that heavy procedural structures may inhibit responsiveness, and resonate with Enz's (2010a, 357–360) finding that agility is particularly important in service organisations where customer expectations evolve rapidly. From this viewpoint, the issue is not the strategy itself but the pace at which it is operationalised and adapted.

Regional responsiveness formed another clear thread. COO B noted that the significant variation between regions makes uniform targets difficult to apply in practice, and COO C echoed the need for a more careful consideration of regional challenges. Their reflections correspond with Olsen's (2004, 111–113) argument that decentralisation enhances responsiveness in service settings, and with Miles and Snow's (1978, 54–57) view that organisations operating as analysers succeed by combining central direction with local flexibility. Introducing regionally adjusted performance expectations—still aligned with the overarching strategic logic—would strengthen contextual fit without undermining coherence.

Data utilisation was also recognised as an area with untapped potential. The transition to Power BI has improved transparency and created a more consistent basis for discussion, yet the COOs agreed that the system is still used primarily for diagnostic purposes. COO C, in particular, highlighted that customer data remain underused, suggesting that a richer interpretation of customer behaviour could guide more nuanced decision-making. This distinction aligns with Simons's (1995, 92–93) differentiation between diagnostic and interactive uses of control systems, and with Parmenter's (2015, 8–10) view that metrics generate value only when they become the basis for joint reflection. Extending data practices toward interpretation and learning would also reinforce Treacy and Wiersema's (1994, 40–43) customer-intimacy value discipline by connecting measurement more directly with customer experience.

The COOs also saw the partnership with RHG as an underutilised developmental lever. While COO B described RHG as a partner with similar challenges, COO C emphasised that RHG's advances in digitalisation have not been fully leveraged within SOK. These insights highlight an opportunity for deeper collaboration and mutual learning. Enz (2010b, 249–255) emphasises that franchise alliances foster innovation when knowledge flows bidirectionally rather than through one-way compliance with brand standards. Similarly, Gawer and Cusumano (2014, 418) conceptualise such relationships as platform ecosystems, where value emerges through co-created innovation.

Stronger knowledge exchange with RHG could therefore enhance Sokotel's sensing and seizing capabilities in the sense articulated by Teece (2007, 1323–1325), particularly in areas such as analytics, digital marketing and customer engagement.

Cultural and motivational aspects also shaped the COOs' developmental insights. COO C reflected that while consensus is central to the cooperative ethos, it may occasionally make it harder to voice critical perspectives. COO B similarly emphasised that questioning and dialogue strengthen collaboration between chain management and operations. These concerns illustrate Schein's (2010, 231–233) paradox of strong cultures: values that unite people can also limit constructive challenge. At the same time, the COOs described the strategy as motivating because it connects daily decision-making with a broader sense of purpose. This sentiment echoes Daft's (2015, 322–324) and Senge's (1990, 13–15) view that meaning and clarity reinforce engagement. Enabling a culture that supports respectful challenge would reflect Jarzabkowski and Spee's (2009, 70–73) concept of constructive friction, where differing viewpoints become an asset for learning rather than a source of conflict.

Taken together, these developmental insights indicate that the S Group's travel-industry strategy is perceived as fundamentally strong but ready for a new phase of evolution. The COOs' reflections consistently point toward mechanisms that enable learning: faster feedback loops, richer data interpretation, regionally attuned objectives and deeper partnership integration. The cooperative ethos provides a natural foundation for this shift, supporting the kind of reflective engagement that dynamic-capabilities theory (Eisenhardt & Martin 2000, 1107–1108; Teece 2007, 1323–1325) identifies as essential for adaptation. In this sense, the developmental ideas offered by the COOs do not challenge the legitimacy of the existing strategy but articulate how its implementation could become more responsive, participatory and future-oriented.

5.4 Strategic implications for SOK and Sokotel

The analysis suggests that the S Group's travel-industry strategy already provides a strong and culturally grounded framework for Sokotel's leadership. However, sustaining its usefulness in a multi-level cooperative environment requires continuous interpretation, dialogue and adaptation. The COOs' experiences highlight several areas where strategic practices could evolve in ways that strengthen both alignment and agility. These implications do not call for a redesign of the strategy itself but rather for adjustments in how it is enacted, communicated and supported across organisational levels.

5.4.1 Institutionalising interactive communication

Across the interviews, the COOs described strategic communication as most effective when it operates through open participation rather than top-down transmission. They emphasised that cooperation between chain management and operations already functions well and that shared understanding is largely built through discussion. These reflections point to the value of transforming strategic communication into an ongoing, interactive process—consistent with Simons’s (1995, 79–93) view that control systems support learning when they prompt engagement rather than compliance.

For SOK, an opportunity lies in formalising cross-level dialogue as a routine part of strategic work. Regular forums in which COOs, strategists and regional decision-makers jointly interpret Power BI results or discuss emerging issues would help turn data into shared meaning. Parmenter (2015, 8–10) and Senge (1990, 13–15) emphasise that learning organisations rely on continuous feedback loops rather than periodic reviews; incorporating this logic into strategic communication would make updates more responsive and more grounded in operational realities.

At Sokotel’s level, lighter, informal “strategy circles” could complement more structured reporting practices. They would give hotel leaders space to raise questions, reflect on regional trends and share experiences with peers. Such practices resonate with Jarzabkowski’s (2005, 29–31) notion of strategizing as situated practice: strategy comes alive in how people discuss it, interpret it and relate it to their daily responsibilities.

5.4.2 Balancing central coherence with regional autonomy

A second implication concerns the balance between consistent direction and regional flexibility. The COOs stressed that significant regional variation can make uniform targets challenging to apply, suggesting that finely tuned goals could better reflect local realities. Olsen (2004, 111–113) notes that service organisations benefit when they combine global integration with local responsiveness, and this principle fits well with Sokotel’s operational environment.

One practical step would be the introduction of regionalised scorecards or goal frameworks modelled on Kaplan and Norton’s (1996a, 53–79) Balanced Scorecard. These could preserve coherence with group-wide objectives while giving units space to adjust their indicators. Such an approach mirrors what Miles and Snow (1978, 54–57) describe as analyser behaviour: central guidance supported by adaptive local initiatives.

For SOK, trusting regional and subsidiary leaders with slightly more discretion would reflect Daft’s (2015, 354–356) notion of “tight values, loose structures,” where shared principles set the

boundaries and local actors determine how best to reach them. Hrebiniak (2006, 13–14) cautions that excessive centralisation can delay adaptation; a clearer division of tactical decision-making could therefore enhance both speed and ownership.

5.4.3 Enhancing data-driven learning

The COOs viewed the transition to Power BI as a major step toward greater transparency, yet they also noted that the system is still used primarily for monitoring rather than interpretation. This creates an opportunity for both SOK and Sokotel to deepen the strategic use of data by complementing reporting with structured reflection.

Simons (1995, 92–93) and Kaplan and Norton (2001, 231–234) argue that performance systems influence strategy only when they stimulate dialogue about underlying causes. SOK could therefore organise interpretive workshops—bringing together analytics specialists, COOs and regional managers—to explore trends, outliers and customer behaviour. Such encounters would operationalise Eisenhardt and Martin's (2000, 1107–1108) idea of dynamic capability as a repeatable learning routine.

For Sokotel, expanding the scope of what is measured could further strengthen this capability. The COOs observed that customer data are not yet used to their full potential. Incorporating sentiment metrics or deeper loyalty insights would align more closely with Treacy and Wiersema's (1994, 40–43) customer-intimacy discipline. When discussed interactively, such data could guide local experimentation and contribute to group-wide learning.

5.4.4 Leveraging the RHG partnership for innovation

The partnership with the RHG represents a distinctive asset within Sokotel's multi-strategy environment. While the COOs viewed RHG as a constructive partner, they also felt that its digital capabilities have not been fully leveraged within SOK. This suggests untapped potential for shared development.

Enz (2010b, 249–255) shows that franchise partnerships foster innovation when knowledge flows in both directions rather than simply through compliance with brand standards. Gawer and Cusumano (2014, 418) conceptualise such collaborations as platform ecosystems, where value is created through co-developed solutions. For SOK and Sokotel, joint initiatives with RHG—such as pilot projects in digital marketing, sustainability reporting or customer analytics—could accelerate learning and modernise operational practices.

Greater collaboration would also reinforce Teece's (2007, 1323–1325) sensing and seizing capabilities by exposing Sokotel to emerging trends in global hospitality and enabling faster adaptation at the local level. At the same time, RHG stands to benefit from Sokotel's strengths in cooperative governance and Nordic service culture, creating a genuinely reciprocal partnership.

5.4.5 Cultivating an adaptive culture

The cultural dimension of development is equally important. The COOs appreciated the cohesion provided by the cooperative ethos but also acknowledged that consensus can occasionally limit constructive challenge. This tension reflects Schein's (2010, 231–233) paradox of strong cultures: unity fosters stability, but it may also mask the need for debate.

Encouraging respectful questioning—particularly in strategic discussions—would strengthen learning and support Jarzabkowski and Spee's (2009, 70–73) concept of constructive friction. Structured reflection sessions, cross-functional reviews or rotating decision groups could create space for different perspectives without undermining shared values. Whittington's (2017, 385–387) notion of open strategy reinforces this idea: participation broadens understanding and helps organisations renew their strategic direction.

For Sokotel, maintaining an adaptive culture is especially relevant because the COOs experience the strategy as meaningful partly due to its connection to their daily work. Preserving this sense of purpose while inviting healthy challenge would sustain both motivation and adaptability.

5.4.6 Summary of strategic innovations

Taken together, the strategic implications for SOK and Sokotel centre on four mutually reinforcing priorities:

Interactive communication: Embedding regular, cross-level dialogue to sustain learning and shared understanding.

Contextual flexibility: Allowing regional differentiation within a consistent strategic framework.

Data-driven insight: Using analytics to prompt interpretation and improvement rather than mere compliance.

Collaborative innovation: Deepening the RHG partnership and internal cooperation to strengthen adaptive capability.

These priorities would help transform the travel-industry strategy from a largely directive framework into a dynamic system of strategic learning. They reflect Teece, Pisano and Shuen's (1997, 516–520) understanding of dynamic capabilities as the capacity to renew strategy continually in response to organisational and environmental change. For both SOK and Sokotel, such an approach would ensure that the strategy remains not only relevant and effective but also capable of evolving with the organisation.

5.5 Synthesis in relation to research objectives

The purpose of this thesis was to explore how the S Group's travel-industry strategy supports the work of COOs within Sokotel and to identify how that support might be strengthened. Three interrelated research objectives guided the inquiry. Rather than forming separate questions, these objectives work together as a logical sequence that reflects how strategy is experienced in practice: leaders first interpret strategic guidance, then navigate multi-strategy complexity and, through that process, identify areas for improvement. This section synthesises the empirical findings and theoretical analysis to show how each objective has been addressed and how they collectively illuminate the study's central research question.

5.5.1 Objective 1: Understanding strategic support for leadership

The first objective was to understand how the S Group travel-industry strategy supports leadership at the COO level. The findings revealed that the strategy provides clarity of direction, a coherent set of priorities and a measurable framework for operational decision-making. Rumelt's (2011, 77–82) argument that an effective guiding policy requires diagnosis, focus and coherent action is clearly reflected in how the COOs described the strategic framework. COO A's observation that the strategy offers "direction and boundaries" captures exactly the type of clarity that Hrebiniak (2005, 41) identifies as crucial for execution.

This structural clarity is reinforced by culture. Schein's (2010, 219–230) conception of culture as a sense-making system helps explain why Sokotel's cooperative ethos amplifies strategic alignment. The COOs repeatedly emphasised collaboration and open communication, suggesting that the strategy not only sets expectations but also resonates with shared values. This combination of cognitive clarity and cultural coherence explains why the strategy is viewed as both practical and motivating.

Leadership communication plays a central role in translating strategic intent into daily action. Daft (2015, 322–324) and Weick (1995, 4–8) both highlight that leaders act as sense-givers who help others understand why a strategic direction matters. The COOs' interpretive work—converting corporate priorities into narratives meaningful to hotel teams—aligns with this perspective. Their

experience shows that strategic support is not only embedded in documents or performance systems but actively constructed through dialogue. In this sense, objective 1 is met: strategic guidance at Sokotel is effective because it integrates clarity, data transparency and cooperative culture into a coherent leadership system.

5.5.2 Objective 2: Navigating overlapping strategies

The second objective examined how COOs navigate the multi-strategy environment that links SOK's framework, Sokotel's internal priorities and RHG's brand requirements. The findings showed that coherence across these layers is built less through structural uniformity and more through interpretive leadership. The COOs act as boundary spanners who connect different strategic logics and help maintain a shared direction even when the underlying assumptions differ.

This dynamic supports Jarzabkowski's (2004, 529–531) view that strategy integration in complex organisations emerges from continuous negotiation. It also aligns with Whittington's (2006, 621) and Mantere and Vaara's (2008, 344–347) strategy-as-practice perspective, where strategy is understood not as a static document but as an activity performed through communication and interpretation. The COOs' recurring references to "constant dialogue" and collaborative problem-solving reflect precisely this type of ongoing strategic work.

The cooperative ownership structure strengthens this sense-making process. Lincoln and Guba's (1985, 102–105) observations on credibility in collaborative systems help explain why trust-based relationships and participatory governance support strategic alignment. At the same time, the RHG partnership introduces both opportunities and challenges. COO B described RHG as "a strategic partner facing similar challenges," while COO C noted that its digital capabilities have not yet been fully utilised. These insights echo Enz's (2010b, 249–255) findings on mutual learning in franchise alliances and align with Teece's (2007, 1323–1325) notion of dynamic capabilities as the ability to sense and seize emerging opportunities.

Taken together, these themes demonstrate that objective 2 has been achieved. The study shows how strategic coherence is maintained through interpretive skill, cultural trust and continuous collaboration, rather than formal control mechanisms alone.

5.5.3 Objective 3: Improving strategic relevance and impact

The third objective concerned the future development of the S Group travel-industry strategy. The COOs recognised the strengths of the existing framework but also identified areas where renewed emphasis could enhance its usefulness. Their developmental reflections centred on four themes: agility, regional responsiveness, interactive learning and cultural renewal.

The need for greater agility emerged from perceptions that decision-making can sometimes lag behind the pace of operational demands. Hrebiniak's (2006, 13–14) caution about bureaucratic constraints supports this concern, while Eisenhardt and Martin (2000, 1107–1108) and Teece (2007, 1323–1325) emphasise the importance of iterative learning routines in building adaptive capacity.

Regional responsiveness is another area where the COOs saw potential for improvement. Their experience aligns with Olsen's (2004, 111–113) recommendation that service organisations combine central direction with local discretion. Adjusting scorecards regionally—within a coherent strategic framework—would transform regional variation from a challenge into an opportunity for learning, reflecting Gryczka's (2016, 183–185) insights on contextual development.

The shift to Power BI strengthened transparency, but the COOs saw room for deeper analysis of customer data. Simons's (1995, 92–93) distinction between diagnostic and interactive systems and Treacy and Wiersema's (1994, 40–43) focus on customer intimacy support this aim. By shifting data discussions from monitoring to interpretation, Sokotel could more fully integrate customer experience into strategic decision-making.

Finally, cultural renewal was seen as essential. While consensus forms a cornerstone of the cooperative ethos, the COOs noted that it sometimes limits constructive challenge. Schein's (2010, 231–233) paradox of strong cultures and Jarzabkowski and Spee's (2009, 70–73) concept of constructive friction help explain why deliberate spaces for debate can strengthen strategic learning rather than threaten cohesion.

Overall, objective 3 has been fulfilled by showing how the strategy could evolve toward greater agility, richer dialogue and deeper data-driven insight—all within the existing cooperative framework.

5.5.4 Integrative synthesis

Viewed together, the three objectives trace the trajectory of how strategy is both enacted and improved within a cooperative, multi-strategy environment. The findings show that strategic usefulness emerges from the interaction between formal structure, interpretive leadership and learning culture. This interplay reinforces Whittington's (2017, 385–387) conception of open strategy, where strategic meaning is co-created rather than imposed.

The study contributes to strategic-management scholarship in three ways. First, it demonstrates that cooperative organisations can achieve high levels of alignment through participatory governance, supporting the strategy-as-practice argument that strategy is made through social interaction (Jarzabkowski 2004; Mantere & Vaara 2008). Second, it extends dynamic-capabilities theory

(Teece et al. 1997, 516–520; Eisenhardt & Martin 2000, 1107–1108) by illustrating how interpretive routines—rather than solely technological processes—constitute adaptive capacity in service settings. Third, it shows how cooperative governance structures (Berger 2015; Lincoln & Guba 1985) can reinforce strategic consistency while enabling meaningful dialogue, creating a hybrid model of control and participation.

In sum, the synthesis confirms that the S Group travel-industry strategy supports Sokotel's COOs effectively while still leaving room for continued development. The integration of clarity, collaboration and interpretation provides a strong foundation for leadership, and the COOs' reflections point toward practical pathways for strengthening adaptability and strategic relevance.

5.6 Limitations of the study

Like all qualitative case studies, this research is shaped by contextual and methodological boundaries that influence how its findings should be interpreted. The aim was not to generate statistically generalisable results but to produce a detailed, theoretically informed understanding of how the S Group's travel-industry strategy supports the work of COOs within Sokotel. The insights therefore reflect the perspectives of a specific leadership group during a particular moment in organisational life.

The empirical material is based on three semi-structured interviews with Sokotel's COOs. Their senior roles and long experience provided access to rich, insider-level knowledge, but this focus also means that the study represents only one organisational viewpoint. Middle managers, supervisors and frontline employees were not included, even though they play important roles in the everyday enactment of strategy. Lincoln and Guba (1985, 102–105) emphasise that qualitative credibility relies on depth rather than breadth; although the narrow sample provided detailed insights into the executive domain, it limits the representativeness of the findings. Future research would benefit from expanding participation to illuminate how strategic meaning evolves across different hierarchical layers.

Conducting insider research brought both advantages and responsibilities. My own familiarity with Sokotel enabled efficient access, smoother rapport with participants and a contextual understanding of terminology and practices. At the same time, Brannick and Coghlan (2007, 69) caution that insider status may introduce interpretive bias, as familiarity can reduce critical distance. To mitigate this risk, reflexive techniques were used throughout the process. Notes were expanded immediately after each interview to capture nuances of tone and emphasis, and interpretations were continuously compared with relevant theoretical frameworks to ensure analytical discipline. This approach follows Silverman's (2022, 82–83) guidance that validity in qualitative research is

strengthened when the researcher is explicit about their role and reflective about its influence on interpretation.

Because the interviews addressed sensitive organisational issues, they were not audio-recorded. Comprehensive handwritten notes formed the primary data source. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019, 525) acknowledge that note-based documentation can be appropriate when recording might inhibit openness, provided that notes are detailed and verified promptly. In this study the notes were expanded immediately after the interviews, supporting accuracy and preserving interpretive detail. However, the absence of verbatim transcripts limits the possibility of linguistic analysis and restricts the number of direct quotations that can be included. The findings therefore represent interpreted meanings rather than precise textual reproductions—a methodological trade-off that prioritised candour and trust between researcher and participants.

Another limitation concerns the specificity of Sokotel's organisational context. The company operates within the cooperative structure of the S Group and simultaneously within the dual branding of Sokos Hotels and Radisson Hotels. This combination of cooperative governance and franchise collaboration is distinctive; therefore, caution is required when drawing conclusions beyond this setting. Nevertheless, many of the analytical themes identified—strategic alignment, interpretive leadership and learning-oriented control—are conceptually transferable to other service-oriented organisations. As Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007, 27–29) note, the strength of case-based research lies in theoretical rather than statistical generalisation: carefully reasoned propositions that illuminate broader managerial processes even when drawn from a single case.

Finally, the study captures a particular moment in time. Strategy interpretation is not static; it shifts as organisations evolve, personnel change and external conditions fluctuate. Jarzabkowski (2005, 29–31) reminds that strategy-as-practice is inherently temporal, with meanings renegotiated continuously as actors interpret their environment. The findings presented here therefore reflect the organisational dynamics of the period during which the research was conducted. Longitudinal studies would be needed to examine how strategic support mechanisms at Sokotel develop as the S Group's structures or the hospitality sector more broadly undergo further change.

In summary, the study's limitations are characteristic of qualitative insider research: a small sample, reliance on interpretive data, a specific organisational setting and temporal boundedness. These limitations do not undermine the study's credibility but rather clarify its analytical scope. By acknowledging them explicitly, the research adheres to Lincoln and Guba's (1985, 102–105) criteria of trustworthiness—credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability—and supports a transparent and responsible interpretation of the findings.

5.7 Recommendations for future research

The findings and limitations of this study highlight several promising directions for extending research on strategic management and implementation within cooperative and service-oriented organisations. While the present thesis concentrated on the views of senior operational leadership—specifically Sokotel’s COOs—it is clear that strategy is enacted across multiple organisational layers. As such, further inquiry could deepen understanding of how strategic meaning develops, travels and changes within complex organisational settings.

A natural next step would be to explore how middle managers, supervisors and frontline employees interpret and apply the S Group’s travel-industry strategy in their daily work. These groups occupy the “translation zones” where formal strategic intent becomes concrete practice, and where behavioural routines either reinforce or dilute organisational direction. Investigating these interpretive processes would extend Mantere and Vaara’s (2008, 344–347) notion of strategic agency by showing how different organisational roles construct meaning in distinct ways. Such research could also build on Jarzabkowski’s (2005, 29–31) strategy-as-practice framework by examining how strategy is embedded in everyday routines, tools and interactions rather than only in leadership discourse.

Longitudinal research represents another valuable direction. The present study provides a snapshot of how the strategy is understood at a specific moment, yet strategy in cooperative enterprises is inherently dynamic. It must evolve as market conditions shift, technologies change and organisational structures are renewed. A longitudinal design would make it possible to trace how interpretive alignment, data-use practices and feedback mechanisms change over time. This would respond to Jarzabkowski’s (2005, 29–31) observation that strategy meanings are continually renegotiated and would offer insights into how learning processes become institutionalised.

Comparative case studies could further enrich understanding by examining how similar multi-brand or cooperative organisations navigate strategic alignment and complexity. Such comparisons would illuminate whether the sense-making processes identified in this thesis are unique to Sokotel’s dual-brand, cooperative context or whether they reflect broader patterns observable in other settings. Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007, 27–29) argue that cross-case designs are especially useful for developing theoretical generalisation by clarifying boundary conditions—an approach well suited to studying strategy implementation in diverse service environments.

Finally, future research could combine qualitative interviewing with complementary methods. Ethnographic observation would allow researchers to capture tacit aspects of strategising, including how leaders frame issues in real time or how employees interpret strategic messages during daily

tasks. Quantitative surveys could broaden the perspective by measuring how widely strategic understanding is shared or where gaps appear. Mixed-method designs would therefore strengthen credibility, dependability and confirmability, aligning with Lincoln and Guba's (1985, 102–105) criteria for trustworthy qualitative inquiry.

Taken together, these avenues would deepen knowledge of how strategies are interpreted, communicated and renewed in cooperative and service-based organisations. By examining multiple organisational levels and adopting multi-method approaches, future research could show more precisely how strategic meaning becomes shared, how it changes and how organisations sustain both alignment and adaptability in increasingly complex service environments.

5.8 Conclusions

This thesis set out to examine how the S Group's travel-industry strategy supports the work of COOs within Sokotel and how that support could be strengthened. Drawing on qualitative insights from three senior operational leaders, the study has shown that the strategy operates not only as a formal framework but also as a dynamic, interpretive process through which organisational meaning is continuously created. The findings illustrate that strategic usefulness at Sokotel arises from the interplay of clarity, culture and communication: formal structures give direction, cooperative values provide cohesion and everyday leadership practices connect strategy to lived experience.

At its core, the S Group travel-industry strategy offers a clear and coherent foundation for decision-making. It links corporate priorities with operational routines and enables the COOs to coordinate across a diverse portfolio that includes both Sokos Hotels and Radisson-branded properties. In this respect, the strategy fulfils Rumelt's (2011, 77–82) criteria for an effective guiding policy and reflects Kaplan and Norton's (1996a, 53–79) logic of aligning goals with measurable outcomes. Yet clarity alone is not enough. As the analysis showed, the strategy's enduring relevance depends on leaders interpreting it flexibly, reinforcing it through dialogue and ensuring that it speaks to both operational demands and cooperative values.

Three interrelated dimensions emerged from the findings. The first—strategic guidance—showed how the COOs use the strategy to create cognitive alignment and maintain motivation. The second—multi-strategy coherence—demonstrated how they navigate and integrate the expectations of SOK, Sokotel and RHG, illustrating the interpretive and relational work required in a multi-layered strategic environment. The third—developmental reflection—highlighted opportunities to strengthen agility, deepen data-driven learning and better recognise regional variation. Together, these dimensions reveal an organisation where strategy is understood not as a static document but as a living framework shaped through interaction.

The study contributes to strategic-management scholarship in three ways. First, it reinforces the strategy-as-practice perspective (Jarzabkowski 2004; Whittington 2006) by illustrating how meaning is co-created through leadership dialogue within a cooperative context. Second, it extends dynamic-capabilities theory (Teece, Pisano & Shuen 1997; Eisenhardt & Martin 2000) to the service sector, showing that interpretive routines and communication systems form essential adaptive capabilities. Third, it adds to literature on cooperative governance (Berger 2015; Lincoln & Guba 1985) by demonstrating how participatory values and professionalised management can coexist, producing a hybrid model of alignment grounded in trust.

The practical implications reflect this synthesis. For SOK, the findings highlight the value of embedding more interactive communication between corporate strategists and operational leaders. For Sokotel, they point to the importance of regional differentiation, enhanced data utilisation and closer collaboration with the RHG. Across both organisations, the results suggest that cooperative enterprises can maintain strong cultural unity while cultivating agility—provided that dialogue and reflection are institutionalised as everyday managerial practices.

Ultimately, the central insight of this thesis is that strategic usefulness depends less on the formal content of the strategy than on the quality of the conversations it sustains. Within Sokotel, the COOs' interpretive leadership gives life to the S Group travel-industry strategy, transforming it from a directive plan into a shared process of meaning-making and learning. The strategy thus functions not only as a roadmap for operational alignment but also as a social practice that connects corporate intent with the realities of daily leadership. Maintaining this balance between structural clarity and adaptive openness will remain essential as SOK and Sokotel continue to navigate the evolving landscape of cooperative hospitality and service management.

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Appendices

Interview questions:

- Mitkä ovat odotuksesi matkailukaupan kilpailustrategian suhteen oman työsi ohjaamisessa ja miten se vastaa näitä odotuksia tällä hetkellä?
- Mikä on matkailukaupan kilpailustrategian rooli käytännön toimeenpanossa ja päätöksenteossasi?
- Pitkä ja lyhyt tähtäin? Antaako strategia eväitä kehityskohtien huomaamiseen?
- Mitä muuttaisit matkailukaupan kilpailustrategiassa ja miksi?
- Johtaako puutteet motivaation vähenemiseen strategian hyödyntämiseen?
- Miten mittaat strategian etenemistä ja toteutumista ja miten sitä voisi vielä parantaa?
- Onko joustavuutta tarpeeksi?
- Ohjaako työtäsi myös jokin toinen strategia? Mikä?
- Mitä eroavaisuuksia strategioiden välillä on?