

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES
ON STRATEGIZING
—
THEORY AND PRACTICAL USE
OF STRATEGY TOOLS

PHILIPP SCHNEEMANN

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
of London South Bank University for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

This research programme was carried out in collaboration
with University of Applied Sciences Mainz

May 2019

Abstract

A recent development in strategic management research focuses on the use of strategy tools in practice, which is associated with the strategy-as-practice (SasP) field. Despite some promising studies, the application, meaning and usage of strategy tools have not been explored sufficiently. A practice perspective in strategy research requires a focus on practitioners and their strategizing practices to understand why and how they apply strategy tools. To accomplish that, the utilization of strategy tools was analyzed while looking at different types of practitioners. Overall, the research aimed to review existing strategizing theory and to give strategists a better understanding of the use of strategy tools in practice.

The grounded theory methodology was employed to analyze and interpret the investigated social phenomenon of strategy tools-in-use and to explain the everyday experiences of social actors. In this context, an exploratory sequential multi-phase design was employed, which enabled the inclusion of three different data collection stages: semi-structured interviews, a questionnaire, and a focus group. Each preceding stage subsequently informed and directed the proceeding one, which is why it was possible to triangulate the results and create more validity.

The theory-related findings enabled the explanation and revision of the term definitions for strategizing, strategy-as-practice and strategy tools. Moreover, the limitations of current strategy-as-practice research have been identified, which clarified that research needs to provide a closer look at basic strategizing activities and take a true practice perspective by including every strategist involved. Based on the practice-related findings it was possible to outline and update the strategy toolkit to express which strategy tools are most commonly known and used. In addition, it was discovered that the main reason practitioners apply strategy tools is to provide a clear structure. In contrast, the reason tools are most commonly avoided is that they tend to oversimplify issues. It was also found that strategy tools are applied as part of a dedicated strategy process and mostly during strategic planning, meaning before making strategic decisions. Further discussion focused on whether tools are used to post-rationalize strategic decision. Most practitioners claimed to apply tools to reach rational decisions but pointed out that post-rationalization exists to justify some decisions and actions. Lastly, the role and effectiveness of strategy tools-in-use was explored. The effectiveness of strategy tools is dependent on various determinants, such as their acceptance, the practitioner applying them, the context or situation organizations are confronted with, the available content, but also their adaptation. In the future, tools need to develop in different ways to maintain their importance and value.

With its unique research design, this research contributes to a better understanding of strategy tools-in-use by focusing on different practitioner perspectives. On this basis, determinants for the use of strategy tools were identified, which should be regarded as the prerequisites for more efficient, but also more effective strategy work by organizations and their strategists.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisors Prof. Dr. Shushma Patel and Prof. Dr. Herbert Paul for their continuous support and guidance throughout the entire research process. Shushma was a tremendous help and always kept me on track through her constructive and critical feedback. Herbert has been and will always be my most influential mentor. I would like to thank him for his patience, motivation, and immense knowledge that he has been willing to share with me. I could not have imagined having a better supervisor and I am sure it would not have worked without him.

Further, I would like to thank Lothar Steiger and Prof. Dr. Daniel Porath. Especially, the methodology and analysis parts of this thesis were much improved on the basis of their knowledge and skill-set. Whenever needed, I was able to rely on them and their substantial methodological expertise.

Special thanks go to my colleague Nils Teschner. Since our Master of Science at LSBU, Nils and I went through the whole research process together. As friends and colleagues, we have guided and motivated each other whenever necessary. I have enjoyed and always appreciated the stimulating discussions about our research and its progress.

Moreover, I would like to thank the LSBU Postgraduate Research Degrees Team for their administrative assistance and the access to resources needed to undertake my research. I am grateful to the School of Business at University of Applied Sciences Mainz for providing me with a challenging work environment and giving me the opportunity to pursue my doctoral studies.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my family for their moral and emotional support throughout this research journey. Special thanks go to my Dad and my wife, Maria. Thanks for always believing in me!

Statement of Originality

This thesis and the work to which it refers to are the results of my personal research efforts. Any ideas, data, images or text that can be connected to the work of others (whether published or unpublished) are fully identified within the work and attributed to their originator in the text, bibliography or in footnotes. This original work has not been submitted in whole or in part for any other academic degree or professional qualification. I agree that London South Bank University has the right to submit my thesis to the plagiarism detection service TurnitinUK for originality checks. The University reserves the right to require an electronic version of the final document (as submitted) for assessment of the above.

Philipp Schneemann

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	I
Acknowledgements.....	II
Statement of Originality	III
Table of Contents	IV
List of Figures.....	VIII
List of Tables	X
List of Abbreviations.....	XI
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Research Rationale.....	1
1.2 Research Context and Scope.....	3
1.3 Research Aims and Questions.....	4
1.4 Structure of the Thesis	5
2 Literature Review.....	6
2.1 Strategizing	6
2.1.1 History and Theoretical Background	7
2.1.2 Strategy-as-Practice: Practice, Praxis, and Practitioners	8
2.1.3 Status Quo of Strategizing Research.....	11
2.2 Strategy Tools	15
2.2.1 Strategy Theory and the Emergence of Strategy Tools	16
2.2.2 Role and Use of Strategy Tools	16
2.2.3 Critical View on the Usability of Strategy Tools.....	17
2.3 Strategy Practitioners	18
2.3.1 Who are Strategists?.....	19
2.3.2 Different Practitioner Perspectives: Academic, Consultant, and Executive.....	19
2.3.3 Who uses Strategy Tools in Practice?.....	23
2.4 Critical Appraisal of Strategy-as-Practice Research.....	23
3 Research Methodology and Design.....	25
3.1 Research Philosophy	25
3.2 Research Approach	27
3.3 Research Strategy.....	28
3.3.1 Grounded Theory	29
3.3.2 Applying Grounded Theory in Research	30
3.3.3 Grounded Theory Coding	31
3.4 Mixed Methods Research Design and Process	32
3.4.1 Research Questions and Objectives	33
3.4.2 Mixed Methods Approach	35
3.4.3 Unit of Analysis	35
3.4.4 Sampling	37

3.4.5	Sample Size.....	40
3.4.6	Access to Sample Population.....	42
3.4.7	Research Participants.....	44
3.5	Data Collection.....	47
3.5.1	Exploratory Sequential Multi-Phase Design.....	47
3.5.2	Qualitative Research: Semi-Structured Interviews.....	48
3.5.3	Quantitative Research: Questionnaires.....	51
3.5.4	Qualitative Research: Focus Groups.....	53
3.5.5	Validation of Research Data.....	55
3.6	Structure of Data Analysis.....	55
3.6.1	Data Condensation.....	56
3.6.2	Data Display.....	57
3.6.3	Drawing and Verifying Conclusions.....	57
3.7	Analysis Stages.....	58
3.7.1	Interview Analysis.....	58
3.7.2	Questionnaire Analysis.....	59
3.7.3	Focus Group Analysis.....	60
3.8	Methodological Conclusion.....	61
4	Research Results.....	63
4.1	Interviews.....	63
4.1.1	Derivation of Integral Research Elements.....	63
4.1.2	Appreciation of relevant Terminology.....	66
4.1.2.1	Strategizing.....	68
4.1.2.2	Strategy-as-Practice.....	70
4.1.2.3	Strategy Tool.....	73
4.1.3	Practice Lens of Strategy Tools.....	77
4.1.3.1	The Strategy Toolkit – Stage 1.....	77
4.1.3.2	Strategy Tool Usage.....	82
4.1.3.3	Advantages and Disadvantages of Strategy Tools-in-Use.....	86
4.1.4	Temporal Integration of Strategy Tool-in-Use.....	93
4.1.4.1	Strategic Problems and Objectives.....	93
4.1.4.2	Tool Utilization as Part of the Strategy Process.....	96
4.1.4.3	Rationalization vs. Post-Rationalization.....	100
4.1.5	Role of Strategy Tools-in-Use.....	103
4.1.5.1	Dependencies of Effective Tool Application.....	103
4.1.5.2	Adaptation of Strategy Tools.....	108
4.1.5.3	Influence of Strategy Tools.....	111
4.1.5.4	Efficient and Effective Utilization of Strategy Tools.....	113
4.1.5.5	Future Development of Strategy Tools.....	116
4.1.6	Overview of Derived Hypotheses.....	118

4.2	Questionnaire	119
4.2.1	Thematic Structure of Results.....	120
4.2.2	Practice Lens Reassessed.....	120
4.2.2.1	The Strategy Toolkit – Stage 2	120
4.2.2.2	Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages.....	125
4.2.2.3	Evaluation of Hypotheses	128
4.2.3	Initiation and Integration of Strategy Tools.....	128
4.2.3.1	Causes for Application.....	129
4.2.3.2	Integration during Strategy Process	130
4.2.3.3	Reaching vs. Proofing Strategic Decisions	133
4.2.3.4	Evaluation of Hypotheses	134
4.2.4	Role and Importance of Strategy Tools	135
4.2.4.1	Determinants of Effective Application	135
4.2.4.2	Reason for Tool Adaptation.....	136
4.2.4.3	Influence on Strategy Work	138
4.2.4.4	Efficiency and Effectiveness.....	139
4.2.4.5	The Future of Strategy Tools	144
4.2.4.6	Evaluation of Hypotheses	147
4.2.5	Overview of Evaluated Hypotheses.....	148
4.3	Focus Group.....	149
4.3.1	Terminology Reviewed.....	149
4.3.2	Critical View on Strategizing Research.....	150
4.3.3	Practice Lens Reviewed.....	151
4.3.4	Tools used during Strategy Work	153
4.3.5	Effective Application of Strategy Tools	156
4.4	Concluding Assessment of Research Results	158
5	Research Discussion	160
5.1	Terminologies and Theoretical Limitations.....	160
5.2	Practice Lens.....	162
5.3	Temporal Integration.....	166
5.4	Role and Importance	169
6	Conclusions and Recommendations	174
6.1	Summary of Research	174
6.2	Original Contribution to Knowledge	176
6.3	Overview of Results.....	177
6.4	Research Limitations.....	183
6.5	Recommendations.....	186
6.5.1	Recommendation for Practitioners.....	186
6.5.2	Recommendations for Future Research	188

References	191
Appendix	212
A Interview Guide, Academics	212
B Interview Guide, Consultants and Executives	217
C Questionnaire Guide	222
D Focus Group Guide	234
E Codebook – Semi-Structured Interviews	236
F Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Usage	239
G Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Advantages of Tool Usage.....	249
H Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Disadvantages of Tool Usage	267
I Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Strategic Problems – Objectives	278
J Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Stages of Strategy Process	285
K Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Rationalization	294
L Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Dependence.....	300
M Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Adaptation.....	318
N Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Role	324
O Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Efficiency – Effectiveness	327
P Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Future Development	332
Q Exemplary Interview Transcript – Consultant 1 – C1	338
R Focus Group Transcript	346
S Full Set of Interview Transcripts	362
T Quantitative Analysis – Excel Workbook.....	493

List of Figures

Figure 1: A Conceptual Framework - Strategy-as-Practice	11
Figure 2: Research Design	32
Figure 3: Structure of Sampling Process.....	37
Figure 4: Sequence Data Collection Stages	48
Figure 5: Case Classification ‘Practitioner’	66
Figure 6: References coded for Practitioner vs. Terminologies.....	67
Figure 7: References coded for Perspectives vs. Terminologies	67
Figure 8: Strategy Toolkit – Know/Use (Interview Stage).....	79
Figure 9: Strategy Toolkit – Perspectives/Know (Interview Stage)	80
Figure 10: Strategy Toolkit – Perspectives/Used (Interview Stage).....	81
Figure 11: References coded for Perspectives vs. Usage.....	83
Figure 12: References coded for Perspectives vs. Advantages & Disadvantages	86
Figure 13: References coded for Practitioner vs. Advantages of Tool Usage	87
Figure 14: References coded for Practitioner vs. Disadvantages of Tool Usage.....	87
Figure 15: References coded for Perspectives vs. Advantages of Tool Usage.....	87
Figure 16: References coded for Perspectives vs. Disadvantages of Tool Usage	90
Figure 17: References coded for Perspectives vs. Strategic Problems - Objectives.....	94
Figure 18: Planning and Execution Phase of the Strategy Process.....	96
Figure 19: References coded for Practitioners vs. Stages of Strategy Process	97
Figure 20: References coded for Perspectives vs. Stages of Strategy Process	97
Figure 21: Post-Rationalization during the Strategy Process.....	100
Figure 22: References coded for Practitioners vs. Rationalization.....	101
Figure 23: References coded for Perspectives vs. Rationalization	101
Figure 24: References coded for Practitioners vs. Dependence.....	104
Figure 25: References coded for Perspectives vs. Dependence.....	105
Figure 26: References coded for Perspectives vs. Adaptation.....	109
Figure 27: References coded for Perspectives vs. Role	111
Figure 28: References coded for Perspectives vs. Efficiency – Effectiveness	114
Figure 29: References coded for Perspectives vs. Future Development.....	116
Figure 30: Strategy Toolkit – Know/Use (Questionnaire Stage).....	122
Figure 31: Strategy Toolkit – Perspectives/Know (Questionnaire Stage)	123
Figure 32: Strategy Toolkit – Perspectives/Used (Questionnaire Stage).....	124
Figure 33: Advantages of Strategy Tools-in-Use	126
Figure 34: Disadvantages of Strategy Tools-in-Use	127
Figure 35: Reasons for the Application of Strategy Tools for each Perspective	129
Figure 36: Strategic Problems and Objectives initiating Strategy Tool Use	130

Figure 37: Tools used during a dedicated Strategy Process.....	131
Figure 38: Averages of Tools used during different Phases of the Strategy Process	131
Figure 39: Average of Tools used before or after the Strategic Decision.....	132
Figure 40: Tools used during different Phases of the Strategy Process - Perspectives	132
Figure 41: Tools used before or after the Strategic Decision - Perspectives	132
Figure 42: Reaching or Proofing a Decision with Strategy Tools	133
Figure 43: Determinants of Effective Application.....	135
Figure 44: Adaptation of Strategy Tools.....	137
Figure 45: Reasons for Adaptation	137
Figure 46: Tool Influence on Strategy Work	138
Figure 47: Influence Indicators of Strategy Tools	139
Figure 48: Efficiency Ratings of Strategy Tools	140
Figure 49: Effectiveness Ratings of Strategy Tools.....	142
Figure 50: Comparison of Efficiency and Effectiveness	144
Figure 51: Future Existence of Strategy Tools	145
Figure 52: Future Value of Strategy Tools	145
Figure 53: Future Development of Strategy Tools	146
Figure 54: Strategy Toolkit – Tools Used – Author’s Research/AIM.....	163
Figure 55: Top Three Strategy Tools – Know/Use.....	179
Figure 56: Top Three Strategy Tools – Know/Use.....	179

List of Tables

Table 1: Definitions of the Term Strategizing	7
Table 2: Six Research Questions on Strategizing and Organizing	9
Table 3: Participant Profiles – Semi-structured Interviews	45
Table 4: Participant Profiles – Questionnaires.....	46
Table 5: Participant Profiles – Focus Group.....	47
Table 6: Strategizing References of Practitioners.....	69
Table 7 : Strategy-as-Practice References of Practitioners.....	72
Table 8 : Strategy Tool References of Practitioners	75
Table 9: List of Strategy Tools incorporated during Research Stage 1	78
Table 10: Strategy Toolkit – Perspectives Know/Used – (Interview Stage)	82
Table 11: List of Strategy Tools incorporated during Research Stage 1 and 2	121
Table 12: Strategy Toolkit – Perspectives Know/Used – (Questionnaire Stage)	125
Table 13: Advantages of Strategy Tools-in-Use.....	126
Table 14: Disadvantages of Strategy Tools-in-Use	127
Table 15: Strategic Problems and Objectives initiating Strategy Tool Use.....	130
Table 16: Tools used during different Phases of the Strategy Process – Perspectives	133
Table 17: Tools used before or after the Strategic Decision - Perspectives	133
Table 18: Reaching or Proofing a Decision with Strategy Tools	134
Table 19: Determinants of Effective Application	136
Table 20: Reasons for Adaptation.....	138
Table 21: Influence Indicators of Strategy Tools.....	139
Table 22: Efficiency Ratings of Strategy Tools.....	141
Table 23: Effectiveness Ratings of Strategy Tools.....	143
Table 24: Future Development of Strategy Tools.....	146
Table 25: Overview of the Hypothesis Evaluation	148
Table 26: Core Toolkit – Author’s Research vs. AIM.....	164
Table 27: Advantages and Disadvantages of Tools-in-Use	166

List of Abbreviations

AIM	Advanced Institute of Management Research
AMT	Amount
AOM	American Academy of Management
BAM	British Academy of Management
BCG	Boston Consulting Group
BI	Business Intelligence
BOS	Bristol Online Surveys
CAQDAS	Computer Aided Qualitative Data Research Analysis Software
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSO	Chief Strategy Officer
e.g.	exempli gratia
Ed.	Edition
EGOS	European Group for Organizational Studies
et al.	et aliae
EU	European Union
EURAM	European Academy of Management
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HARP	Heightening your Awareness of your Research Philosophy
i.e.	id est.
IT	Information Technology
KSF	Key Success Factor
M&A	Mergers & Acquisitions
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MVP	Minimum Viable Product
Min	Minutes
No.	Number
p.	Page
PESTLE	Political Economical Social Technological Legal Ecological
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
pp.	Pages
RASCI	Responsible Accountable Support Consulted Informed
SAP-IN	Strategy-as-Practice International Network
SasP	Strategy-as-Practice
SD	Strategy Director
SDG	Strategic Decision Group
SMS	Strategic Management Society

SPSS	Statistic Package for Social Sciences
SWOT	Strength Weaknesses Opportunities Threats
TOWS	Threats Opportunities Weaknesses Strength
UK	United Kingdom
Vol.	Volume
VRIO	Value Rare Inimitable Organized

1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the research motives and the need for further exploration on the practical role of strategy tools-in-use. Section 1.1 outlines the rationale for the research and emphasizes why it is crucial to investigate different practitioner perspectives. The proceeding section 1.2 provides the context and scope of this research to explain the problems to be addressed within the strategy-as-practice field. Subsequently, section 1.3 clarifies the research aims and objectives by outlining the theoretical as well as practical implications for strategic management research. Section 1.4 concludes the chapter and provides an overview of the thesis structure.

1.1 Research Rationale

In the preceding decades, strategic management research has focused on many different streams and management problems. The concept of strategy originated in the 1960s and was mainly introduced and popularized by Alfred Chandler (1962), Igor Ansoff (1965) and Kenneth Andrews (1971). At that time, researchers were convinced that strategic management is primarily concerned with the rational, analytical process of deliberate planning (Grant, 2016). Until today, this approach can be considered as the most influential one for strategic management research, which was further deepened by Michael E. Porter (1980) through his research on industry structures. From that point on, discussion about strategy content was prevailing, as researchers tried to determine what organizational strategy should be. These scholars provided rational as well as normative guidelines and tools to support strategic decisions that ultimately lead to enhanced performance. However, Henry Mintzberg (1985, 1989), as leading critic of these rational approaches, subsequently developed the emergent strategy approach to emphasize that strategies emerge through continuous adjustment and revision of gained experiences and the underlying circumstances. As a result, a new research stream received attention focusing on the strategy process itself by recognizing strategy as an organizational phenomenon and not as an issue detached from an organization's internal environment (Mintzberg, 1994; Johnson et al., 2003; Hodari, 2009). Strategy was seen as emerging through a process rather than being determined by rational analysis. Unfortunately, scholars following processual strategy research have failed to explore how practices (e.g. strategy tools) and practitioners (e.g. strategists) interact inside these processes (Chia and MacKay, 2007; Johnson et al., 2003; Hodari, 2009). Even Mintzberg (2004) claimed in one of his more recent publications that research still neglects how strategy is practiced in reality; it ignores how organizational strategy work is actually accomplished. In response to that criticism on process focused strategy, a practice perspective emerged to provide a more realistic view on the development and execution of organizational strategy work (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Johnson et al., 2003; Whittington, 1996). The strategy-as-practice (SasP) perspective created a new stream in strategy research by focusing on

actual strategizing activities (Whittington et al., 2003). The overarching questions of this stream concentrate on what practitioners are doing while conducting strategy work (Jarzabkowski, 2005) – the so called “...unheroic work of ordinary strategic practitioners” (Whittington, 1996, p. 734). Meaning, SasP research is more concerned with the performance of strategy work rather than the economic performance of companies (Whittington and Caillaud, 2008).

Part of this strategy work includes the strategy tools that have been developed to support strategists to execute and succeed in their job. Today, numerous strategy tools are available to support and guide the development of competitive strategies. The most prominent ones seem to be the SWOT analysis, Porter’s Five Forces, Strategic Group Map, BCG/McKinsey Portfolio Matrices, Ashridge Parenting Matrix, Scenario Planning, or the Value Chain (Jarzabkowski et al., 2009, 2013; Knott, 2006; Moisaner and Stenfors, 2009; Wright et al., 2013; Grant, 2016; Paul and Wollny, 2014). Stenfors and Tanner (2007) claim that such tools help managers to set long-term directions in complex competitive markets and to develop strategic advantages. To investigate their practical role, they emphasize that strategy tool research should “...evaluate, explain and expect different experiences and consequences of strategy tool use in organizations” (Stenfors and Tanner, 2007, p. 4). This is one reason why current research projects focus on how and in what ways strategy tools are useful for different types of strategists (Dameron et al., 2015; Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014; Tassabehji and Isherwood, 2014; Wright et al. 2013).

Even though various studies have questioned the efficacy of strategy tools (e.g. Prahalad and Hamel, 1994; Knott, 2006) many publications in the area of strategic management – ranging from high impact journal articles to practical papers and websites – continue to address the subject of strategy tools and how they are used. Over the years, various studies have concentrated on the types of tools applied (e.g. Clark, 1997; Frost, 2003) or on determining which tools are commonly used in practice (e.g. Jarzabkowski et al., 2009; Rigby, 1993; Rigby and Bilodeau, 2017). Nonetheless, research into how and why tools are applied in practice is scarce (Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014; Knott, 2008; Stenfors et al., 2004; Stenfors and Tanner, 2007; Wright et al., 2013). Hence, these questions remain widely unanswered and not sufficiently investigated (Hodgkinson et al., 2006; Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2006; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). For that reason, this research is less concerned about the theoretical foundation of strategy tools, but rather their practical application.

The use and number of strategy tools has increased considerably over the past decades (Reeves et al., 2012, 2015; Freedman, 2013; Ghemawat, 2002), which is due to the influence of different types of strategists. For example, academics have led to a substantial application increase by educating business school graduates (Marcus et al., 1995; Wright et al., 2013). Further, corporate executives all over the world have enhanced the popularity of tools, since they are commonly perceived as their most frequent users (Jarzabkowski, 2008; Paroutis and Heracleous, 2013; Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Varyani and Khammar, 2010). And, due to the complexity of strategy work, many

organizations increasingly rely on consultants to support their strategizing, as they are known for their methodological and analytical expertise across various industry sectors (Lundgren and Blom, 2011; Paroutis et al., 2016).

Nonetheless, the application, meaning and usage of strategy tools has not been explored sufficiently, which is why this research aims to contribute to the emerging field of strategy-as-practice by outlining how and when strategy tools are used by the different types of strategists. The existing differences and similarities between those practitioners are to be determined to find out exactly who the true users of strategy tools are. Ultimately, studying why and how strategy tools-in-use complement and support the strategy process helps to discover what needs to be “...involved in being a competent strategist and how some practitioners are more influential than others” (Jarzabkowski and Whittington, 2008, p. 283). To undertake such a practice-oriented research project, it is necessary to combine existing strategizing theory with the social phenomenon of strategy tool use (Seidl and Whittington, 2014). In keeping with several other researchers (e.g. Hendry, 2000; Jarzabkowski, 2004-2014; Whittington, 2006, 2010), this research explores strategy tools-in-use and not tools themselves.

1.2 Research Context and Scope

The empirical research of this thesis concentrates on strategizing practices and practitioners. It addresses the calls in the SasP literature to focus on what the common strategizing tools are and how these are applied in practice, as well as who is doing the formal work of strategizing (Whittington, 2003). In this context, a wider view on strategists is required to better understand their role in shaping and implementing strategy without neglecting their different affiliations and levels (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). Thus, clarification is needed on what makes a practitioner a strategist. Once practitioners apply strategy tools in practice they can be signified as strategists who are able to adapt to and adhere to the recurring norms and discourses of strategy work (Knights and Morgan, 1991). This research therefore investigates their roles in organizational strategy work and whether they apply strategy tools as part of making strategy.

Strategy-as-practice researchers also call for studies across complex, multidivisional and multinational organizations (Balogun et al., 2003; Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014) to gain a more comprehensive overview on the actual application of strategy tools. For this reason, the empirical investigation incorporates practitioners from different organizations across various industries, including those from international public and private universities, multinational corporations from the banking, manufacturing and pharma sector, and globally operating consultancies focusing on financial services, industrial goods, public services and transport. Further, the research involves practitioners from all hierarchical levels to follow the call that strategizing practices should be explored across multiple organizations levels (Hambrick, 2004; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007).

1.3 Research Aims and Questions

Taking a practice perspective in strategy research requires a focus on practitioners and their typical strategizing practices to understand how they are influenced by social and economic contexts (Johnson et al., 2007). This means it is necessary to study why and how strategy tools are applied rather than concentrating on what is being applied in practice. Research that tries to bridge the “...gap between the utopia of the mind (the theory of how strategy tools should be used) and the realism of experience (how [practitioners] actually use tools)...” directly falls into the SasP research agenda (Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014, p. 1). Thus, researchers not only need to examine tools and practitioners, but also their interactions while doing strategy work (Whittington, 2006).

The aim of this research is to examine how practitioners use strategy tools to conduct strategy work. The sample population is comprised of business school academics, consultants with a strategy focus, and executives from different hierarchical levels working with strategy. Most strategists understand the underlying theoretical concepts of strategy tools but fail to fully realize their potential in practice - how they could be used, under what circumstances, and the practical outcomes they are able to generate. Hence, it is intended to contribute to existing strategizing theory and provide strategists with a better understanding of strategy tool use in practice, which ultimately enables companies to conduct more efficient but also more effective strategy work. Thereby, focus is drawn on the determinants for the effective application of strategy tools (e.g. organization context or situation, practitioners using the tools, or their adaptation in practice), the typical strategy toolkit of strategists, but also to the temporal integration of strategy tools during strategy work. For that reason, two overarching research questions with associated sub-questions were developed to investigate the combination between theory and practice for strategy tools-in-use. These research questions have led to the derivation of the theoretical background, which is presented in the subsequent literature review.

1. How can theory on strategizing be advanced through a better understanding of strategy tool use?

- 1.1 What is meant by the terms strategizing and strategy-as-practice, and what is a strategy tool?
- 1.2 What are the limitations of current strategy-as-practice research?

2. How do strategists use strategy tools in practice?

- 2.1 Which strategy tools do strategists use for their strategy work?
- 2.2 Why do strategists use strategy tools to conduct their strategy work?
- 2.3 When do strategists use strategy tools?
- 2.4 How do strategists evaluate the role of strategy tools?

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

The *introductory chapter* describes the research rationale and identifies the specific research aims and objectives. As part of that, the emergence of the SasP field is introduced to emphasize the motive behind this research. Consequently, the gap in strategic management literature is identified to explain the necessity to investigate strategy tools-in-use while looking at different types of strategists.

The *second chapter* presents a critical review of the literature on SasP by focusing on strategizing practices (i.e. strategy tools) and the strategic practitioners involved. The review identifies previous findings as well as research gaps and unanswered questions regarding the application of strategy tools. It concludes with a critical appraisal of the major gaps in SasP research and emphasizes the theoretical implications for this research.

The *third chapter* outlines the research design and the applied methodologies. It explains why an abductive approach (i.e. combination of inductive and deductive methods) was chosen, which resulted in a mixed method research design and process. Further, it is described why the Grounded Theory Method was the appropriate research strategy, as it allowed the interpretation and exploration of real-life experiences of different social actors. Lastly, the chapter details the mixed method approach – semi-structured interviews, questionnaire and a focus group – adopted to collect data and to validate the findings. Each of the preceding stages informed the next one to accomplish the triangulation of results. Meaning, the interviews led to hypotheses, which were subsequently assessed with the questionnaire. Thereafter, all findings were critically validated with a focus group.

The *fourth chapter* presents the research results based on the three consecutive research stages. The first research stage, semi-structured interviews, gathered the practitioners' opinions and experiences by focusing on why and how strategy tools are used in practice. As a result, hypotheses were derived on the basis of these practice perceptions. Subsequently, these hypotheses were evaluated with the quantitative results of the questionnaire. In the questionnaire, the practitioners particularly answered why, when, under which circumstances and for what reason they apply strategy tools. Finally, the last stage served as participant validation of the two preceding phases to appraise the research findings and to emphasize the theoretical as well as practical implications.

The *fifth chapter* discusses all empirical findings of the research with the existing literature and conclusively answers the research questions as well as sub-questions. The discussion is structured on the basis of the categories and themes identified during the analysis.

The *concluding chapter* summarizes the core findings of the research. Moreover, it outlines the original contribution and addresses its limitations. Finally, recommendations are presented for the practitioners investigated and topics for future research are outlined.

2 Literature Review

This chapter presents a critical literature review on strategizing and strategy tools. First, the term strategizing is broadly discussed in section 2.1. In particular, the historical and theoretical background is presented to outline how the strategizing and strategy-as-practice discussion has developed over time. Section 2.2 focusses on strategy tools to explain how they emerged, what role they play, and critically assesses their usability in practice. Section 2.3 refers to strategy practitioners to determine who strategists are and how they interact with strategy tools. Section 2.4 concludes the chapter by highlighting the major issues and gaps of SasP research and clarifies the theoretical implications for this research.

2.1 Strategizing

In literature, the term strategizing stands for devising (e.g. developing, formulating, or implementing) a strategy or strategies (Johnson et al., 2003). In the broadest sense, strategizing can be seen as a holistic strategic management approach. Initially, Johnson et al. (2003) developed the idea that strategy is not something an organization ‘has’, but rather what the members ‘do’ with it. In this context, the term strategizing was developed to describe the ‘doing of strategy’ (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). Following the notion of Vaara and Whittington (2012), Paroutis et al. (2016, p.4) explain that “Strategizing refers to strategy work and encompasses all the continuous practices and processes through which strategy is conceived, maintained, renewed, and executed.” Meaning, strategizing concentrates on the what, when, how, and why of strategy making. Melin et al. (1999) define the term as “...the way strategies unfold over time, that is the way strategies are developed, realized, reproduced and transformed in an ongoing process” (Paroutis et al., 2016, p. 5). Since there is no agreed-on definition for the term, Paroutis et al. (2016) have created a table that summarizes those most applicable (see Table 1).

Definition	Source
"...refers to the strategy work and encompasses all the continuous practices and processes through which strategy is conceived, maintained, renewed, and executed."	Paroutis et al. (2016)
"...the detailed process and practices which constitute the day-to-day activities of organizational life and which relate to strategic outcomes."	Johnson et al. (2003)
"The concept of strategizing emphasizes the micro-level processes and practices involved as organizational members work to construct and enact organizational strategies, through both formal and informal means."	Maitlis and Lawrence (2003)
"...an organizational learning process...new strategies evolve over time, not from discrete decisions but from indeterminate managerial behaviors embedded in a complex social setting."	Floyd and Wooldridge (2000)
"...the meeting, the talking, the form filling and the number-crunching by which strategy actually gets formulated and implemented."	Whittington (1996)

Table 1: Definitions of the Term Strategizing (extended; adapted from Paroutis et al. (2016))

2.1.1 History and Theoretical Background

The discussions about strategizing, currently anchored in the SasP research field, can be traced back to the 1990s. The subject first appeared in Richard Whittington's journal article (1996) *Strategy as Practice*. The article was located in the 'Strategy at the Leading Edge' section of the Long Range Planning journal, which typically includes new research streams and approaches (Hodari, 2009). According to Google Scholar (2018), it is the most cited strategy-as-practice article, which is not surprising as Whittington's work is a common starting point for practice-related strategy research. His initial idea fueled various special editions of journals (e.g. *Journal of Management Studies* (2003, 2014), *Long Range Planning* (2006), *Human Relations* (2007), *Revue Francaise de Gestion* (2007), *British Management Journal* (2015)) and five renowned books (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Golsorkhi, 2006; Johnson et al., 2007; Golsorkhi et al., 2015; and Paroutis et al., 2016). Furthermore, the strategy-as-practice research community has become a specialist interest group at various international conferences, such as those held by the Strategic Management Society (SMS), American Academy of Management (AOM), British Academy of Management (BAM), European Academy of Management (EURAM), and the European Group for Organizational Studies (EGOS) (Hodari, 2009; Rouleau, 2013). Since the research community mainly originated in Europe, with contributions from the United Kingdom, France, Scandinavia, Germany and Switzerland, some international scholars consider it the European way of researching modern strategy. However, in recent years the research field has developed more presence across the globe, mostly as a result of the Strategy-as-Practice International Network (SAP-IN). Nonetheless, the research field is still mostly dominated by prominent strategy-as-practice scholars like Jarzabkowski, Paroutis, Seidl, Vaara and Whittington (Rouleau, 2013).

The field emerged to return strategy research to its original core, namely to the practitioners or, more precisely the people that work in the organizations (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Whittington, 1996). Mintzberg (2004), another great contributor to strategic thinking, claimed that future research should refocus on real concerns and the actual work of the practitioners. Interestingly, many scholars have attempted to comply with that proposal, but instead of identifying *what* people do they mostly described *when* they do strategy (Stacey, 2007). Overall, however, the SasP perspective has emerged in response to the practice turn in social theory (Whittington, 1996; 2003; Schatzki et al., 2001) to view strategy as a practice in itself.

2.1.2 Strategy-as-Practice: Practice, Praxis, and Practitioners

At this point, it is noteworthy that the terms ‘strategizing’ and ‘strategy-as-practice’ can be used interchangeably, as both generally describe the same social phenomenon. Nonetheless, various researchers have tried to coin a more particular definition for strategy-as-practice. Golsorkhi et al. (2015, p. 1) view strategy-as-practice “...as a distinctive research approach for studying strategic management, strategic decision-making, strategizing, strategy making, and strategy work” (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2003; Whittington, 1996). As such the approach “...focuses on the micro-level social activities, processes and practices that characterize organizational strategy and strategizing” (Golsorkhi et al., 2015, p. 1). Strategy-as-practice delivers an alternative to mainstream strategy research that usually focuses on the analyses of different stages in the strategic management process, performance measures, characteristics of successful strategies and other aspects that deal with the theoretical basis of doing strategy. It examines “...the way in which actors interact with the social and physical features of context in the everyday activities that constitute practice” (Paroutis et al., 2016, p. 8). Practice is central to the approach, as it allows researchers to investigate the everyday issues of strategic practitioners who are directly involved in strategy work (e.g. strategic planning or analysis). The aim of SasP research is to advance the theoretical understanding of all different types of strategists to enable them to conduct their work with more practical relevance (Golsorkhi et al., 2015). In Whittington’s second article (2003) on strategy-as-practice, he formulated six research questions to identify the true jobs of strategists and organizers as outlined in Table 2 below.

Research Questions

- 1 How and where is strategizing and organizing work actually done?
 - 2 Who does the formal work of strategizing and organizing and how do they get to do it?
 - 3 What are the skills required for strategizing and organizing work and how are they acquired?
 - 4 What are the common tools/techniques of strategizing and organizing and how are these used in practice?
 - 5 How is the work of strategizing and organizing organized itself?
 - 6 How are the products of strategizing and organizing communicated and consumed?
-

Table 2: Six Research Questions on Strategizing and Organizing (Whittington, 2003, p. 119-121)

Subsequently, in order to guide researchers conducting studies in this field, Whittington introduced the strategy-as-practice framework which isolated the three following elements: (1) praxis (“the flow of activity in which strategy is accomplished”), (2) practices (“the social, material and symbolic tools of strategy”) and (3) practitioners (“those doing strategy”) (Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Johnson et al., 2017; Spee and Jarzabkowski, 2009). The concept followed the practice turn in social theory interpretation of Reckwitz (2002), who claimed that it is necessary to better understand the true meanings of practice in organizations.

To better understand what SasP research aims to investigate, Whittington’s three framework elements are explained in more detail below.

Praxis (How?)

The term *praxis* originated in the Greek language and means the actual activities that people do. In the work of Reckwitz (2002, p. 249), it is described as “...an emphatic term to describe the whole human action...”. Whittington (2006, p. 619) transferred this idea into strategy research and thus defined strategy praxis as “...all the various activities involved in the deliberate formulation and implementation of strategy.” He explained that praxis takes place in all kinds of institutional episodes, which include board meetings, management training, consultant workshops, team meetings, presentations, projects, emails, or even coffee breaks (Whittington, 2006; Mezias et al., 2001; Westley, 1990). In other words, all activities that are essential to create and execute strategy (Paroutis et al., 2016). Subsequently, Jarzabkowski et al. (2007, p. 9) developed a more distinct definition in which they explain that “Praxis comprises the interconnection between the actions of different, dispersed individuals and groups and those socially, politically, and economically embedded institutions within which individuals act and to which they contribute.” Typically, all these situated activities have strategic consequences for the affected groups, organizations or industry (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007) and should be considered as the daily routines of management or more particularly “...what managers do and what they manage” (Johnson et al., 2003, p. 15). These daily routines are the micro-level activities that strategists employ to utilize informal as well as formal

means (Maitlis and Lawrence, 2003; Whittington, 1996). After reviewing the different definitions and explanations, it can be postulated that praxis aims to explain *how* practitioners are doing strategy work.

Practices (What?)

Reckwitz (2002, p. 249) defined *practices* as "...routinized types of behavior which consist of several elements, interconnected to one another...". Whittington (2006, p. 619) expanded this definition and described practices as "...shared routines of behavior, including traditions, norms and procedures for thinking, acting and using 'things', this last in the broadest sense." For Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) the use of such practices is closely linked to the actual 'doing', since they allow actors to interact with behavioral, cognitive, procedural, discursive and physical resources to accomplish a collective activity. In more general terms, practices refer to the methods, tools, and techniques that practitioners employ while strategizing. Over time, such practices become the standards and routines of organizational strategy work (Paroutis et al., 2016). When used as units of analysis, *what* practices practitioners actually apply and how they utilize them should be examined.

Practitioners (Who?)

The *practitioners* are strategists, such as managers, consultants, or other individuals involved during strategizing, that draw upon the practices described above (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Paroutis et al., 2016; Whittington, 2006). According to Reckwitz (2002, p. 250), the practitioner is the carrier of both the praxis and practices "...she or he is not only a carrier of patterns of bodily behavior [praxis], but also of certain routinized ways of understanding, knowing how and desiring [practices]." On that basis, Whittington (2006, p. 619) described strategy practitioners as "...those who do the work of making, shaping, and executing strategies." He further explained that the practitioners are the central element of SasP research, since their behavior, characteristic, and skills intrinsically influence the practices applied and what actually happens in practice. This was confirmed by Jarzabkowski et al. (2007), as they state that practitioners are inherently interrelated with practices and praxis. Practitioners shape strategy work through *who* they are, *how* they act and *what* practices they employ.

In a later publication Vaara and Whittington (2012, p. 6) summarized: "*Practices* refer to the various tools, norms, and procedures of strategy work, from analytical frameworks such as Porter's Five Forces to strategic planning routines such as strategy workshops. *Praxis* refers to the activity involved in strategy-making, for example, in strategic planning processes or meetings. *Practitioners* are all those involved in, or seeking to influence, strategy-making." Based on Whittington's (2006) agenda, Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) developed a revised conceptual framework of praxis, practices, and practitioners in order to locate strategizing between these three elements (see Figure 1).

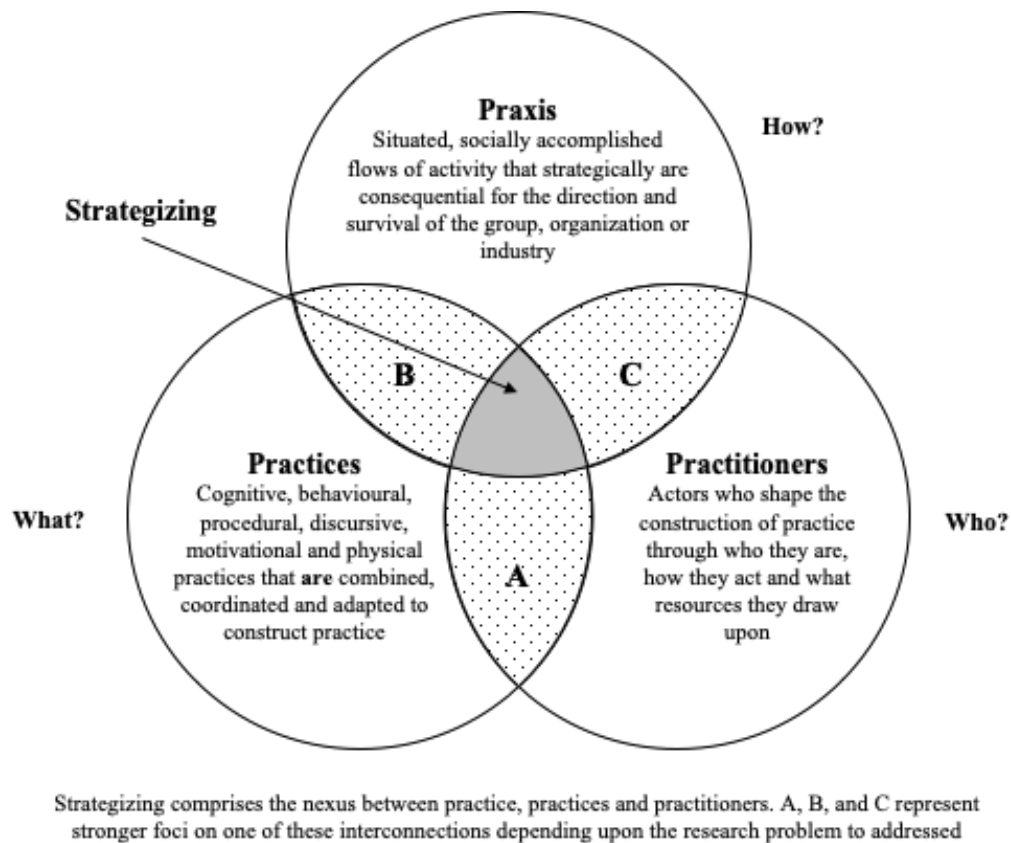


Figure 1: A Conceptual Framework - Strategy-as-Practice (adapted from Jarzabkowski et al., 2007)

The areas A, B, and C in Figure 1 identify possible research agendas for SasP researchers. Area A stands for research projects with a focus on Practitioners and Practice, area B for the interconnection of Practices and Praxis, and C links the Practitioners and Praxis. Strategizing comprises the nexus between all these areas and is therefore located in the center of the framework. However, Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) clarified that it is unusual to find studies linking all three elements with every research problem or question related to them, as this would clearly be too complex. Similar to previous studies (Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014; Paroutis et al., 2015; Wright et al., 2013), this research focuses on area A, as it investigates practices (use of strategy tools) applied through practitioners (academics, consultants, and executives) to explore the direct interactions between both.

2.1.3 Status Quo of Strategizing Research

Research on the use of strategy tools has gained more attention since Whittington (2003) formulated his strategizing concept and proposed the research question: “What are the common tools and techniques of strategizing and organizing and how are these used in practice?” (Whittington, 2003, p. 117). Jarzabkowski (2004, 2005) in particular responded that research knows much less about how such tools are used in action than which tools are applied in practice. Subsequently, further research projects have sought to answer Whittington’s question and investigated the use of strategy tools in practice. A selection of such studies is outlined below:

Bain & Company have been researching the use of management tools (including strategy tools) since 1993 (Rigby, 1993), and conduct an annual survey on the trends in manager choices and evaluations of management and strategy tools (Rigby and Bilodeau, 2017). They have gathered data from more than 12,000 participants (mainly senior managers of multinational companies) enabling them to illustrate general executive tool preferences and to track the effectiveness of tools included in their research. Though the sample size and scope are impressive (including almost every industry and economic sector worldwide), the survey does not explore how practitioners actually use the tools. Similarly, as the research mainly focuses on quantitative measures, critics such as Knott (2008) argue that the results do not represent the surveyed population and the overall study is superficial. The Bain & Company research does not provide a clear distinction between strategy tools, management tools and strategic processes or activities. The study is only useful to understand the tool choices and preferences of managers, while the practical application remains unexplored. Building on Rigby's study (1993), Clark (1997), Frost (2003), as well as Gunn and Williams (2007) have attempted to explain the popularity and usefulness of strategy tools, but most studies failed to provide a true practice perspective.

Stenfors and Tanner (2007) offer more depth in their research compared to previous studies. They followed the strategizing approach of Whittington (2003) and argued that strategy tool use "...should be conceptualized as a form of activity and that such a framework allows us to evaluate, explain and expect different experiences and consequences of strategy tool use in organizations" (Stenfors and Tanner, 2007, p. 4). They used the grounded theory methodology "...to enable a dynamic description of strategy tool use that captures complexity and allows the linking of theory with practice" (Stenfors and Tanner, 2007, p. 6). Part of that methodology included collecting five different types of data: survey, unstructured email and phone interviews, themed face-to-face interviews, presentations on strategy tools, and participant observations. The sample population consisted of executives from the 500 largest companies in Finland only, which is a clear limitation. Though Stenfors and Tanner tried to identify the meaning of strategy tools for strategizing activities, the chosen activities were general and could not be combined with typical strategic processes and activities. The authors themselves conceded in their conclusion that more attention should be paid to typical strategy processes by exploring the effects of strategy tool use on strategizing activities (Stenfors and Tanner, 2007).

The **Jarzabkowski** research group (publications between 2004-2014) has made several contributions to understand strategy tool use in practice by questioning a population of over 2.000 domestic and international business school alumni from 12 of the top 30 business schools in the United Kingdom (Jarzabkowski et al., 2009; Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). They produced a survey that was used to evaluate the impact of strategy education on strategy tool use. Furthermore, their strategy toolkit (2009) can be seen as another approach to clarify which strategy tools are most prominent. In contrast to Bain & Company, the researchers provide a clear distinction between tools and activities. The

group continues to use the toolkit to inform further research, such as: ‘We Don’t Need No Education – Or Do We? Management Education and Alumni Adoption of Strategy Tools’ (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). However, as much as the research provides some knowledge about *who* uses the strategy tools, it does not address the question of *how* and for *what purposes* strategy tools are used. Another limitation is the time relevance of their survey results; they continue to use ‘old’ results from the 2004 study. In a recent research article, ‘Strategy Tools-in-use: A Framework for Understanding ‘Technologies of Rationality’ in Practice’, the group focus “...on how tools are actually mobilized by strategy makers...” (Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014, p. 1) in order to show the interaction of strategists with the tools they apply. They argue that strategy tools-in-use usually have three different dynamics: selection, application, and outcomes (Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014). However, they do not provide any guidance on how organizations could enhance tool ‘use’ to improve the effectiveness of their strategy processes.

Wright et al. (2013) put more emphasis on the practice approach in their research to “...investigate not just how useful tools are, but also in what ways they are useful” (Wright et al., 2013, p. 99). The authors argue that all managers have clear preferences for specific tools, especially for the tools “...that provide different perspectives, peripheral vision, connected thinking, simultaneously help differentiate and integrate complex issues, and guide the thinking process” (Wright et al., 2013, p. 92). The sample used in their research consisted of 46 managers (top managers, middle managers, and junior managers) from various industries (textiles, manufacturing, trading, engineering, medical devices and sourcing, IT, financial services, and the public sector), all enrolled in a ‘capstone strategy course’ at a business school in the UK. The researchers limited the investigation to the use of 12 popular strategy tools (plus one personally preferred tool per participant), which were found in leading strategy textbooks and taught in typical strategic management courses at business schools. Participants had to apply the frameworks in a full strategic audit report and rate each tool regarding its usability. Information was gathered with the help of a one-page questionnaire and validated with face-to-face interviews (Wright et al., 2013). The research can be considered promising, due to its ability to show managers how supportive the frameworks can be when used in the right way. However, it does not further investigate the roles of strategy tools from a true practice perspective. Moreover, Wright et al. (2013) point out the important role of consultants, but excluded them from the sample, which leaves significant room for future research.

The more recent research of **Tassabehji and Isherwood** (2014) is yet another approach that tries to find out which and how strategic tools are used by managers. In their research, they assume that managers use a variety of strategy tools, with an overwhelming focus on established ones rather than on tools that aim to encourage more innovative and dynamic strategies. The aim of their study “...is to review the current use of strategic tools by managers, to assess whether new strategic tools are being adopted to cope with the changing environment” (Tassabehji and Isherwood, 2014, p. 64). To

accomplish that task, they undertook a quantitative online survey of managers' use of strategy tools and received 458 usable responses. Similar to previous studies (Kim and Mauborgne, 2009), they found that practitioners most frequently use the traditional frameworks, such as PESTLE, Ansoff Matrix, Porter's Five Forces, SWOT, Scenario Planning, or Value Chain, as they enable focus on symbolic and rational planning dimensions. In contrast, less frequently used tools include those that focus on "...transactive planning (that is iterative and amenable to ongoing incremental adjustment) and generative planning (that stimulates innovation) ..." (Tassabehji and Isherwood, 2014, p. 76), such as Game Theory, Cultural Web, or Blue Ocean Strategy. Overall, Tassabehji and Isherwood postulate that the simpler the tool the more it is used by practitioners, wherefore external and internal analysis tools still dominate strategic management practices. The study is helpful, although the authors concede that the sample was strongly biased. Indeed, it remains unclear whether the surveyed participants were actual strategists or not (Respondent Demographics: main responsibility in current role – Strategy 26%) (Tassabehji and Isherwood, 2014, p. 70). Moreover, they included only one practitioner perspective and failed to further define what falls into this group. Due to these limitations, it is questionable whether they provide an objective practice view.

Many other related studies have been undertaken recently with a specific focus on particular practical capabilities of strategy tools. These are not further discussed here because they are not considered comparable to this research. Paroutis et al. (2015), for example, have focused on how managers can visually interact with strategy tools while conducting strategy work and making decisions. Cheng and Havenvid (2017, p. 1), in turn, have investigated how strategy tools are used to influence relationships and how organizations engage in strategic actions by using them.

The most recent research on strategy tools **Vuorinen et al.** (2017) intended to map the current landscape of strategy tools and was built upon a systematic literature review that searched and reviewed all strategy-tool-related publications from the past 25 years. The study aimed "...to understand how the strategy tools represent the theoretical landscape of strategy, what gaps exist in the strategy toolbox, and how the current strategy tools shape managerial practice and the teaching of strategy" (Vuorinen et al., 2017, p. 592). Based on 482 published abstracts and 88 full text articles Vuorinen et al. were able to identify 88 strategy tools that were presented in top management journals between 1990 and 2015. They found that the landscape of strategy tools is surprisingly traditional, since most modern approaches in strategic thinking still fail to transform into usable tools (Vuorinen et al., 2017). This research is useful for the SasP research agenda, but more applicable as a reference guide. It falls outside the typical spectrum of practice-related research because it solely looks at the theoretical foundation of strategy tools. Thus, it fails to provide a practice perspective that explains the actual usage of strategy tools. Interestingly, Vuorinen et al. acknowledge that it is not entirely useful to investigate strategy tools on the basis of published articles, as many are introduced through

books or magazines, or have been developed and adapted by different types of practitioners (Vuorinen et al., 2017).

In recent years, the strategizing research field has gained more attention in highly academic strategy publications, such as the Strategic Management Journal, as it has moved from organizational studies to the agenda of influential strategy researchers. The studies outlined above demonstrate that there is a need for further research on strategy tool use. Hence, this research intends to create a more in-depth understanding of strategizing, while looking at different types of strategists. Previous studies usually covered one or two of the particular user groups at once, but primarily focused on academics or corporate executives. The third but no less important user group of consultants has received only marginal attention in literature, as it is considered to be difficult to convince such practitioners to participate in an in-depth research project. Including all types of strategists provides a better view on strategizing and allows the researcher to draw a broader picture of all possible tool users.

2.2 Strategy Tools

The following section provides a closer look at strategy tools, in particular their emergence and application in practice. In research, strategy tools are often referred to as strategy frameworks or more generally as knowledge artifacts (Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2006), which were developed as new or alternative forms of practice to solve managerial problems (Moisander and Stenfors, 2009). According to Jarzabkowski and Kaplan (2014, p. 538) “...the term *tool* is a generic name for frameworks, concepts, models or methods.” Strategy tools in particular focus on key issues and priorities, provide a basis for discussion, enable a structured analysis, work as guidelines for necessary strategizing activities, and can simply be applied by any kind of strategist (Jarrat and Stiles, 2010; Gunn and Williams, 2007; Mintzberg et al., 1998). Paroutis et al. (2015, p.1) use a very general definition as they “...define strategy tools as the concepts, models and methods employed by managers during strategy making, e.g. the BCG matrix, Porter’s Five forces and SWOT” (Jarratt and Stiles, 2010; Wright et al., 2013). March (2006) claims that such tools are ‘technologies of rationality’, since they provide causal structures, room for data collection, and support decision-making. They can help strategists to make rational decisions (‘procedural rationality’ (Simon, 1978)), which is needed due to the limited cognitive powers of humans (Cabantous and Gond, 2011). In summary, “...the whole purpose of strategy tools is to aid and guide managerial decision-making – ideally, allowing managers to make better, more informed decisions as a result of their use” (Wright et al., 2013, p. 94).

2.2.1 Strategy Theory and the Emergence of Strategy Tools

The theoretical foundation of strategy goes back to ancient history when those in charge strategically planned their military and political decisions. Nonetheless, the concept of strategic management did not emerge until the 1960s (Ghobadian and O'Regan, 2008; Nerur et al., 2008). Major contributions to the field have been made by Alfred Chandler (1962), Michael E. Porter (1980; 1985) and Henry Mintzberg (1994). The development and utilization of strategic paradigms and ideas have become important subjects for all different types of practitioners involved in strategy work (Marcus et al., 1995; Hodari, 2009). Over the last 50 years, strategists have designed more than 80 strategic management tools to aid and guide managerial decision-making (Reeves et al., 2015). Most of these tools originated from academic research by combining management theory with managerial reality (Aram and Salipante, 2003; Wright et al., 2013). Typically, they are introduced through teaching at business schools, the extensive use of consultants, the incorporation in business articles and strategy literature as well as the dissemination in business media (Moisander and Stenfors, 2009; Sahlin-Andersson and Engwall, 2002; Tsoukas and Knudsen, 2002; Whittington et al., 2003). Nevertheless, the development of tools cannot be seen as the creation of simple, discreet, intrinsic objects, technologies or devices (Suchmann et al., 1999). The development, introduction and use of the frameworks should rather be understood as the production of new or alternative forms of practice with the overall aim to solve managerial problems (Moisander and Stenfors, 2009). However, it remains unclear how such approaches relate to one another and how or if they should be applied during strategy work (Reeves et al., 2015). Very little is known about the concepts, methods, and tools applied in practice that are continually taught in strategic management classes (Jarzabkowski and Giuliatti, 2007; Jarzabkowski et al., 2013; Wright et al., 2013). Thus, precisely why and how practitioners employ these elements in practice needs to be clarified (Jarzabkowski and Giuliatti, 2007; Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2006).

2.2.2 Role and Use of Strategy Tools

As mentioned, strategy tools are first and foremost designed to facilitate strategic management and to simplify the practical strategy work of organizations. Hence, strategists prefer to use such frameworks to increase the efficiency of strategy processes (Moisander and Stenfors, 2009; Grant, 2013). Strategy tools enable focus on key issues and priorities, provide significant dimensions for interrogation, offer clear structures for analysis, build guidelines for strategizing activities and tend to be uncomplicated (Jarrat and Stiles, 2010; Gunn and Williams, 2007; Mintzberg et al., 1998). Generally, they support and direct the decision-making of executives through the encouragement of dialogue and idea exchange between managers from any level in a corporation (Hodgkinson and Wright, 2002; Spee and Jarzabkowski, 2009; Whittington et al., 2006). Summing up, strategy tools are able to support individual- and collective-organizational learning, enhance the strategy process

and improve the ability to understand complex problems from various perspectives (Moisander and Stenfors, 2009). Today, their use goes beyond simple analytical application as there are also integrative socio-cultural and political implications that should be considered (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013; Wright et al., 2013). Considering the dynamic market faced by multinational organizations, today's managers prefer complicated strategic tools for complex issues and challenges or tools that are adapted to specific competitive situations, rather than simple structures that are valued as less useful (Wright et al., 2013; Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2006; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). Accordingly, Lozeau et al. (2002) describe that most strategists reinterpret strategy tools-in-use to meet unique situated strategic problems. They recommend that practitioners should develop their own frameworks and methodologies for specific tasks, instead of "...borrowing and bastardizing techniques from elsewhere..." (Lozeau et al., 2002, p. 502). Jarzabkowski and Wilson (2006) state a similar view and argue that the use of strategy theory and tools is based on *bricolage*. The term *bricolage* is defined as the practical use of existing theoretical frameworks in alternative or creative ways that are different to the original purpose of the tool-in-use (Levi-Strauss, 1966; Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2006). Adapting traditional tools (e.g. SWOT, Porter's Five Forces, PESTLE, etc.) is by far easier than developing a new tool that will require significant learning before it can function in practice (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2006).

Studying tools-in-use requires individual understanding within the social context of shared knowledge on strategic methodologies and their outputs in practice (Whittington, 2003). Strategy-related knowledge artifacts are useful in the long-run, but they have to provoke ideas and enforce communication on any level of the organization and with other surrounding stakeholders (Moisander and Stenfors, 2009). The successful application of tools depends on the in-depth understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each existing tool, the ability to incorporate the appropriate "...tool(s) in the right way at the right time, and the right people and skills to develop the tools to meet the company's objectives" (Wright et al. 2013, p. 95; Jarrat and Stiles, 2010; Stenfors and Tanner, 2007). Thus, modern SasP research should guide the tool utilization of strategists to enhance their ability to conduct more efficient but also effective strategy work.

2.2.3 Critical View on the Usability of Strategy Tools

Business schools teach strategic management with the help of strategy tools to enable their students to analyze and formulate strategies. But is this approach still suitable for the shifting landscape companies work in (Jacobides, 2010)? Knowledge artifacts function as constructs that frame strategizing practices for all types of users (Jarratt and Stiles, 2010; Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2006). However, many critics (e.g. Burt et al., 2006; Jacobides, 2010; Levy, 2000; Pickton and Wright, 1998) argue that the role and usability of the tools is limited. Traditional frameworks try to analyze competitive situations, while including easy definable and stable measures that mainly focus on past

and current developments (Webb, 2014). The more interesting view about the future of organizations is mostly neglected, because tools presume that industry boundaries remain constant over time (Jacobides, 2010). That thinking has to be discarded, since modern platform organizations such as Uber and Airbnb show that such boundaries are a thing of the past. Jacobides (2010) further explains, that such fixed artifacts reduce complexity by drawing static pictures and outlining industry environments with narrow dimensions. These approaches can only provide guidance in a less dynamic competitive landscape (Jarrat and Stiles, 2010). Additionally, most tools can be misleading due to their assumption that industries are always clearly defined and that companies are well aware who their closest competitors, suppliers, and customers are (Jacobides, 2010; Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2006; Mintzberg, 1990; Mintzberg et al., 1998). Jarrat and Stiles (2010, p. 29), raise other criticisms regarding strategy tools, such as the: "...danger of oversimplification, the lack of explanatory or predictive value, inadequate definition and prioritization of factors identified for interrogation, frequent disagreement on which factors should be included, re-enforcing of entrenched mental models, and confining deliberations to elaborations and extensions of what is already known" (Burt et al., 2006; Jacobides, 2010; Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2006; Webb, 2014). Moreover, Calori (1998) states that such frameworks create bias for thinking, binary logic and feelings that limit the ability to understand, finding reasons and making decisions. In order to resolve these deficits, researchers and especially tool users have to examine strategy tools from a practice perspective, because "...strategy is a central and expensive part of organizational work..." (Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2006, p. 363; Whittington, 2003). Strategists should therefore ask themselves what types of frameworks can work best in particular competitive situations (Webb, 2014, p. 5).

Based on the criticism described above, it can be argued that the formulated limitations are mainly based on vague interpretations and personal opinions. Therefore, it is essential to identify real deficits and limitations of strategy tools-in-use.

2.3 Strategy Practitioners

As earlier noted, when discussing the use of strategy tools, it is necessary to examine the role of strategy practitioners or more precisely strategists as well. According to Mintzberg et al. (2003), anyone in an organization can be a strategist as long as he or she controls key or precedent setting functions. Interestingly, the role of the strategist can also be taken by a collection or group of people. Paroutis et al. (2016) identify five categories of strategic practitioners - Chief Executive Officers, Chief Strategy Officers, strategy teams, middle managers, and (strategy) consultants - that play a key role in strategizing. These practitioners are most suited to the strategist's job description, as their holistic view and power is far greater than that of the other members in an organization (Mintzberg et al., 2003). As such, these actors are responsible for creating, communicating and executing all strategic tasks and for monitoring the organizational strategy process (Paroutis et al., 2016; Lundgren

and Blom, 2011). In other words, strategists represent a central part in the world's largest organizations, which is why they hold an important role in society (Mintzberg, 2004; Varyani and Khammar, 2010).

2.3.1 Who are Strategists?

The SasP field regards strategy practitioners as the logical link between the two framework elements: praxis and practices (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Whittington, 2006). For Whittington (2006), a strategist is a top-level manager in charge of strategy formulation, which is why research has mainly focused on senior managers involved in strategy work at the top of organizations. Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) criticize this definition, as it neglects the other parts of the strategy process and a large group of actors such as middle managers, consultants, or operational level employees that play a decisive role in organizational strategy work as well. For that reason, they call for a broadening of the term strategist so that other actors shaping and implementing strategy are perceived and not neglected (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). In a 2009 publication, Jarzabkowski and Spee categorize strategists as either internal or external. Internals, such as CEOs or project managers, hold a position in the organization. By contrast, externals such as academics, consultants, gurus, the media, and business regulators are not an intrinsic part of an organization, even though they might significantly impact organizational strategy work (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Varyani and Khammar, 2010). Van den Steen (2017) recently discovered more insights on the effects of internal and external strategists. Strategy work conducted by internals leads to both improved strategies and execution. Externals were assessed critically, since they tend to compromise a strategy's quality as well as its execution. Overall, strategists can be "...all actors, managers or non-managers, internal or external to the organization, who are doing strategy work" (Lundgren and Blom, 2011, p. 1). On the basis of these findings, it is one aim of this research to understand how strategists interact with strategic practices or more specifically strategy tools. To get a more distinct answer, the different types of internal and external strategists have been separated into three overarching practitioner perspectives - academic, consultant, and executive – which are explained in the following.

2.3.2 Different Practitioner Perspectives: Academic, Consultant, and Executive

Academic

Academics are usually considered the developers of strategy tools, as most tools derive from research projects responding to practical strategic problems (Moisander and Stenfors, 2009; Sahlin-Andersson and Engwall, 2002; Tsoukas and Knudsen, 2002; Whittington et al., 2003). As mentioned, academics therefore combine existing management theory with managerial reality (Aram and Salipante, 2003; Wright et al., 2013). Academics can and should be considered as frequent tool users, since they typically incorporate entire strategy toolkits in their strategic management courses (Marcus et al., 1995; Wright et al., 2013). During these courses, they jointly apply tools with their students to teach

them the basics of organizational strategy work. In summary, it can be stated that academics develop, teach, and publish tools to pass on to their students and other practitioners, which are then applied to conduct strategy in practice (Hodari, 2009). Unfortunately, they often reduce their approaches to simplified analytical techniques that do not provide any value for organizations (Mintzberg, 2004). Hence, academics need more distinct knowledge about the usability and role of strategy tools that are applied in response to a specific organizational context (Ambastha and Momaya, 2004; Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2006; Hodari, 2009).

Consultant

As mentioned, consultants and their role in organizational strategy work has barely been explored in the strategy-as-practice research agenda (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). Only a few studies have investigated their influence on strategizing (Kaplan, 2008; Lundgren and Blom, 2011; Nordqvist and Melin, 2008; Regnér, 2003; Varyani and Khammar, 2010). Yet, the role of consultants as external stakeholders in developing and executing strategies has substantially grown in the last decades (Armbruster and Kipping, 2001; Fincham and Clark, 2002; Jones, 2003; Lundgren and Blom, 2011; Paroutis et al., 2016). The main purpose of consultants is to assist client organizations in solving their strategic problems, since they are known and most valued for their methodological and diagnostic expertise in various industries (Paroutis et al., 2016). Consultants themselves claim that their key role is to assist clients with strategic problems, such as strategic planning, growth, mergers & acquisitions, positioning, competitiveness, resource allocation, etc. (Lundgren and Blom, 2011). Nonetheless, in a great number of cases they have to deal with very complex issues which occasionally makes it difficult to deliver straightforward diagnoses and solutions (Sturdy et al., 2009; Paroutis et al., 2016). But for clients, the consultants' role as importers of outside expertise or agents of change can be quite useful to achieve rational decisions during the process of strategy making (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996; Sturdy et al., 2009; Paroutis et al., 2016). Interestingly, however, there are widely divergent opinions regarding the role of consultants. For example, Fincham and Clark (2002, p. 8) note that consultants are consistently described as, "...expensive (i.e. charging exorbitant fees) and ineffective (i.e. their advice rarely works); as destroying organizations; as repackaging old ideas and developing empty buzzwords; as running amok if not tightly controlled; as undermining the quality of management; as lacking independent insights; as acting in their own interests, rather than the client's, and so forth." Notwithstanding, consultants are needed to strengthen managers' confidence and reduce clients' feelings of uncertainty, which in the best case stabilizes or substantiates certain strategic decisions (Ernst and Kieser, 2002; Furusten, 2009; Kaplan, 2008). In some cases, consultants are needed to legitimize a course of action, justify change, or promote innovative ideas (Appelbaum and Steed, 2005; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Saxton, 1995). All this is usually enabled through the application of tools and techniques that provide rigor and a scientific basis for clients' strategic decisions (Lundgren and Blom, 2011; Jarzabkowski, 2005). Nevertheless, literature

has so far largely avoided investigating how consultants shape organizational strategy, hence it is necessary to understand how they act and interact with clients and how they contribute to strategy work (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Lundgren and Blom, 2011). In this research, the focus lies on the consultants' usage of strategy tools to find out when and how consultants apply them.

Executive

Strategizing involves multiple actors who interact to accomplish successful strategy work. In contrast to that on consultants and their role during strategy work, there is a large amount of research that focuses on top management (Jarzabkowski, 2008), strategy directors (Angwin et al., 2009; Paroutis and Heracleous, 2013), strategy teams (Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007), and middle managers (Balogun, 2003; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; Manterre, 2008; Regnér, 2003; Roleau, 2005; Varyani and Khammar, 2010). In this research, these internal actors are collectively referred to as executives.

With regard to top management research, the role of the *Chief Executive Officer (CEO)* has been debated for many years (Hambrick and Mason, 1984; Finkelstein and Hambrick, 1996, Pettigrew, 1992; Finkelstein et al., 2009; Paroutis et al., 2016). Researchers argue that a large proportion of an organization's strategic decision-making is biased, due to the psychological and identifiable characteristics of its top managers (Finkelstein et al., 2009; Hambrick and Mason, 1984). Carter et al. (2008) claim that strategy work is clearly a concept for CEOs and senior managers of organizations, in other words the members of the Board of Directors. Apparently, CEOs are the key players in modern strategy making and thus the true strategists (O'Shannassy, 2010). This notion can be questioned, as strategizing involves much more than top or senior managers. Further, it can be argued whether CEOs do the strategy groundwork, such as the strategic audit, with all the tools and analyses necessary.

In some cases, organizations employ senior functional executives who are solely responsible for the organizational strategy. These senior executives are usually called *Chief Strategy Officers (CSOs)* or *Strategy Directors (SDs)* (Paroutis et al., 2016). Again, little research is available on what their actual role, task and purpose is. According to Breene et al. (2007), CSOs and SDs are entirely responsible for strategy formulation, refinement and implementation (Birshan et al., 2015, 2014; Paroutis et al., 2016). A more recent Boston Consulting Group (BCG) study found that the CSO job is the least defined role at senior management level, meaning it can be everything and nothing. The major responsibilities, however, are strategy development, resource allocation, and strategy execution (Kachaner and Stewart, 2013). Meaning, CSOs "...are people that wield the authority and have a complex range of skills to make strategy happen – they act as realisteurs" (Breene et al., 2007, p. 87). They are sometimes called the 'Director of everything'. Overall, their key role is to support the activities of the CEO and to create a well-functioning social network between all entities (Paroutis and Heracleous, 2013; Paroutis et al. 2016; Angwin et al., 2009). Interestingly, the methods, routines

and tools that CSOs use to conduct strategy work are generally the basic and less complicated ones. Some do not even use any of these approaches, which in turn suggests that tools are rather used at a lower organizational level (Paroutis and Heracleous, 2013; Paroutis et al. 2016).

As Mintzberg et al. (2003) explain, strategists can also be a composition of different actors. These groups are referred to as *strategy teams* that usually consist of a strategy director (e.g. CSO), strategy analysts and strategy managers. Normally, all these actors have at least some consulting experience, which is why they are often perceived as organizational in-house consultants providing sophisticated assistance for senior and middle managers. Thus, strategy teams are considered as the supporting function of top management (Paroutis et al., 2016). Such teams require both technical as well as interaction knowledge and skills. Technical skills (i.e. executing, reflecting, and initiating strategy) help them to handle the day-to-day strategizing, which includes the utilization of strategy tools and analyses. Interaction skills (i.e. coordinating, supporting, and collaborating with different stakeholders) are needed to ensure proper communication with all managers of the organization (Angwin et al., 2009; Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2005, 2007; Paroutis et al., 2016). Yet again, tool application appears to be a central part of their role, but due to different hierarchical levels in strategy teams it remains unclear who really uses them.

The last but perhaps most decisive group of executives is the *middle managers*, although the prevailing top-down view on strategy undermines their role as actual strategists (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Whittington, 2006). However, enough studies have already proven that middle managers and even lower level employees have a considerable impact on strategy work (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000, 1997, 1992; Mantere, 2008; Regnér, 2003; Rouleau, 2005). Given the role of middle managers, Floyd and Wooldridge (1992, p. 2) identified their four key tasks, namely ‘championing strategic alternatives’, ‘synthesizing information’, ‘facilitating adaptability’, and ‘implementing deliberate strategy’. Hence, their engagement during strategy work includes much more than the implementation of strategies that have been planned by top managers (Floyd and Lane, 2000; Varyani and Khammar, 2010). However, their inclusion during ‘true’ strategy work is still debatable, as it usually depends on the decisions of the senior managers involved (Whittington, 2006). Similarly, Mantere (2008) explains that middle managers can only work successfully and be part of strategy making, once the strategic goals are aligned at all organizational levels. If this is the case, middle managers can be seen as the drivers of strategy, since they are needed to realize all strategic objectives (Floyd and Lane, 2000; Mantere, 2008). Thus, it can be argued whether middle managers are the actual users of strategy tools, as they tend to have wide ranging strategic capabilities and access to the necessary information. Nonetheless, most people outside the organizations still believe that the top management including the CEO is responsible for the application of strategic concepts and analyses.

2.3.3 Who uses Strategy Tools in Practice?

All actors outlined above have at least some touch points with strategy tools, but to properly apply them they need to be aware of the capabilities required to enhance their participation in strategy work (Paroutis et al., 2016). According to Vaara and Whittington (2012, p. 291), tool users can be "...all those involved in, or seeking to influence, strategy making." However, it can be postulated that strategy work is not an exclusive preserve of top management (e.g. CEO or CSO), as strategizing and especially the application of strategy tools requires multiple actors (e.g. strategy teams, middle managers, or consultants) due its considerable complexity (Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014; Whittington, 2007; Paroutis et al., 2016). All actors have different motives while employing tools during strategy work. For example, consultants perceive tool utilization as their professional skills or unique selling point which equips them with the expertise for various industries and organizations (Lundgren and Blom, 2011; McKenna, 2006; Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014). Top managers, in contrast, view tools as a means of communicating information and selling positive impressions of a new or already existing strategy (Paroutis and Heracleous, 2013; Angwin et al., 2009; Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014; Ketokivi and Castaner, 2004; Mantere and Vaara, 2008). Middle managers, in turn, regard strategy tools as enablers of strategy discourse across all organizational levels and divisions or to provide bottom-up alternatives towards the top management (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Mantere and Vaara, 2008; Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014). Due to these divergent meanings, the differences between the different types of strategists should be assessed more precisely to find out who actually uses tools in practice.

2.4 Critical Appraisal of Strategy-as-Practice Research

Almost all researchers that investigate the use of strategy tools in practice try to connect existing theory with practical implications. However, so far strategizing research has mainly focused on the explanation of theoretical concepts or their dissemination in practice. In contrast, only a few attempts have been made to investigate the largely neglected practice view on strategizing activities such as the application of strategy tools. Most of these attempts fail to provide a true practice perspective, as they ignore important types of strategists that are typically involved during strategy work. Not one study includes all relevant practitioners (i.e. internal or external), which creates room for further research. If studies have focused on the practical use of strategy tools, they mainly concentrated on tool choices and preferences of strategists – the practical application of the tools remains widely unexplored. In this regard, more attention should be paid to typical strategy processes and not general management activities. However, it is particularly questionable that extant research does not provide any guidance on how organizations could enhance their use of strategy tools to improve the overall effectiveness of their strategy processes.

Therefore, understanding the potential of strategy tools-in-use should be considered as an essential part of modern strategy research, as it enables strategists to improve their strategy work. Investigating the application of strategy tools requires qualitative in-depth information and an examination of the particular types of strategists that employ strategy tools, as well as quantitative insights that focus on the differences of certain strategic practices. Subsequently, the following chapter outlines the research methodology and design to express how the research problem has been addressed and the set research aims as well as objectives were to be achieved.

3 Research Methodology and Design

At every stage in a research project, researchers make different assumptions to justify their scientific thinking. There are epistemological assumptions about human knowledge, ontological assumptions about the realities included in research, and axiological assumptions that stand for the influence of a researcher's values and ethics about the research process (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Saunders et al., 2016). All these types of assumptions shape the understanding of the research questions, the methods used, and how findings are interpreted (Crotty, 1998). A homogenous and well-conceived set of specific assumptions can constitute a reliable research philosophy that is able to support the choice of methodologies, research strategy and data collection as well as analysis procedures (Saunders et al., 2016). In business and management research it is crucial to understand which essential role the choice of research strategy (e.g. Grounded Theory) plays, as it will affect what the researcher can do and how he understands what he investigates (Johnson and Clark, 2006). To choose the right research philosophy, a researcher should improve his reflexivity, which means that he has to question his own thinking and actions to shape the relationship between his philosophical position and his approach of undertaking a sophisticated research project (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000; Gouldner, 1970; Saunders et al., 2016). There is no best or most appropriate research philosophy for business and management research that could be applied for every project (Tsoukas and Knudsen, 2003). Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 105) claim that the questions relating to "...the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways..." first need to be answered to come to a decision concerning the most appropriate research philosophy for a research project (Gray, 2017).

This chapter outlines the methodological choices taken to conduct this research. Section 3.1 describes the underlying research philosophy. Section 3.2 explicates the purpose of the abductive mixed methods approach and section 3.3 refers to the grounded theory approach and explains the reasons for the use of this research strategy. Section 3.4 describes the research design and process. Section 3.5 presents the data collection techniques employed and further outlines the sequential multi-phase design. Section 3.6 illustrates the structure of the data analysis and section 3.7 emphasizes the analysis stages to point out how the conclusions have been drawn and validated. Section 3.8 concludes the chapter and provides the link to the subsequent research results chapter.

3.1 Research Philosophy

To identify the research philosophy of the research the reflexive tool HARP (Heightening your Awareness of your Research Philosophy), designed by Bristow and Saunders (2014), was applied. It helps researchers to think about their values and beliefs in relation to their respective research project. The tool supports researchers to make their values and assumptions more explicit to preconceive the potential fit between their beliefs and those of the five predominating philosophies (i.e. positivism,

critical realism, interpretivism, postmodernism, and pragmatism) applied in business and management research (Saunders et al., 2016; Gray, 2017; Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). After conducting the HARP test and reviewing the results for this research, the two philosophies with the highest scores were interpretivism (14) and pragmatism (15). Both indicate the epistemological and ontological assumptions of the project. As SasP researcher it seemed obvious to adapt a subjectivist extreme in which social reality is grounded on the perceptions and actions of social actors (Johnson et al., 2007).

All findings strongly rely on the interpretation skills of the researcher. Therefore, a logical choice could have been interpretivism, as it differentiates between humans with a distinct meaning and physical phenomena (Crotty, 1998; Gray, 2017). Investigations on strategy tools-in-use, seen as a social phenomenon, should be closely connected to the interaction between humans, in this case between the practitioners (Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014). Hence, the idea of interpretivism might appears obvious, as it "...argues that human beings and their social worlds cannot be studied in the same way as physical phenomena and that therefore social sciences research needs to be different from natural sciences research rather than trying to emulate the latter" (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 140). The interpretivist perspective can be challenging, as researchers need to enter the social world of their participants to understand their practices from a different viewpoint. Likewise, interpretivism comes with several methodological limitations as it mainly focuses on inductive approaches that solely rely on qualitative data collection methods. The phenomenological or interpretivist perspective might be sufficient to "...understand how people invent structures to help them make sense of what is going on around them" (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 26).

Nevertheless, without any triangulation or participant validation, it does not seem profound enough to answer the question of how and why strategy tools are actually used to conduct strategy work (Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014; Stenfors and Tanner, 2007; Wright et al., 2013). Hence, a mixed methods design was needed to conduct a reliable research project, supported by qualitative and quantitative findings (Belmondo and Sargis-Roussel, 2015; Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014; Paroutis et al., 2015) to portray the actual practice perspective that is grounded at the center of all strategy as practice researchers (Seidl and Whittington, 2014). These aspects implied that the dominant research philosophy of this research could not be interpretivism.

Therefore, pragmatism was also considered (founded by American philosophers Charles Pierce (1839-1914), William James (1842-1910) and John Dewey (1859-1952)) to approach the research problem (Sundin and Johannisson, 2006; Gray, 2017), as theory related concepts are best viewed in terms of their practical use while integrating different perspectives to interpret the gathered information. This is in line with the perception of Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) as they claim that the use of strategy tools in organizations is socially constructed. The basic idea behind pragmatism is that all 'meaning structures' have to be investigated from lived experiences of individuals (Easterby-

Smith et al., 2012; Gray, 2017) and that social concepts are only notable where they endorse actions (Kelemen and Rumens, 2008; Saunders et al., 2016). Pragmatism does not consider theories, ideas, concepts, research findings, and hypotheses in any abstract form, but rather in terms of their practical consequences in particular contexts, for example formulating a new turnaround or growth strategy. Researchers that follow the philosophy start their research with a problem and “...aim to contribute practical solutions that inform future practice” (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 143). While using pragmatism as research philosophy it is necessary to formulate a research problem and question with a truly practical nature. Further, it allows the application of a mixed method design and to work with different types of methods and knowledge, which usually combines both qualitative and quantitative research (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009a; Saunders et al., 2016). In line with the theory, it can be concluded that there are various ways to interpret a social phenomenon and that there is no specific method that is able to provide the entire picture, as there might be multiple realities applicable to it. Therefore, methods used by pragmatists should “...enable credible, well-founded, reliable and relevant data to be collected that advance the research” (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 144; Kelemen and Rumens, 2008). All this allows researchers to choose from a wide variety of different methods.

For the research, a sequential multi-phase design (Saunders et al., 2016; Gray, 2017) consisting of three data collection stages was applied. The SasP research community claims that there is a knowledge gap between how and why strategy tools are used in practice and how this differs between the different types of strategists and the context to which they are applied (Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014; Wright et al., 2013). Therefore, this research contributes to this topic by taking a subjective and socially constructed viewpoint (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012) that is grounded on the philosophy of pragmatism. This approach follows the modern mixed methods approach of recent publications in the field (e.g. Belmondo and Sargis-Roussel, 2015; Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014; Paroutis et al., 2015). All such projects aim to explain actual strategizing activities of practitioners to provide an answer to the questions about how and why they are applied during strategy work (Balogun et al., 2003). The application of pragmatism has enabled the investigation of strategy tool use by taking a practical lens.

3.2 Research Approach

Choosing the right research approach is crucial, as it allows researchers to make appropriate decisions about their specific research design. Further, it helps to consider the research strategies and methodologies with the best fit to the project and provides guidance when it is necessary to adapt the research design due to possible constraints or limitations (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Saunders et al., 2016).

This research aims to investigate a social phenomenon while applying different methods to contribute to and modify the existing theory on strategy tools-in-use. The chosen mixed methods approach is

predominantly inductive (a sequential multi-phase design: qualitative – quantitative – qualitative). Meaning, the focus of the analysis lies on qualitative research findings and is thus comparable to other empirical studies within the SasP field (Belmondo and Sargis-Roussel, 2015; Hill and Westbrook, 1997; Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014; Kaplan and Jarzabkowski, 2006; Paroutis et al., 2015; Stenfors and Tanner, 2007, Wright et al., 2013).

Whittington (2004) claims that strategy practices can only be understood with a strong intimate engagement and the production of precise narratives to investigate how practitioners interact with both social and physical strategizing activities that influence their daily strategy work. Thus, induction allows researchers to generate and build their own theories about the explored phenomenon (Gray, 2017). The gap in SasP research concerning the questions how and why strategy tools are actually used in practice needs much more in-depth exploration, which is why inductive reasoning was applied to approach this matter. The judged conclusions were supported by observations made regarding the different types of practitioners surveyed (Ketokivi and Mantere, 2010; Saunders et al., 2016). Further, a quantitative approach was used to triangulate the initial findings, once the themes and patterns were identified as theoretical basis. This quantitative research stage has a positivist nature, as it moves from theory to additional data, which clearly stands for a deductive approach (Saunders et al., 2016). Strategy-as-practice studies with a positivist approach include Oliveira et al., (2008), Spee et al., (2008), and Rigby and Bilodeau, (2005-2017). In this research, the deductive approach was predominantly used to assess the previous research findings and hypotheses that were developed as part of the first data collection stage (semi-structured interviews).

The combination of both approaches led to an abductive approach to incorporate existing theory where needed and to build a new or at least modify the existing theory available on strategy tools-in-use. The term abduction was first used by Charles Sanders Peirce, ‘the father of pragmatism’, in his *Illustration of the Logic of Science* (Peirce and De Wall, 2014). Pierce developed the term to create a distinction between a type of non-deductive implication and the already known inductive type (Douven, 2011; Reichertz, 2004). Even though he used and coined the term, he never really provided a coherent picture of its actual meaning in his published work. Most of his thoughts on abduction were channeled through Fann (1970), who tried to evolve a better understanding of Peirce’s remarks (Douven, 2011). Using abduction enables researchers “...to make new discoveries in a logically and methodologically ordered way” (Reichertz, 2004, p. 160). Hence, abduction was applied in this research to use the data first collected to identify themes and explain patterns, and to test these results through successive data collection methods (i.e. questionnaire and focus group).

3.3 Research Strategy

A research strategy should be designated to develop “...a plan of action to achieve a goal” (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 177). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), a research strategy can be the

methodological link between the chosen research philosophy and the connected data collection and analysis methods. Usually, the choice is dependent on the particular research questions and objectives, and it has to be coherent with the rest of the research design; e.g. philosophy, approach, purpose and data collection (Saunders et al., 2016). Consequently, the research relied on the exploratory grounded theory approach of Glaser and Strauss (1967) to collect and analyze data on the usability of strategy tools. According to the literature, the methodology is typically used to explore various business and management problems (Goulding, 2002). It is predominantly inductive, and described as a constant comparative method, whereby researchers start their analysis with the first data collected and persistently compare indicators, concepts, categories and findings while the theory emerges (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Saunders et al., 2012). Further, it permits the development of adequate theoretical conceptualizations of the findings (Charmaz, 2000; Saunders, 2012), which enables the contribution to existing theory. The method is particularly suited to this research, as it facilitates the development of a more dynamic explanation on how strategy tools are actually used by strategists regardless of their practical background.

3.3.1 Grounded Theory

Grounded theory refers to both the methodological approaches and the end result of the research process (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016; Gray, 2017; Saunders et al., 2016). It was developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967) as a reaction against variable-centered hypothesis setting and logico-deductive theorizing in research or ‘extreme positivism’ in social research (Suddaby, 2006). The approach is not exclusively a method or framework for qualitative research. However, all related research confirms that it is predominantly used to work with qualitative data (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Therefore, the method is mainly applied to develop and explore a theory rather than empirical analyses. In their initial work, Glaser and Strauss (1967) claimed that testing theory through hypotheses only neglects the whole process of generating a new theory and that such variable-focused analysis mostly ignores real world problems (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). The purpose of the grounded theory methodology is to analyze, interpret and explain social phenomena and to explicate the everyday experiences of social actors in specific situations (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Suddaby, 2006; Saunders et al., 2016). It is designed to systematically approach a research problem while collecting and analyzing qualitative data (Glaser, 1978; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Generally, it is either used to generate theory with little existence of previous knowledge or to modify existing knowledge in terms of an original contribution.

Referring to the literature (Charmaz, 2011; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Suddaby, 2006; Saunders et al., 2016), the grounded theory method is well suited to this research, as it supports the abductive research approach. When working with grounded theory analysis it is important to understand that it

is not entirely ‘inductive theory’, as it contains different elements of inquiry - induction, deduction, as well as verification (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). For Glaser and Strauss (1967) implementing the abduction idea of Charles Sanders Peirce was one way of combining all three aspects, while putting a strong emphasis on practical experiences at the beginning of grounded theory-based research (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). However, Glaser (1992) criticizes the importance of verification emphasized by Corbin and Strauss (1990) (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). For Glaser (1992) the verification element has nothing to do with the initial idea of grounded theory, as he claims it should be more about the investigation of hypotheses and theory. The research design of this research is grounded on the more developed ideas of Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Charmaz (2006, 2014), since they include all elements with similar emphasis.

3.3.2 Applying Grounded Theory in Research

Today, grounded theory methodology is adopted in many different fields of social sciences including business and management research (Timmermans and Tavory, 2007; Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). The method has gained attention in various business studies within the fields of marketing, organization, leadership, technological and organizational changes, as well as strategic management (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). Strategic management researchers claim that there is a strong need for alternative perspectives on everyday practices in organizations. This can be seen as a justification for the application of the approach, since it enables the interpretation and exploration of real-life experiences of different social actors (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Suddaby, 2006). Nonetheless, most researchers need to adapt the method to create theoretical consistency throughout their project, which may not be completely in line with the initial purpose of the approach. Strauss and Corbin (1998) claim that these alterations only add new ideas and concepts to the existing theoretical construct. According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2016, p. 199) the “...methodology can be described as a highly developed idea consisting of a set of formally named and described procedures. These procedures are the key and the tools for producing a theory of social phenomena through the analysis of empirical data.”

Grounded theory was developed to theorize gathered data through a strictly formalized and descriptive methodology, which is also the main criticism of it. The formal coding processes and data analyses influence the research design of some studies as they can limit the flexibility of the whole project (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). Glaser (1992) himself criticizes the development of the theoretical approach, which has moved in a technical and far too complex direction. Goulding (1998) agrees and calls that issue ‘methodological slurring’. Too many rigid rules and misperceptions have been established through the years and researchers should accept that theory does not work without some form of adaptation (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). In particular, work with computer-assisted qualitative data analysis programs, like the computer software NVivo, has opened

new ways of conducting research that follow the ideas of the grounded theory approach (Saunders et al., 2016; Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016; Gray, 2017).

When reviewing the relevant literature, researchers can find three different versions of the grounded theory that can be used to conduct qualitative research, for example Glaser (1992, 2002), Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Charmaz (2006, 2014). The initial ideas presented by Glaser and Strauss (1967) have developed during preceding decades. Subsequently, Strauss (1990) and later Strauss and Corbin (1998) revamped the original method by initiating a complex process of systematic coding, which was strongly criticized by Glaser (2002). The latter claims that too much emphasis is placed on the researcher's personal preferences, which bias the data interpretation, and for that reason researchers should be treated as variables themselves (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). For Strauss and Corbin (1998) the researchers play a different role because their personal interests and input should be considered as the most crucial part of the analysis. Both claim that the researcher that applies grounded theory is subjective, but Glaser argues that he is objective (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). Charmaz's (2006, 2014) third version of the grounded theory is the constructivist version, which is mainly a more flexible simplification of Strauss and Corbin's (1998) approach.

As earlier detailed, this research relies on a subjectivist view to better investigate the personal perceptions and actions of the incorporated social actors, which means that it is primarily based on the grounded theory versions of Strauss and Corbin (1998) as well as Charmaz (2006, 2014). When developing theory from data, grounded theory requires relatively specific operations and actions to enable the constant comparison of the gathered data. Charmaz (2014) explains that to develop consistent interpretations about the narratives of the interviewed social actors, researchers need to code the data and develop categories (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). Thus, they should collect and analyze data simultaneously, while developing analytical codes to reorganize the gathered information into categories or concepts (Saunders et al., 2016).

3.3.3 Grounded Theory Coding

Grounded theory coding or theoretical coding was first elaborated by Glaser (1978) and in more detail by Strauss and Corbin (1998) (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). With the help of theoretical coding the development or modification of theory can take place in direct contact with data, which demonstrates that "...the closeness of data is ever present in the grounded theory approach" (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016, p. 203). Referring to Strauss and Corbin (1998), the coding process consists of three different coding stages: open coding (disaggregation of data into units), axial coding (recognizing relationships between categories), and selective coding (integration of categories around core categories to develop a grounded theory) (Saunders et al., 2016). Charmaz (2006) takes a much simpler approach by applying two coding types: initial coding and focused coding, whereby collected data is disaggregated into conceptual units and given a label (Saunders et al., 2016). The

latter is similar to the coding procedures in the thematic analysis of Braun and Clarke (2002) and the template analysis of King (2012). In 2008, Corbin and Strauss adapted their initial approach by combining axial coding with open coding and renaming selective coding into integration (Saunders et al., 2016), which follows the idea of Charmaz (2006) to become more flexible while coding. To sum up, applying these coding methods describes the process of constantly comparing the collected data with the codes and categories that have been used to develop an emerging theory that is grounded in data (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016; Saunders et al., 2016).

The coding process used in this research, which mainly incorporated the originated coding styles of Charmaz (2006, 2014), is outlined in section 3.7 – Analysis Stages. While applying the grounded theory approach, the aim is to develop data from simple descriptions to profound prescriptions (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). Coding is the most important activity for this specific research strategy., Strauss (1990, p. 20) claims that the main purpose of coding is “...raising questions and giving provisional answers (e.g. hypotheses) about categories and their relations.”

3.4 Mixed Methods Research Design and Process

The research design was used as a general plan to answer the research questions and to structure the data collection as well as the analysis. It contains the research questions, derived from the research objectives (research sub-questions), describes the research methodologies used to conduct the research projects, and specifies the abductive research analysis (Saunders et al., 2016). Figure 2 illustrates this process:

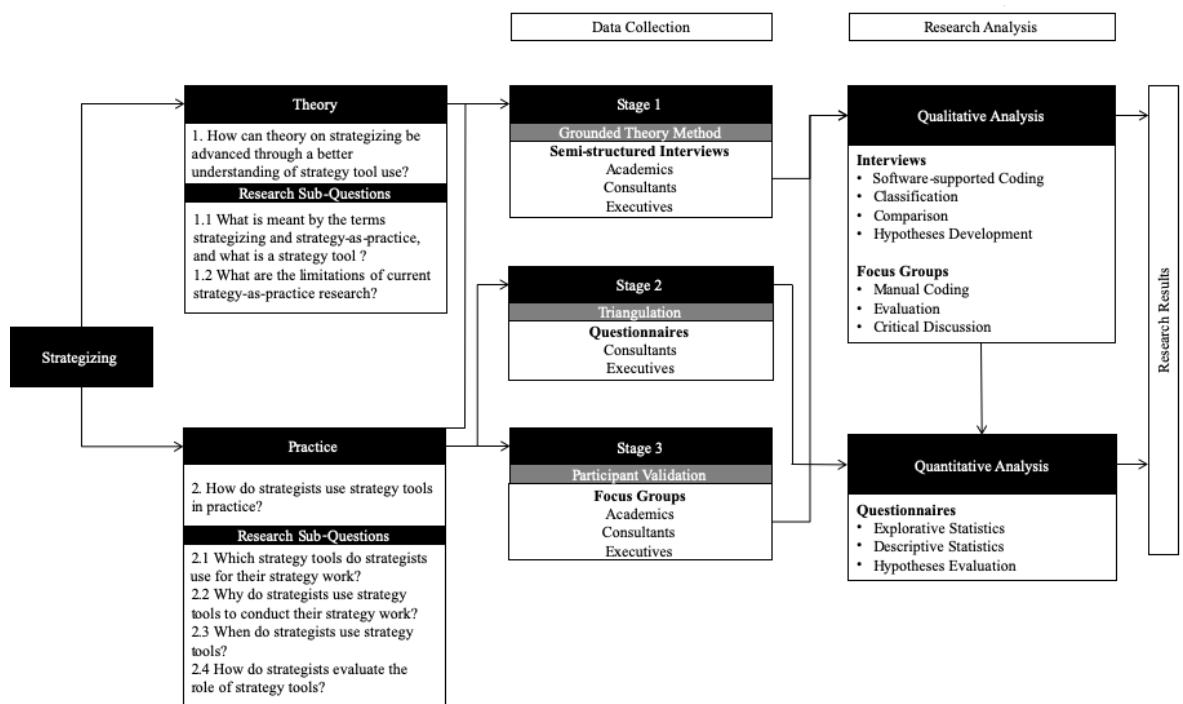


Figure 2: Research Design

3.4.1 Research Questions and Objectives

‘Strategy-as-practice’ constitutes the theoretical background of this research, which aims to contribute knowledge to the relatively new field and to clarify the practical role of traditional strategy tools. More specifically, this research examines the application, meaning and utilization of strategy tools within the strategy process. When applying grounded theory as research strategy to investigate strategy tools-in-use, research questions can be formulated as statements that identify the social phenomenon under investigation (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). The two guiding research questions have theoretical as well as practical implications. To answer them accurately, the research objectives were reformulated into research sub-questions. A mixed methods approach, consisting of three data collection stages, was used to answer the respective research questions. Semi-structured interviews were applied during data collection stage 1, a quantitative online questionnaire as part of data collection stage 2, and a focus group session during the final data collection stage 3. More detailed information on the data collection process is outlined in section 3.5.

1. How can theory on strategizing be advanced through a better understanding of strategy tool use?

The research outlines how strategizing can influence strategy work and thus attempts to close a gap in strategic management theory. To appropriately answer the theory related research question, information gathered from critically reviewing the relevant literature and data collection stage 1 are compared.

1.1 What is meant by the terms strategizing and strategy-as-practice, and what is a strategy tool?

The terms strategizing and strategy-as-practice need clarification, as several definitions exist that show differences and commonalities. This holds also true for the term strategy tool. Numerous definitions are available, but most do not distinguish between actual strategy tools and processes. The research analyzes and compares the most appropriate definitions found in current literature with the results collected during the semi-structured interviews and the focus group. Hence, this comparative analysis aims to contribute further developed definitions for corporate strategists and the members of the respective research community.

1.2 What are the limitations of current strategy-as-practice research?

To draw a more consistent picture of the relatively new research field, information on its existing deficits and limitations is provided. The answer for this sub-question is partially based on findings in current literature but also on qualitative data collected in stage 1 and 3. Hence, critical statements on the terminologies and theory behind strategizing are gathered to discuss their meaning for practice. Based on these findings, it is possible to formulate topics and proposals for future research related to strategy-as-practice and more specifically to strategy tools-in-use.

2. How do strategists use strategy tools in practice?

The practical role of strategy tools needs to be clarified to provide strategists with more insights regarding their utilization in practice. This practice perspective is crucial, as it is needed to connect existing theory with the social phenomenon of strategy tool use. All data collection stages are used to answer this practice related research question.

2.1 Which strategy tools do strategists use for their strategy work?

Like previous studies, the research aims to understand which strategy tools strategists most commonly use. The basis has been the Advanced Institute of Management Research (AIM) strategy toolkit (Jarzabkowski et al., 2009), which was compared to the most popular tools in the leading strategy textbooks (e.g. Grant, 2013; Johnson et al., 2014; Wheelen et al., 2014). The intention is to show the tool preferences of the identified population of interest. To answer this sub-question, it was almost verbatim implemented during the data collection stages 1 and 2. The resulting list of strategy tools-in-use is another contribution, as it demonstrates which tools different types of strategists commonly apply.

2.2 Why do strategists use strategy tools to conduct their strategy work?

To investigate the utilization of strategy tools it is necessary to provide evidence of why such tools are used to conduct strategy work and to examine the rationale of strategists for using strategy tools in practice. Therefore, it is important to identify and compare different experiences of the surveyed strategists involved in this research. Data collection stage 1 is used to create the basis to answer this sub-question since it provides explanation of application experiences, advantages and disadvantages; stage 2 further investigates the rationale of the participants to use such tools. The answer explains the motivation of strategists to use strategy tools, and why it is, or is not, necessary to apply them during strategy work.

2.3 When do strategists use strategy tools?

Research aims to understand when or at which point strategists use strategy tools - before, during or after the actual strategy process. The point of use provides additional insights regarding the meaning of strategy tools. Variations of this sub-question were included in data collection stages 1 and 2. The question is also raised to learn whether tools are used to reach or to proof a strategic decision. In other words, if they are applied to reach rationale answers or to post-rationalize decisions that have already been made.

2.4 How do strategists evaluate the role of strategy tools?

The last step of the inquiry aims to evaluate the usefulness of strategy tools. This question was included in all data collection stages. During the interviews, the related questions remained open to leave room for the interpretations of the participants. The questionnaire in turn attempts to find

prompt answers considering the role and meaning of tools for the corporate world. Ultimately, the gathered results should also provide information regarding the future existence and importance of strategy tools.

3.4.2 Mixed Methods Approach

A mixed method approach was chosen to answer the formulated research questions. Saunders et al. (2016, p. 169) state that “Mixed methods research is the branch of multiple methods research that combines the use of quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques and analytical procedures.” The research philosophy pragmatism was selected as well suited for this project, as it enables choice between any position or mixture of positions (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010; Saunders et al., 2016). Pragmatists claim that “...the nature of the research question, the research context and likely research consequences are driving forces determining the most appropriate methodological choice” (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 170). The exact choice of both quantitative and qualitative methods strongly relies on the particular nature of the research. For this research, more attention was paid to the qualitative research approaches, in line with most SasP research into strategy practices, since they provide necessary details and rich explanations to deepen the understanding of strategy tools-in-use. The mixed approach is also applicable when using grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) as research strategy. In fact, grounded theory is increasingly used with mixed method approaches, though most researchers adopt it without considering the basic rules connected to it. This development is criticized within grounded theory literature (e.g. Charmaz, 2014; Goulding, 2002), because developing or modifying theory is only possible if following a resembling rule setting, as applied in the specific version one uses (e.g. Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; or Charmaz, 2006).

When conducting research with a mixed methods design, quantitative and qualitative techniques are combined in many different ways that start from fairly simple concurrent set-ups to more complex and sequential settings (Saunders et al., 2016). In this research, the research problem was investigated with an exploratory sequential multi-phase design, which allows the inclusion of induction (qualitative – semi-structured interviews), deduction (quantitative – questionnaires), and verification or validation (qualitative – focus groups). All were essential for the grounded theory analysis (Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Strauss, 1990, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016).

3.4.3 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is the central entity of analysis in a research project. In other words, the precise object for which the researcher is trying to develop his conclusions (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2014; Johnson et al. 2007). Johnson et al. (2003) recommend all SasP researchers to identify their unit of analysis that enables them to draw more general contributions. Several strategy practices, such as workshops

or the use of tools, are quite common in different organizations, but others tend to be unique, such as specific planning routines (Whittington, 2006). Therefore, Whittington (2006, p. 629) claims that it is expedient for researchers taking a practice perspective on strategy tools, that these “...common practices become the units of analysis and it is their performance, rather than that of particular organizations, that needs to be explained” and understood (Hodari, 2009). One of the problems associated with the right choice of a unit of analysis is the difficulty of drawing boundaries around strategizing activities. The underlying concept of strategizing is considered open-ended, and the more so when approaching it from different practical perspectives (Johnson et al., 2007; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Rouleau, 2005; Westley, 1990;). Thus, it can be challenging to set an appropriate scope and unit of analysis within the research design. Both aspects must be constrained to ensure a systematic empirical research (Johnson et al. 2003, 2007). They further state that it is important to preserve a sense of ambiguity in relation to the identified unit of analysis, especially when approaching the problem from a rather interpretative perspective. In a similar way, Van Maanen (1995, p. 139) argues “...to be determinate, we must be indeterminate.” Johnson et al. (2007, p. 60) clarify and indicate “...the research itself must reflect the ambiguity present in the empirical situation, even including the ambiguity in its object.” Therefore, they suggest a ‘middle-range tactic’ that allows variation and mobilizing the unit of analysis for the respective research design (Johnson et al., 2007; Langley, 1986).

The unit of analysis of this research focuses on strategy tools-in-use (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014), which was subject for modification during this study as the underlying ‘concept of tools’ already involves ambiguity in the terminology itself (Hodari, 2009). What is a tool? Which types of frameworks qualify as strategy tools? These questions need to be clarified, as the collected participant definitions may demonstrate too many variations and adaptations. To deal with the given ambiguity of the term ‘strategy tool’, a predetermined set of tools was employed that was based on the AIM strategy toolkit (Jarzabkowski et al., 2009). However, to avoid losing additional information room has been provided for personally preferred tools that respondents might view as influential strategic knowledge artifacts (Wright et al., 2013).

When taking a practice perspective, it is interesting to focus on the particular practitioners using tools rather than looking at tools in isolation (Hodari, 2009), which is reflected in the chosen unit of analysis. This is in line with Jarzabkowski and Kaplan (2014), as both claim that practices-in-use should be considered as proper units of analysis for such SasP studies, which justifies the rationale of Orlikowski (2000) to study technologies-in-use (Hodari, 2009). In strategy-as-practice research, the focus should be on the actor respectively the practitioner and not on firms or industries (Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014; Kaplan, 2007; Paroutis et al., 2016). While doing research on doing strategy “...the issue of defining units of analysis is of course related to the issue of sampling” (Johnson et al., 2007). After the unit of analysis is identified, the typical sampling questions become

present - how many and which cases should be studied, where can we find them and how do we obtain their information (Johnson et al., 2007). Hence, the proceeding section emphasizes the sample selection.

3.4.4 Sampling

Every research project, regardless of its research questions and objectives that uses empirical data needs to consider the use of sampling techniques (Saunders et al., 2016; Gray, 2017; Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Referring to Saunders et al. (2016, p. 272) “...sampling techniques enable you to reduce the amount of data you need to collect by considering only data from a subgroup rather than all possible cases or elements.” The sample of a study should cover the entire variety of cases in such a way that the researcher is able to provide meaningful suggestions and to justify his research findings (Becker, 1998; Saunders et al., 2016). When conducting research, one should decide whether it is practical to collect data from the entire population or if it is more convenient to select a sample. In the vast majority of cases, researchers select a sample that is equally important for almost all data collection techniques. Sampling has various benefits when conducting a complex research project. It enables substantial time savings, datasets become more manageable as fewer people are involved, and data collection is much more detailed, which ultimately leads to a quicker availability of results. However, the most important aspect of selecting a sample is the researcher receiving the qualification to answer his set research questions (Saunders et al., 2016; Bryman and Bell, 2015). In Figure 3, the structure of the sampling process for this research is outlined.

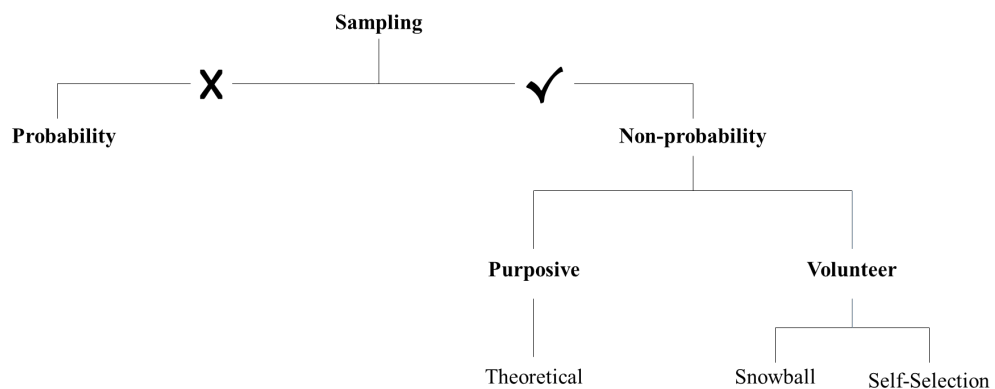


Figure 3: Structure of Sampling Process

Non-Probability Sampling

Non-probability sampling, also called non-random sampling, was employed as the overarching sampling approach, which means the probability of all selected cases from the targeted population was unknown (Saunders et al., 2016; Yin, 2016). No research questions that require statistical inferences about the population’s characteristics have been raised, which is why the chosen sampling technique appeared to be reasonable. The majority of all non-probability sampling techniques is

based on subjective judgment (Saunders et al., 2016; Gray, 2017; Sekaran and Bougie, 2016; Yin, 2016), which is in line with the chosen research philosophy – pragmatism. However, findings based on non-random sampling cannot confidently be generalized for the population of interest. Moreover, it involves the risk of a sampling bias, as it results in a sample of a population in which participants were not equally likely to be selected. For that reason, different non-probability sampling techniques were employed to reduce this source of bias.

Purposive Sampling

During all three data collection phases, purposive sampling was applied, which is a particular form of non-probability sampling, to reach the targeted population of strategists. While using purposive sampling, researchers trust their own judgment to select cases appropriate to answer their research questions and to meet the set objectives (Saunders et al., 2016; Yin, 2016). The technique is usually applied when conducting in-depth research with rather small samples, as it enables researchers to select particularly informative cases (Saunders et al., 2016; Neuman, 2014). Respondents are “...selected on the basis of their expertise in the subject investigated” (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013, p. 254). Purposive samples should not be considered as statistically representative (Saunders et al., 2016; Gray, 2017; Patton, 2015; Sekaran and Bougie, 2016; Yin, 2016), but they help to gain detailed insights on the characteristics of very specific target populations that are usually difficult to access (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016; Gray, 2017). Hence, the sampling process needs to be confined to the specific types of respondents who can deliver the expected information, as they are either the only ones who possess it, or they stand for the set criteria of the researcher. The technique is therefore specifically suitable when particular participants “...are chosen because they are known to provide important information that could not be gained from other sampling designs” (Gray, 2017, p. 225; Maxwell, 2009). However, a core issue of such samples can be researcher bias, especially when the researcher’s judgements are poorly conceived (Yin, 2016). Consequently, participants with heterogeneous characteristics were chosen for this study to increase the variation in the collected data and therefore reduce possible bias (Patton, 2015; Saunders et al., 2016).

Theoretical Sampling

Due to the premise of the grounded theory strategy, theoretical sampling was employed, which is a special form of purposive sampling. All other forms of purposive sampling, i.e. typical case, extreme or deviant case, critical case, heterogeneous or maximum variation sampling, or homogeneous sampling, were discarded as theoretical sampling is a central component of the grounded theory approach and essential to develop and refine theory grounded in data (Breckenridge and Jones, 2009, p. 1). In their initial work, Glaser and Strauss (1967; Breckenridge and Jones, 2009) formulated an almost undisputed definition. Theoretical sampling is “...the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges” (Glaser and Strauss,

1967; p.45). Later, Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe it as a means to “...maximize opportunities to discover variations among concepts and to densify categories in terms of their properties and dimensions” (p.201). While applying it, researchers need to have an idea of ‘where’ and not particularly ‘what’ to sample. Generally, participants are chosen as they are needed for the comparative analysis. This process is called subsequent sample selection, whereby participants are purposively selected by the needs of the theory that emerges (Saunders et al., 2016). Eriksson and Kovalainen (2016) claim, that in practice the sampling of additional activities, events, or experiences is directed through the evolvement of theoretical constructs (Charmaz, 2014). The sampling and more accurate comparative analysis of the theoretical constructs goes on until theoretical saturation has been reached (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1990; Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). With these rules, “...the resulting theory is considered to be conceptually dense, solid and grounded in the data” (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016, p. 203). Ultimately, this is the actual aim of the grounded theory strategy, as theoretical sampling enables the achievement of core categories that sufficiently explain the investigated social phenomenon (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016); in case of this research the use of strategy tools in practice. Theoretical sampling was solely used during the first data collection phase – semi-structured interviews. This approach allowed the grounded theory to emerge, while successively conducting the. Consequently, additional participants were selected and interviewed on behalf of the emerging categories.

Volunteer Sampling

During all data collection phases, purposive sampling was complemented through volunteer sampling, and more precisely through snowball as well as self-selection sampling. Both were employed to reduce the different forms of bias mentioned above. Snowball sampling (Goodman, 1961) was necessary, due to the limited access to ‘actual’ strategic practitioners. While using this sampling technique, access to a small pool of initial candidates was needed to request the nomination of other participants suitable for the respective research approach. Snowball sampling is quite useful when the population of interest is not connected to a list or any other obvious source of possible research participants (Saunders et al., 2016; Gray, 2017; Morgan, 2008; Yin, 2016). However, participants involved should know others that share certain characteristics and thus make them eligible for the project (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981; Gray, 2017).

The data collection began with purposive sampling to achieve two different effects – gather first information related to the research topic and to ask for other potential candidates suitable and willing to be part of the study (Morgan, 2008). In the initiation phase, the professional network of the researcher worked sufficiently to start the entire process, but at a certain point, snowball sampling was the only possibility to reach a broader sample. Due to the very specific notion of the sample population, self-selection sampling was also used, which allowed potential participants to identify their own desire to become part of this research. The request was therefore publicized through

appropriate media, specifically the professional social media platforms LinkedIn and Xing while making use of initiators well connected within both platforms. Self-selecting participants often take part in such research projects, as they tend to have strong feelings and opinions regarding the research problem or the raised objectives (Saunders et al., 2016). These kinds of contributions can be quite value-enhancing due to their limited failure rate, as participants decide themselves whether they are suitable for the research or not. This technique was used at the end of data collection phase 1 – semi-structured interviews and quite sufficiently during phase 2 – questionnaires. A problem of volunteer samples is the voluntary response bias, as most participants usually try to identify candidates who are similar to themselves, which potentially results in a rather homogenous sample (Lee, 2000; Saunders et al., 2016). However, this form of bias was considered as a marginal problem, as all respondents were informed that they are only suitable if they had experience with the application of strategy tools before they actually participated.

3.4.5 Sample Size

There are no rules for non-probability sampling techniques regarding sample size because it is mostly not the size that is important, but rather the logical relationship between the selected sampling technique and the focus of the research project itself (Saunders et al., 2016). Clearly, the sample size is dependent on the research problem “...in particular, what you need to find out, what will be useful, what will have credibility and what can be done within your available resources” (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 297; Patton, 2015). In particular, when researchers conduct exploratory research that is initiated with some form of in-depth interviews it is important to create validity grounded on insights that are collected throughout the data collection.

A common misconception of qualitative research is that numbers are unimportant to ensure the appropriateness of a sampling strategy (Sandelowski, 1995; Gray, 2017). In practice, qualitative samples should not be too small neither too large. Many research methods books claim that the collection of qualitative data should continue until the researcher has reached some sort of *data saturation* (e.g. Flick, 2009; Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016; Gray, 2017; Saunders et al., 2016). Data saturation is reached once the collection of additional data provides no or just partially novel information or themes (Saunders et al., 2016). According to Ryan and Bernhard (2003) there are three aspects that can influence the achievement of saturation: the amount and complexity of the gathered data, the experience and fatigue of the researcher, and the number of reviewers analyzing the data. Once data saturation is reached, it can be used to justify the researcher’s decision for the sample size in his qualitative research project (Boddy, 2016). At this point, the research results should be capable to deliver at least some degree of generalization. Traditionally, generalization is seen as one of the central aims of social science, because it is a process that enables researchers to formulate and further advance theory (Mayring, 2007). When considering the applied research strategy, Strauss

and Corbin (1990) argue that saturation is always a matter of degree (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). They further claim, that the issue of time is much more crucial than saturation, because “... the longer researchers take to learn about and know their data, the better the results are as there will always be the potential for ‘something new to emerge’ in the analysis” (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016, p.89). However, in the initial work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) theoretical saturation was defined as a research milestone, whereby the researcher must identify the point at which no further information is being added to the investigation and more precisely the categories (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016).

For this research, saturation was appropriate and needed to develop hypotheses that were based on the interview results and the underlying analysis, instead of simply explaining the meaning of the gathered data (Dey, 1999). At this point, it is important to note that the investigated population was fairly homogeneous and that all interviews were semi-structured, which was necessary to achieve data saturation. Otherwise, it would have been impossible to reach saturation, as unstructured interviews typically lead to new and differing information (Guest et al., 2006).

Initially, the sample size of the *first data collection stage* was planned to consist of 15-20 interviews (Kuzel, 1992). However, determining a suitable sample size was difficult. The literature gives some guidance; for example, Guest et al. (2006) state that 12 in-depth interviews can be sufficient for a relatively homogenous sample (Sandelowski, 1995), but for a more heterogeneous group this number might not be suitable. Creswell (2013) claims that researchers should expect to conduct between 5 and 30 interviews to reach some sort of saturation, especially when the research question has a wider range (Saunders et al., 2016). For grounded theory research, Marshall et al. (2013) recommend a sample size that ranges between 20-30 interviews, but also clarify that this number should not be considered as imperative. During the first data collection phase, 15 interviews were conducted. The theoretical saturation started between the interviews 11-14, as most information was either repetitive or simply a reformulation of insights that had already been gleaned. New codes or themes only emerged infrequently and progressively while the analysis continued. Interestingly this confirms the findings of Guest et al. (2006), as they claim that data saturation mostly occurs by the time research has analyzed 12 interviews.

The *second data collection stage* aimed to reach a wider sample to enhance the weight of the research results. The phase was used to triangulate the previously collected information to increase the credibility as well as validity of the research results. Yet again, non-probability sampling in the form of purposive and volunteer sampling was applied to create a deeper understanding of the social phenomenon under investigation (Marshall et al., 2013; Small, 2009). However, none of these sampling techniques can be considered as statistically representative, as the sample selection is mostly based on subjective judgement (Saunders et al., 2016). Consequently, a sampling error cannot be assessed, which would have been possible with a random sample. Hence, determining or even

calculating a suitable sample size is fairly impossible when investigating such a non-random sample. Had it been possible to reach a random sample, a sample size of 384 cases (i.e. confidence level = 95%; confidence interval = 5%; population >100000) would have been needed. However, even with access to a random sample it would have been extremely difficult or even impossible to reach a meaningful sample of strategists. During this second data collection stage, it was planned to contact approximately 100 participants. The targeted population consisted of various corporate executives and strategy consultants since they represent the group of practitioners that actually apply strategy tools in practice. The expected return rate of the questionnaire was set between 35-50%. In total, of the 97 candidates contacted, 50 responses were collected, which represents a return rate of 51,5%. However, this return rate is not truly representative due to the different forms of volunteer sampling. The first questionnaire page was visited 236 times, which expresses a more realistic return rate of approximately 21%.

The *third data collection phase* was used to validate the results gathered from the semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The aim was to undertake one or two focus group session depending on the information gathered. Such groups should consist of 4-6 strategists. Purposive sampling was again applied to select the participants for the focus groups. However, it should be noted, all participants had already been contacted during or contributed to one of the previous stages. One focus group session with seven participants was conducted, as the data collected was sufficient with regard to the findings of the earlier stages. This means that most of the previous results have either been confirmed or slightly modified, which is why it was decided that one focus group was enough with as participant validation.

3.4.6 Access to Sample Population

Gaining access to the sample population is one of the most difficult tasks in a research project, which is why researchers often rely on their professional network. Saunders et al. (2016) explain that there are different levels and types of access when conducting research. The type chosen for this research, hybrid access, combines both the traditional and the internet-mediated access approach. Traditional access to the sample population usually involves face-to-face interactions, especially when conducting some form of research interviews. The internet-mediated access type involves the use of computer-based technologies, such as the Internet, email, or the use of video telephony software via webcam to gain virtual access to conduct interviews or deliver questionnaires (Saunders et al., 2016).

Accessing a meaningful population is one of the major challenges of SasP research, since it is necessary to create close and intimate contact with various practitioner perspectives (Paroutis et al., 2016; Balogun et al., 2003), even though the researcher cannot offer any benefit (Langley, 1986; Hodari, 2009). For this research, the major issue was access to a meaningful sample of consultants and executives, which is difficult because information on strategy tool use implies information on

sensitive topics such as underlying strategy processes (Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Paroutis et al., 2016). Accessing academics with strategy backgrounds was assumed to be straightforward, since they are usually not involved in any particular corporate strategy work. However, this cannot be generalized, as some are perhaps involved in part-time consulting activities. The vast majority of studies on strategy tools-in-use and practices have either been undertaken with or within public sector organizations (e.g. Chesley and Wenger, 1999; Langley, 1986, 1989; Lozeau et al., 2002) or academic institutions (e.g. Dyson, 2004; Jarzabkowski, 2000; Jarzabkowski and Giulietti, 2007; Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014; Wright et al., 2013). Both have fewer concerns about confidentiality and competitive positions (Johnson et al., 2007; Hodari, 2009). Therefore, Kaplan (2007) claims that there is little evidence that organizations in such public sectors can project strategy practices that are similar to organizations within industries from the private sector (Hodari, 2009). To obtain access, different approaches were applied, as detailed below:

In stage 1 – semi-structured interviews – a hybrid access approach was employed to reach the interview respondents. Meaning, interviews were either conducted in person at the particular corporate site or via Skype or Facetime. Whenever possible interviews were arranged ‘on-site’ to create a more realistic interaction scenario, as people usually tend to better portray their practical experiences when they are at work (Balogun et al., 2003). In many cases internet-based video telephony was applied, because of time (restrictions of participants), cost (travel expenses) and logistical constraints (timeframe of semi-structured interview stage) (Saunders et al., 2016). Access to participants needed to be granted before the actual interview could be conducted, which was usually not a very straightforward procedure due to ethical constraints (e.g. anonymity and confidentiality standards). Prior to the interview, all interviewees received an information sheet and consent form as part of the proposing email letter. All participants were asked to grant either written or verbal consent before the interview.

In stage 2 – questionnaires – different types of internet-mediated access were used to approach the participants for the online questionnaire. The questionnaire was based on a survey tool provided by Bristol Online Surveys (BOS). All above-mentioned sampling techniques were employed to distribute the questionnaire. The majority of participants was accessed with a proposing email that included the hyperlink to access the survey, as well as the information sheet to detail the ethical standards applied. Several others were recruited through one of the popular professional social media platforms (LinkedIn or Xing), as response to a proposing post that included the link to the survey. In all cases, participants were asked to grant informed consent at the beginning of the questionnaire.

In stage 3 – focus group – candidates from the previous stages were selected again to verify the findings. Similar to the other stages, the contact was initiated with a proposing email that included an information sheet and a consent form. Afterwards, the procedure and purpose of the focus group was further clarified during a phone call. Prior to the focus group session, participants were asked

for either verbal or written consent. The session was held in the observation laboratory at University of Applied Sciences in Mainz, Germany.

3.4.7 Research Participants

In most research projects, it is usually problematic to identify and access key research participants, who can provide appropriate and relevant data. The overarching aim is to gain access to rich information enabling the researcher to undertake fine-grained and in-depth analyses to learn from the investigated social phenomena (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016, p. 53). Hence, knowledgeable participants with the ability to comment and contribute to the phenomenon under study should be selected. Accordingly, Johnson et al. (2007, p. 61) argue that studies with small samples should always try to maximize the value of the gathered information “... in terms of the types of inferences or insights that can be drawn from it.”

Several different types of practitioners in the field of SasP have received attention in recent years, namely academics, consultants, and executives from different hierarchical levels. However, the majority of studies usually concentrate on only one or two of these (e.g. Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014; Paroutis et al., 2015; Wright et al., 2013). Interestingly, consultants are mostly neglected, as accessing them is difficult due to their time and availability constraints. However, during all data collection stages conducted for this research it was at least equally challenging to reach high-level executives that deal with strategy work.

For the first data collection stage, different types of respondents were targeted, e.g. academics with a strategy background (i.e. practice experience in strategy work or teaching experience in strategic management), consultants that work or have worked on strategic projects, and corporate executives involved in an organization’s daily strategizing activities. The key selection requirement for all respondents was their knowledge and experience on strategy tool use. The decision to include different types of strategists was taken to create a more elaborate picture of how strategy tools are actually applied in practice. Fifteen semi-structured interviews were conducted. Table 3 illustrates the profiles of the different participants, which are here clustered in three different groups. Participants were selected on a convenience basis, as long as they fulfilled the predetermined criterion. The industrial background or business area did not play a role while selecting respondents.

Participants	Academics	Consultants	Executives
Number	5	5	5
Industry	Private University Public University	Management Consulting	Banking Manufacturing Pharmaceutical
Hierarchical Level	Low - Medium - High	Medium - High	Medium - High
Job Roles	Assistant Professor Professor Senior Lecturer	Engagement Manager Principal Consultant Project Leader Senior Manager Manager	Corporate Director Internal Consulting Corporate Vice President Business & Enabling Strategies Head of Portfolio Management & Strategy Head of Strategic Development / Corporate Strategy Vice President Portfolio Management & Strategic Planning Financial Services Glass and Glass-Ceramics Human Pharmaceuticals Human Pharmaceuticals, Animal Health, Biopharmaceuticals Human Pharmaceuticals, Animal Health, Biopharmaceuticals Biology Business Administration Mathematics Veterinary Studies
Business Area	Organization & Human Resource Management General Management & Organization Strategic Marketing	Social Business and Fintechs Industrial Goods Public Services Public Transport	
Education	Strateg Management Business Administration Economics Geography International Business Tourism Management	Social Business and Fintechs Business Administration Philosophy Informatics	
MBA	3 out of 5	1 out of 5	2 out of 5

Table 3: Participant Profiles – Semi-structured Interviews

In the second data collection stage, the questionnaire was distributed to consultants and executives only, as both are known to use tools in actual competitive industry settings. Academics were excluded from the questionnaire sample due to their rather implicit use of strategy tools (i.e. exemplary application during lectures or research projects), as they are usually not involved in practical strategy work. All hierarchical levels of consultants and executives were tolerated as long as the participants were involved in some sort of strategy work or decision-making. As mentioned, the questionnaire was completed by 50 respondents with a majority of executives. Table 4 outlines an overview of the participants based on the demographic questions that were asked at the beginning of the questionnaire. Most of the presented variables were not included in the latter analysis. However, some of these elements were collected to probe possible other relationships in the data.

	Consultants	Executives	Total	
Number	21 (42%)	29 (58%)	50	
Gender				Percentage
Male	17	28	45	90%
Female	4	1	5	10%
Total				
Age				
21-29	4	2	6	12%
30-49	13	16	29	58%
50-64	3	9	12	24%
>65	1	2	3	6%
Business Education				
Yes	19	25	44	88%
No	2	4	6	12%
Highest Level of Education				
Bachelor/Diploma	2	8	10	20%
Master/MBA	13	13	26	52%
PhD/Doctoral Studies	6	8	14	28%
Industry/Sector				
Automotive	0	1	1	2%
Chemical	1	0	1	2%
Consulting	10	3	13	26%
Finance	1	2	3	6%
IT	6	0	6	12%
Manufacturing	0	8	8	16%
Pharma	1	5	6	12%
Retail	0	1	1	2%
Transportation	0	3	3	6%
Other	2	6	8	16%
Responsibility				
General Management	5	11	16	32%
Strategy	12	9	21	42%
Sales/Purchasing	0	3	3	6%
Operations	2	2	4	8%
Finance	0	1	1	2%
Controlling	0	1	1	2%
Other	2	2	4	8%
Hierarchical Level				
Low	5	1	6	12%
Medium	6	11	17	34%
High	10	17	27	54%
Years of Experience				
1-2	2	1	3	6%
3-5	6	5	11	22%
5-10	4	8	12	24%
>10	9	15	24	48%

Table 4: Participant Profiles – Questionnaires

During the last stage, all different types of strategists were included to conclusively validate the research findings from the preceding two stages. As detailed later, the focus group members had either already participated during the interview stage, the questionnaire stage, or both. Table 5 outlines the backgrounds of the focus groups members and uses the previous group clustering.

Participants	Academics	Consultants	Executives
Number	2	3	2
Industry	Public University	Consulting	Pharmaceutical
Hierarchical Level	Medium – High	Medium – High	Medium – High
Job Roles	Professor	Engagement Manager Senior Consultant Manager	Corporate Director Internal Consulting Manager Market Access
Business Area	Strategic Management Management & SMEs	Public Transport Telecommunication	Human Pharmaceuticals, Animal Health, Biopharmaceuticals Human Pharmaceuticals, Animal Health, Biopharmaceuticals
Education	Business Administration Business Administration & Informatics	Financial Services Philosophy & Informatics English & International Management Business Administration	Veterinary Studies Business Administration
MBA	1 out of 2	3 out of 3	2 out of 2

Table 5: Participant Profiles – Focus Group

3.5 Data Collection

A mixed method design was used to investigate and achieve the formulated research objectives. The collection process was divided into three different stages and undertaken with a sequential multi-phase design. Throughout the stages primary data was collected with semi-structured interviews, an online questionnaire, and a focus group session. Each stage was followed by an in-depth analysis to answer the proposed research questions and to support it with evidence. The previous analyses needed to be completed first to inform the next.

3.5.1 Exploratory Sequential Multi-Phase Design

The variations to combine qualitative and quantitative research methods are steadily increasing. This has led to the development of an ever-increasing number of different mixed method design approaches in recent years (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011; Nastasi et al., 2010; Gray, 2017; Saunders et al., 2016; Yin, 2016). During this research, an exploratory sequential multi-phase design has been applied, for which several phases were undertaken to expand and elaborate the initial findings. Such a design is characterized by the sequence of the methods occurring, i.e. a qualitative method followed by a quantitative method, and then by another qualitative method (Gray, 2017; Saunders et al., 2016). Using multiple data collection phases is both interactive and iterative, as the earlier phases subsequently inform and direct the following phases of data collection and analysis (Saunders et al., 2016; Yin, 2016). The data collection started with semi-structured interviews that mostly contained open-ended questions to give participants the chance to define and describe the phenomenon under study. In addition, some closed-ended questions were employed (e.g. list of

known/used strategy tools), which were later compared to the questionnaire responses. A substantial outcome of this stage was the derived hypotheses, which were later triangulated with the results of the subsequent online questionnaire. The results of both stages were then validated with the participant evaluations from the focus group session. Figure 4 illustrates the applied multi-phase design in a simplified form.

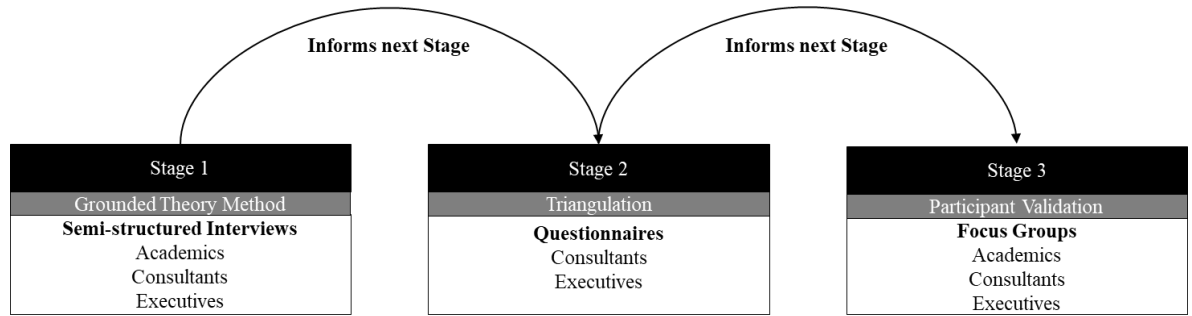


Figure 4: Sequence Data Collection Stages

3.5.2 Qualitative Research: Semi-Structured Interviews

Using qualitative interviews as the central data source is common in SasP research. According to Johnson et al. (2007) they provide a principle source to practitioner experiences and feelings regarding practices-in-use. This is similar to the suggestions of Worren et al. (2002), who claim that interviewing practitioners about their opinions and experiences on the actual use of tools appears to be a valid approach to investigate practice perceptions (Hodari, 2009). These perceptions (e.g. experiences, knowledge, opinions, interpretations, and feelings) were crucial to answer the more open research questions in this research that focused on how and why strategy tools are used in practice. Mason (2002) supports this idea and emphasizes that it is important to interact with practitioners by talking and listening to their opinions, which ultimately enables researchers to gain access to their in-depth knowledge and insights.

Instead of using structured interviews that solely rely on closed questions to generate quantifiable results that help to clue pre-determined categories (i.e. a priori), semi-structured interviews were employed to gather more complex insights (Fontana and Frey, 1994) and to enable the necessary interaction with the practitioners. Semi-structured interviews are ‘non-standardized’ and also called ‘qualitative research interviews’ (King, 2004; Gray, 2017). In such an interview, the researcher has a list of different themes and questions to be covered. This ‘guideline’ can vary between every interview because of the different types and backgrounds of participants (Gray, 2017). The interview type is mostly applied to study ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016), and its flexibility should be considered as an advantage due to the researcher’s ability to promptly react to his opponent and to change the question order if necessary (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Saunders et al., 2016). The greatest challenge, however, is to cover all pre-formulated topics and questions, and to retain the raised issues essential to the research problem. A researcher never knows in which direction

a respondent will lead the interview, because semi-structured interviews allow much more freedom than structured approaches (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). While applying this method, this research aimed to gain a variety of insightful answers about day-to-day strategizing activities and the use of strategy tools in practice. Based on the theory grounded in the acquired data, hypotheses were derived that were assessed with the subsequent questionnaire approach.

As mentioned, 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather information about the use of strategy tools. Theoretical saturation started between interviews 11-14. At that point, the developed categories had a distinctive meaning and importance, and there was little need to continue with extensive interviewing, as new information was not dramatically illuminating (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Dadourova, 2008). Interviews 13-15 confirmed that appraisal, since no further insights from reviewing additional results were generated.

Interview Content

All participants were interviewed using an interview guideline suited to their perspective. Prior to the first interview, the guide was prepared to structure the approach. The chosen topics and corresponding questions reflected the insights and findings gained from the reviewed literature. During the interview phase, two marginally different guides were applied (see Appendix A and B). Consultants and executives were interviewed with the same guide. Academics, however, were interviewed with an adjusted interview guide, due to their rather implicit role in practice. Both guides consisted of four major parts – introduction questions, theory related questions, practice related questions, and closing questions. The first part aimed to obtain knowledge related to the strategic background and experience of the respondent with a focus on the terms strategy work, strategic problems, and strategy process. The theory related questions were asked to test the interviewee's knowledge on 'strategy tools' and their general familiarity with the terms 'strategizing' and 'strategy-as-practice'. Parts of the gathered information were later used to contribute appropriate definitions for these terms. The third part – practice related questions – was the most crucial section of the interview, as all questions were related to the actual application of strategy tools. In the latter two parts, closed-ended questions were included to understand which strategy tools the respondent knew and preferably used. Besides that, respondents were asked in which phase they tend to apply the tools they are using, and how they rate their efficiency. Similar questions were raised again in the subsequent questionnaire. The fourth part of the interview guide, the closing questions, created a direct link to the planned contribution of the research, i.e. to develop recommendations that enable strategists to undertake more efficient and effective strategy work. The generic design of the interview guide supported the generation of comparable data, which was a prerequisite to undertake the comparative analyses.

Collection Process

Prior to the first interview, the interview guide was piloted to verify its quality and consistence. Two former colleagues from the University of Applied Sciences in Mainz, who were not part of this research, were asked for critical feedback. The respondents made comments on particular interpretations of the questions, such as understanding hurdles as well as the need for clearer definitions and wording, and criticized the interview style (e.g. the interviewer's attitude or intonation). All feedback loops led to an improvement to the guide and interview style, and thus helped to obtain appropriate information to answer the set research questions.

To receive insightful answers, an interviewer needs to gain trust and respect to ensure the reliability of the results (Oppenheim, 1992; Guest et al., 2006). For this research, trust was gained through the distribution of the participant information sheet, which included the confidential agreement and an explanation of the study's purpose. Before the actual interviews were conducted, respondents were asked to grant either written or verbal consent. With their informed consent, all participants were ensured that they would be treated with the highest standards of anonymity and confidentiality. The documented standards were set based on ethical approval, which was granted through the Research Ethics Committee of London Southbank University. Approval was obtained before data collection started.

The interview process took four months (December 2015 – March 2016). Participants were predominantly international with a slight preponderance of respondents from Germany. Most were employed at German-based corporations. In some organizations, it was possible to interview more than one member. Every interview began with a short explanation of the research context and participants were asked to provide some demographic information for the categorization approach (Cassell, 2015). Due to the extensive use of open-ended questions, the duration of the interviews was not predictable. On average, they lasted for 60 minutes including the introduction at the beginning. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for later analysis and coding procedures. Transcription was conducted with the highest accuracy possible in terms of data interpretation and resulted in a data set of 102 single-spaced typed pages (see Appendix Q for an exemplary transcript; see Appendix S for full set of transcripts). A denaturalist transcription mode was followed whereby idiosyncratic elements of speech were removed (Oliver et al., 2005; Cassell, 2015). The process was supported through the software 'f4 transcript', a computer-assisted transcription tool.

The overall set of interviews covered a wide variety of valuable in-depth information on strategy tools used in practice and provided understanding of the underlying theoretical constructs. Participants reflected on their entire experience in strategy work, shared insights on the role of strategy tools in daily strategizing and identified issues that were not initially outlined in the reviewed literature. This information was needed to identify new theories grounded in the data.

3.5.3 Quantitative Research: Questionnaires

In the past, strategic management research favored quantitative studies (Ketchen et al., 2008; Phelan et al., 2002; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). For instance, between 1980-2006 only 7.9% of empirical studies in the Strategic Management Journal were purely conducted with qualitative methods (Molina-Azorin, 2009; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). In recent years, this trend has shifted towards qualitative approaches either based on interviews (Mantere, 2005; Regnér, 2003) or observations (Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Samra-Fredericks, 2010). However, the use of questionnaires is still a common element of SasP research (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013; O'Brien, 2011; Rigby and Bilodeau, 2017; Stenfors et al., 2007; Tassabehji and Isherwood, 2014), although it is increasingly employed to triangulate previous qualitative methods.

Generally, questionnaires are popular because they allow researchers to collect great amounts of data from sizeable populations in a distinct economical way. The gathered data is standardized and information can be compared easily (Saunders et al., 2012; Gray, 2017; Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Most people understand the term 'questionnaire' as a process where "...the person answering the question actually records [its] own answers..." which means that the questionnaire is self-completed (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 436). De Vaus (2014) claims that within a questionnaire each person is asked to respond to a predetermined order of the same set of questions (Saunders et al., 2016). Therefore, researchers should be aware of the difficulty in producing a reliable questionnaire to ensure the collection of data required to answer and achieve the set research questions and objectives (Saunders et al., 2016; Gray, 2017).

In this research, the second data collection stage aimed to clarify how strategy tools are actually used in practice by comparing the results with the more open interview approach. Participants were specifically asked why, when, under which circumstances and for what reason they use strategy tools and which strategic process they cover with them. With 50 questionnaire responses, the method illustrated a much broader view on the entire investigation. Participants involved in the research had to be involved in strategy work but did not necessarily have to be a strategist. The questionnaire was built on important variables found in the literature, but also on the issues as well as hypotheses derived from the interviews.

Questionnaire Content

All invited participants received access to the same online questionnaire, which was prepared with Bristol Online Surveys (BOS). A few of the closed-ended questions used in the first data collection stage were also incorporated in the questionnaire. The questionnaire had five building blocks – demographic questions, strategy toolkit questions, motive questions, practice-related questions, and value questions. The demographic questions were the first to be asked to create more options for the data categorization and to ascertain possible patterns for the statistical analysis. In the next part,

respondents were asked to define their strategy toolkit. As part of that, they were asked to rate the efficiency (i.e. total workload compared to the usefulness of results) as well as effectiveness (i.e. degree to which objectives are achieved and extent to which targeted problems are solved) of tools they already used in practice. The list of strategy tools employed was informed by the research of Jarzabkowski et al. (2009) and Wright et al. (2013). The motive questions were used to gather information on the cause of strategy tool utilization, and the advantages as well as disadvantages of tools when applied in practice. With the practice-related questions, participants were asked during which phase of the strategy process they typically applied the tools they already used. Additionally, they were asked whether they applied strategy tools to reach or to proof a strategic decision to deepen the investigation on post-rationalization. Further, practitioners were asked to identify dependencies of effective tool application. Lastly, questions regarding the value of tools were asked to better understand their role in strategy work. Participants were also requested to value the future of tools and how they should change to become more effective. In total, the questionnaire consisted of 12 topics and 30 questions that were directly related to the phenomenon under study (see Appendix C).

Collection Process

Before its distribution, the questionnaire was pilot tested on four test candidates (e.g. former colleagues, practitioners, and researchers from other disciplines, e.g. political or social sciences) deemed similar to the targeted sample population. Based on the pilot responses, estimates about the comprehensibility, duration, question validity, as well as reliability and quality of the data were obtained (Silman et al., 2018). All these elements led to a refinement of the questionnaire, which ensured that participants had no problems in answering the developed questions (Saunders et al., 2016). The received feedback mostly targeted the length of the questionnaire or the chosen question styles. Most suggestions were considered and implemented to simplify the questions and shorten the questionnaire.

All respondents were invited to voluntarily complete the questionnaire. As part of the proposing email, participants were provided with all necessary information to ensure their familiarity with the research topic and the applied safety standards. The safety standards followed the principals of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) drafted by the European Union (EU). To participate in this research, respondents needed to grant their informed consent, which was given by clicking the 'I agree' button on the second page of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was open for four weeks (11 May – 10 June 2018). It was distributed to consultants and executives only, as both perspectives represent the 'true practitioners' that frequently use tools in actual competitive industry settings. The subject groups for the sample were strategy consultants, staff members of in-house strategy departments, or other corporate executives involved in strategy work. The participants were predominantly international with a slight majority from European respondents (i.e. Germans, British, or Dutch).

3.5.4 Qualitative Research: Focus Groups

The focus group method is an interview technique that usually involves more than four participants (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Saunders et al., 2016). Hutt (1979) identified that the technique can and should be used within management research. In his view, it is a way to help individuals to define and identify problems as well as potential solutions while relying on interaction (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Saunders et al., 2016). Such group interviews are focused on a particular issue, topic or social phenomenon as they encourage discussions and perception sharing in an open and risk-free context (Krueger and Casey, 2009; Saunders et al., 2016). One key feature is the spontaneous participant interaction and the unpredictable group dynamics that stimulate the construction of shared understandings (Belzile and Oberg, 2012; Edmunds, 2000; Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016; Saunders et al., 2016). Additionally, they can “...illuminate the production of social understandings and narratives of everyday [practices]” (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016, p. 182). Similarly, used in a mixed method research design, focus groups can provide an in-depth picture of the topic under study after previous empirical methods have been employed. For this research, the method was used to undertake the planned participant validation and was particularly suitable to assemble the different perspective types with their varying experience levels in strategy tool use. The method was partially used to raise additional research questions, but also to identify theoretical implications for future research (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016).

All participants involved had already contributed at earlier stages of the data collection process. They were confronted with a first draft of the analysis results and asked to critically discuss and evaluate those findings. However, no one had seen any previous results prior to the actual focus group session.

Focus Group Content

As with the first data collection stage, a guideline was prepared to structure the focus group session, which comprised of a limited number of questions directly connected to the set research questions and objectives. Additionally, the questions were adjusted to consider the previously collected data and analyzed results. Preparation followed the principals suggested by Stewart and Shamdasani (2015), who claim that focus group questions should move from general to specific and their order should be relative to the importance of the research problems. The session started with engagement questions about the research topic in general to break the ice between the moderator and the participants. The second and more crucial part aimed to examine the practice-related research questions and their preliminary answers with exploration questions. This part included issues like the controversial discussion about the post-rational application of strategy tools, their role and future value in practice. The closing questions were raised to conclusively discuss the theory-related research questions, such as the definition for strategy tools as well as the limitations of strategizing theory. In total, the guideline consisted of 14 predetermined questions (see Appendix D).

Collection Process

As explained, the focus group was undertaken based on a semi-structured guideline that had been previously discussed and revised based on the input of the supervisory team. A condensed version of the research results was prepared in a presentation format and incorporated to illustrate all interpretations and findings.

The focus group took place on 17 September 2018 in the observation lab of the University of Applied Sciences in Mainz, Germany. The participants had heterogeneous backgrounds. In contrast to the other stages, all participants were of German origin and employed at a German-based organization. This decision was taken to minimize extensive travelling and the associated costs. During the session, the role of the moderator was taken by the researcher to keep the group within the set boundaries and to generate interest and encourage discussion on some specific outcomes. While moderating, it was crucial to enable interaction, but at the same time to limit personal opinions that could lead the participants in a certain direction (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009b; Saunders et al., 2016). At the beginning of the session, all participants were asked to shortly introduce themselves, but no one was forced to share any details of their professional background (e.g. corporation, project, or position). To start the discussion, the moderator briefly summarized the research purpose as well as the aim of the data collection stage. The session took approximately 100 min and included seven strategists. This was in line with the recommendations in the existing literature, since well-designed focus group sessions usually last for approximately 1-2 hours (Morgan, 1997; Vaughn et al., 1996) and consist of 6-12 participants (Bernard, 1995; Krueger, 2014; Langford et al., 2002; Morgan, 1997; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2004, 2009b). Due to the complexity of the phenomenon being researched and the required experiences, the number of invited participants was low (Krueger, 2014). The entire session was audio-recorded with the installed equipment in the observation lab. Afterwards, 'f4 transcript' and 'Happy Scribe' were used to transcribe the data in a tape-based transcription mode. Such transcripts usually consist of a purposeful selection of direct quotes, wherein the researcher focuses "...on the research questions and only transcribes the portions that assist in better understanding of the phenomenon of interest" (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009b, p. 4). However, to ensure that no data remained unrecognized the entire session was transcribed, which resulted in another transcript of 16 single-spaced typed pages (see Appendix R).

Due to the consistency of the transcribed material generated, one focus group session was enough for this research. The critical appraisal regarding the practical use of strategy tools was considered sufficient, since most respondents largely agreed with the research findings.

3.5.5 Validation of Research Data

Saunders et al. (2016, p. 206) describe validation as “...the process of verifying research data, analysis, and interpretation to establish...” validity, credibility, and authenticity of research results. When applying mixed methods, researchers tend to combine different data types to ascertain whether the findings corroborate with each other. This process is called triangulation, which is needed to assess and establish the validity of the research by analyzing the research questions not only from an inductive, but also from a deductive perspective (Flick, 2011; Denzin, 1970, 1978). The primary goal of this approach is “...to uncover deeper meaning in the data” (Guion et al., 2011, p. 1; Patton, 2015) and to test the derived hypotheses of the qualitative analysis. Triangulation requires the application of more than data source and collection to proof the validity of the gathered information, the analysis and lastly of the interpretation. The combination of different methods compensates the weaknesses or blind spots of the other. The methods remain autonomous and rather operate side by side (Flick, 2009; Gray, 2017). For this research, it would have been sufficient to use two independent sources of data to ensure that the generated data was relating the truth. Therefore, hypotheses were developed based on the results of the semi-structured interviews to test them with the subsequent questionnaire. Nonetheless, another data collection method, i.e. focus group, was added to validate all findings. This participant validation element (Saunders et al., 2016) was mainly used to further minimize the researcher bias. Other studies call this process respondent validation (Bryman, 1988) or member checks (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). It involves the illustration of research results to a sample of respondents that supports or criticizes the explanation and interpretation of the developed conclusions. According to Maxwell (2013, p. 244) it can be used to combat the threats to validity in qualitative research, as it is “...systemically soliciting feedback about one’s data and conclusions from the people you are studying.” The focus group method worked significantly well as participant validation because most respondents either agreed with the findings or added critical contributions, which clearly enhanced the quality and validity of the results. However, whichever methods a researcher decides to use, “...all methods must be open, consistently applied and replicable by others” (Oakley, 1999, p. 252).

3.6 Structure of Data Analysis

Data analysis has been the subsequent step for each of the data collection stages. The entire analysis was predominantly influenced by qualitative data where it was necessary to create an interconnected process between collection, analysis and interpretation (Saunders et al., 2016; Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). As such, qualitative data analysis is an interactive and iterative process, which should not only be interpreted mechanically, because today it is mainly based on data processing software. Instead, it should be a thoughtful and reflective process supported by research analysis software, which helps to manage and organize unstructured information (Gray, 2017; Saunders et al., 2016). However, for

this research, because of the exploratory sequential multi-phase design, different analysis types needed to be connected to develop meaningful contributions. To handle the large amount of mostly unstructured data (i.e. interview results) the analysis approach of Miles et al. (2014) was followed. Miles et al. formulated three significant steps that data analysis should include: data condensation, data display, as well as drawing and verifying conclusions. All three steps were undertaken to structure the data analysis in this research.

3.6.1 Data Condensation

Data condensation is “...the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming the data that appear in the full corpus of written-up field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical materials” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 12). Especially, in qualitatively driven research it should be considered as a necessary analysis step, due to large amounts of data that are based on open-ended questions (Eisenhardt, 1989). Through this process, the value of the gathered information is strengthened, as it “... sharpens, sorts, focuses, and organizes data ...” to draw and verify the final conclusions (Miles et al., 2014, p. 12). This condensation, transformation or preparation goes on until the actual fieldwork and the final report have been completed (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016).

For the *first data collection stage*, interview transcripts were produced and subsequently populated into the computer aided qualitative data research analysis software (CAQDAS) NVivo to analyze the unstructured data and to create an expressive dataset (Saunders et al., 2016; Bazeley and Jackson, 2013; Gray, 2017). Data condensation has been ongoing throughout the life of this predominantly qualitative project. Condensation commenced with the set research questions, the selected cases, and the data collection approaches. During the interview analysis the most important episodes of data condensation were coding, theme development, and category generation. As part of the analysis, it was established which data was worth coding, which categories were best able to summarize the set codes, and which theory was evolving from the underlying information (Miles et al., 2014). During the *second data collection stage*, a set of structured research results was generated through an online questionnaire that consisted of different types of closed-ended questions (i.e. multiple choice and scale questions). Data condensation was realized through the sample selection, the number of questions, and the question style. All gathered results were transferred into the statistical analysis software SPSS to generate explorative and descriptive statistics. At the *final data collection stage*, all focus group members were asked to evaluate the preliminary research findings. The gathered information was condensed through manual coding and thus the identification of critical appraisals (i.e. direct quotes).

3.6.2 Data Display

Data display has been the second major step of the analysis. Miles et al. (2014, p. 12) state that “...a display is an organized, compressed assembly of information that allows conclusion drawing and action.” Data can be displayed in the form of matrices, graphs, charts, or networks, which are all designed to aggregate analyzed information into an accessible, compact and understandable form to “...either draw justified conclusions or move on to the next step of analysis...” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 13). As with data condensation, the development and use of displays was considered as imperative part of the analysis in this research.

As part of the *interview analysis*, results were primarily displayed with bar charts to illustrate and interpret the emerged categories and their underlying codes. All bar charts were prepared based on the results of the executed matrix-coding queries. In a few cases (i.e. distinction of terminologies), coded references were displayed in tables with the aim to develop definitions with a direct connection to the contributions of the interviewed practitioners. However, throughout the entire interview analysis the most frequently used elements to outline the data have been quotes of the surveyed participants. During the *questionnaire analysis*, findings were displayed in various formats, which can be attributed to the quantitative nature of the collected data. Explorative and descriptive statistics were illustrated with different forms of output tables, charts and graphs (including bar charts and radar charts). Results from the *focus group analysis*, were similarly displayed as in the first stage, since the focus group session generated additional qualitative research findings. At this point, however, only core codes in the form of direct quotes were used to validate or even scrutinize the earlier findings.

3.6.3 Drawing and Verifying Conclusions

The third and last step of the analysis is called: drawing and verifying conclusions. Right from the start of the data collection process, the meanings of the gathered information were interpreted by searching for patterns and similarities, explanations, causal flows, and given propositions (Miles et al., 2014; Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). A final conclusion can only be found once the entire data collection is completed, which depends on the size of the dataset and the sophistication of the researcher.

The *interview analysis* led to various findings that supported the derivation of hypotheses. Based on these findings the questionnaire was developed to gather additional information regarding the researched phenomenon. The *questionnaire analysis* was mainly employed to assess and evaluate the set hypotheses. Statistical hypothesis testing was not applicable, since the sample was not randomly selected. Lastly, the results of the *focus group analysis* were used to conclude with a critical assessment of the triangulated research results. This ‘reality check’ aimed to ensure the validity and generalizability of the conclusions drawn.

3.7 Analysis Stages

The exploratory sequential multi-phase design resulted in three different analysis stages. In the following, these stages are outlined in more detail to express how relationships and patterns in the data were recognized to draw and verify conclusions.

3.7.1 Interview Analysis

Before the start of the interview analysis, the unstructured data needed editing. Approximately 17 hours of audio-recorded interview material had to be transcribed. In business research, it is usually adequate to transcribe all words that have been spoken rather than documenting all idiosyncratic information, which would be needed for discourse or conversation analysis (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). The transcription process for this research took about two months in total. The average time to transcribe an interview was 6-8 hours. Whenever possible, the process started immediately after each interview. A major issue has been accuracy and the correct documentation of the audio-recordings. Factual accuracy was ensured by undertaking data cleaning, meaning the correction of grammar and spelling mistakes. Another crucial aspect of transcribing is ensuring a clear distinction between the interviewer and participant, the different topics, questions and responses, required for the use of CAQDAS such as NVivo (Saunders et al., 2016; Gray, 2017).

While using the grounded theory method, researchers usually avoid using priori codes derived from existing theory and literature, as codes should rather be developed from the underlying data. Some doctoral theses with practice perspectives (e.g. Hodari, 2009; Jarzabkowski, 2000; Langley, 1986) have applied thematic categorization (also called template analysis) to condense and code the collected data in a more flexible way. However, this research relied on the modern coding approach of Charmaz (2006, 2014). Saunders et al. (2016, p. 598-599) claim that “Charmaz emphasizes a Grounded Theory Method that is interactive, flexible and less prescriptive”, especially in comparison to the approach of Strauss and Corbin (1998). Charmaz’s (2006, 2014) method has two major coding phases: initial coding and focused coding (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016; Saunders et al., 2016). For both approaches, the initial sampling procedures are the same, as both are based on theoretical sampling, constant comparison, and theoretical saturation.

In this research, the initial sample of participants was chosen based on their relationship to the respective research questions. All subsequent participants were selected to explore the emerging codes and different ideas, categories, and interpretations (Gray, 2017; Saunders et al., 2016). As such, the constant comparison of data supported the emergence of the grounded theory. The sampling continued until theoretical saturation was reached.

The interview analysis started with *initial coding*, which represents the first classification and analysis process of the grounded theory method. It involved the search for key words, phrases or sentences that might have a more specific meaning to the phenomenon under study. This process required line-by-line analysis to understand the material and to interpret the insights regarding strategy tools-in-use. During the process, codes were constantly compared to pre-formulate emerging categories and properties (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). To store, sort and code data, the qualitative research analysis software NVivo10 was applied. In NVivo, codes are called nodes, which can be words, text pieces, or entire sentences that relate to a particular theme, topic, or issue that might be significant for the analysis (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). Initial coding with NVivo was streamlined, as the tool was fairly easy to adapt. Vague ideas of how to name nodes emerged before the coding actually started. Most nodes emerged while working through the data. Each node was given a brief description to ensure the accuracy and comparability across all cases.

Once a reasonable set of codes had been developed *focused coding* started. At this point, codes were aggregated to larger categories or themes (template analysis (King, 2012)). Thus, it was necessary to re-code the existing codes into a smaller and more focused list, which meant working through all coded data again (Saunders et al., 2016). Charmaz (2006) states that this process is not simple nor linear but progressing from the initial coding to more focused coding enables researchers to gain insights about what the data actually means, and which codes have the analytical capability to become categories or focused codes (Saunders et al., 2016). During this research, constant comparison and categorization of the collected data supported the development of more abstract categories to understand all mentioned issues related to the use of strategy tools in a practical context. At this point some nodes were merged, deleted or renamed to gain reliability. In fact, the two-step coding helped to raise questions and to develop provisional answers about the emerged categories and their relations (Strauss, 1990; Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). Finding such focused codes or core categories that adequately explain the social phenomenon under investigation is the overarching goal of the grounded theory method (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). These core categories were later used to run matrix-coding queries and directly compare their impact when paired together. This process was the validation element that allowed hypothetical relationships between the different categories to be generated. Such categories were then refined and reorganized, which is the process where the data develops into theory (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016).

3.7.2 Questionnaire Analysis

Before explaining the questionnaire analysis in detail, it should be emphasized that this quantitative approach was mainly chosen to triangulate the previously gathered findings. The exploratory sequential multi-phase design of this research led to a methodological triangulation, which was used to establish the necessary validity and utility of the findings. As part of that process, results from the

semi-structured interviews and the questionnaire were compared to find concluding patterns and similarities. In the case that the conclusions of both methods are similar, validity has been increased (Flick, 2011; Denzin, 1970, 1978; Guion et al., 2011).

Nonetheless, to compare the results of both stages the questionnaire needed to be analyzed first. The response data of the online questionnaire, which mostly consisted of categorical data, was therefore transferred into SPSS to conduct the statistical analysis. Data coding was automatically undertaken through the online platform of BOS. However, the dataset was prepared and cleaned in a subsequent step to identify incomplete, incorrect, inaccurate or irrelevant data parts (Saunders et al., 2016). Once this process was satisfactory completed, several explorative and various descriptive statistics were generated to express the quantitative research results (see Appendix T for Excel Workbook). Explorative statistics were generated while making use of tables, charts and graphs to explore and understand the gathered data (Tukey, 1977; Anderson et al., 2016; Saunders et al., 2016). The descriptive statistics enabled the numeric description and comparison of variables (Anderson et al., 2016). However, to test the data for relationships and differences, significance testing needed to be employed to either reject or accept the previously developed hypotheses (Berman Brown and Saunders 2008; Saunders et al., 2016). Yet, it should be noted that the application of any inferential statistical method was not possible, since the underlying sample was not randomly selected. Apart from that, it would have been difficult to obtain significant test statistics because of the small sample size under investigation (Anderson et al., 2016; Saunders et al., 2016). The most applicable tests would have been *Pearson's chi-squared test* (Pearson, 1900) or *Fisher's exact test* (Fisher, 1922, 1934).

For the questionnaire analysis all results were directly compared with the previous interview analysis to create more elaborate responses for the preliminary answered research questions. The hypotheses were further assessed or even refined to enhance the robustness of the previously developed theory.

3.7.3 Focus Group Analysis

As stated, the focus group session was used as a participant validation element, which was yet another form of triangulation (Torrance, 2012). Theory instead of methodological triangulation was chosen, even though the third stage represented another method that could have been used to collect additional data. Theory triangulation involves the use of multiple perspectives that interpret or validate a dataset, which incidentally reduces the threat of research bias (Denzin, 1978). In this regard, Denzin (1978, p. 307) states: "By combining multiple observers, theories, methods and data sources, [researchers] can hope to overcome the intrinsic bias that comes from single-method, single-observer, single-theory studies" (Torrance, 2012). While relying on this triangulation type, it is assumed that individuals from different backgrounds or positions raise different perspectives. If each

involved individual interprets the presented data in a similar way, validity has been established (Flick, 2011; Denzin, 2017).

Qualitative approaches usually have a great potential for researcher bias, as the researcher represents both – the data collector and analyst (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In this research, this potential was reduced through the direct involvement of the research participants while checking and confirming the research findings. During participant validation, research participants are either confronted with initial data (interview transcripts or activity observations) or with “...first drafts of interpretive reports...”, in other words with a preliminary version of the research findings (Torrance, 2012, p. 114). This process was in fact carried out to validate and verify the formulated interpretations (Bloor, 1978; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). At this point, it is expected that the focus group participants mostly interpret and substantiate the previous findings. However, in some cases the validation process leads to new evidence, but also occasional disagreement, which causes a modification of the drafted reports (Bloor, 1978; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Torrance, 2012).

The focus group analysis started with a tape-based analysis to create an abridged transcript. In contrast to the interview analysis it was decided to disassemble the focus group data with a manual coding approach, since the pursued participant validation was principally applied as critical appraisal. Accordingly, Yin (2016, p. 199) argues that analyzing qualitative data with a more open coding approach may be more discretionary and less routine, but it has the potential to be thoughtful and insightful. As part of the analysis, the entire collection of codes respectively direct quotes was compared with all research findings to prepare a consistent interpretation. To ensure this consistency, the codes were thematically organized based on the research questions and their preliminary answers. This process significantly raises the validity of the research results, as most remarks either support or even justify the interpretations of the previous analyses.

3.8 Methodological Conclusion

The applied mixed method research design (Figure 2) required a stringent sequence of the data collection and analysis stages to answer the theory as well as practice-related research questions. Semi-structured interviews, used as initial data collection method, appeared to be a valid approach to investigate how and why practitioners use strategy tools to conduct strategy work. This investigation gathered practice perceptions to understand the actual application of tools. In this regard, the grounded theory method required a constant comparison of the collected data to allow the theory to emerge and to derive hypotheses. With the subsequent questionnaire stage, it was aimed to further clarify why, when, under which circumstances and for what reason practitioners apply strategy tools. These findings were needed to enable the methodological triangulation of the more open interview approach and to evaluate the derived hypotheses. The last data collection stage served as participant validation and theoretical triangulation of the two preceding research stages to appraise

the research findings and to emphasize the theoretical as well as practical implications. The outlined sequence of the research stages was incorporated in the following chapter to ensure the validity of the research results and to find conclusive answers for the research questions. As earlier noted, the preceding stages inform and direct the subsequent stages of data collection and analysis.

4 Research Results

This chapter presents the findings of all research stages. Section 4.1 presents the results from the interview analysis following the principles of the grounded theory method. The next section 4.2 refers to the questionnaire findings, which were used to triangulate the interview results and to evaluate the developed hypotheses. In section 4.3, the findings of both preceding stages are validated based on the participant contributions from the focus group discussion. As earlier noted, the sample of this research consisted of different types of strategists. Within this chapter they were clustered in different practitioner perspectives - academic, consultant, and executive - to compare their viewpoints regardless of whether they are different or congruent. Lastly, section 4.4 concludes with a brief assessment of the research stages and thereby clarifies the meaning of the sequential order.

4.1 Interviews

This section draws on the derivation of the integral research elements, which were used to initiate the coding and classification process of the collected information. Due to the constant data comparison, focused codes and core categories were developed to explain the emerging theory and practical outcomes. Based on these findings it was possible to partially answer most of the theory- and practice-related research sub-questions.

The analysis presented below starts with gaining an appreciation of the relevant terminology to understand their actual meaning from a theoretical but also practical perspective. After that, the strategy toolkit is introduced based on the interview results to get a first impression of which strategy tools are best known and used by the different types of strategists. Thereafter, the rationale for the use of strategy tools is explained to outline why they are used during organizational strategy work. Subsequently, the temporal integration of strategy tools-in-use is discussed to identify what initiates their application, and whether they are applied before or after making a strategic decision. In the last analysis step presented, the actual role of strategy tools during strategy work is assessed from different viewpoints. Finally, a complete overview of the developed hypotheses is outlined, which informed the structure and questions of the questionnaire approach.

4.1.1 Derivation of Integral Research Elements

The integral research elements were mainly derived from the existing SasP literature, which represents the theoretical basis of this research. All SasP researchers refer to the terms *strategizing* and *strategy-as-practice*, and if they focus on practices they predominantly mention *strategy tools* as the conceptual foundation to support and conduct strategic tasks. This research reflects upon *strategy work* as an individual element, which is in practice usually based on a dedicated process with different stages (i.e. analysis, formulation, implementation and evaluation and control). It was included to interpret practices from a broader perspective to lead participants from their strategic

tasks and problems to their thoughts on the use of strategy tools. Tools have been the most crucial research element to focus on in order to effectively investigate their practical use. All four elements were used to start the initial coding process. After completing this step, focused coding was employed to enable the evolvement of core categories (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). Such core categories, with their underlying codes, resulted in a codebook which was used to structure the comparative analysis of the interview results and to create an interrelation with the research questions and objectives.

Coding Process

The process started with initial coding. At this point key words, phrases, and topics with a wider relation to the researched phenomenon were identified to start the process. The ‘integral research elements’ (i.e. strategy-as-practice, strategizing, strategy tool, and strategy work) were used as coding foundation. Most information was coded under the tree node ‘strategy tool’ and its subordinate parent node ‘usage’, which was divided into emerging child nodes such as ‘adaptation’, ‘content’, ‘post-rationalizing’, ‘acceptance’, ‘practitioners’ or different sorts of advantages and disadvantages of tool usage e.g. ‘structure’, ‘visualization’, ‘misleading-dysfunctional’, or ‘complexity’. Codes either originated based on themes or terms and their connection to the questions in the interview guide or through topics that participants most frequently remarked upon during their interviews (i.e. codes emerged while working through the data). Up to that point, the majority of codes remained unstructured and uncategorized. However, in some cases it was possible to pre-formulate categories and properties. Initial coding involved the constant comparison of data as required by the grounded theory method, which was ensured through regular checks on the validity of the data (Kirk and Miller, 1986). After completing the initial coding phase, the recoding of the material started to generate a more focused set of codes and categories. Recoding was necessary to review the initial process and to check whether the information coded was appropriate and valid for the respective node or not.

Focused coding was more complex, due to the constant emergence of valuable insights. It was employed to generate more adequate categories and a consistent set of focused codes. Under the parent node ‘usage’, several meaningful categories emerged e.g. ‘rationalization’, ‘dependence’, as well as ‘advantages’ and ‘disadvantages’ of tool use. Another strong parent node was ‘adaptation’, which could be seen as a standalone category due the significant amount of coded references. The tree node ‘strategy work’ was split into two categories namely ‘process’ and ‘strategic problems – objectives’. Again, reaching these core categories was enabled through constant comparison and categorization of newly collected data. As soon as new or disparate data emerged, the categories needed to be modified or adapted, which continued until theoretical saturation was reached. Both coding phases resulted in a thematic node/code structure - the ‘codebook’ (see Appendix E).

Comparative Analysis

In the next step, the core categories were analyzed with matrix coding queries to find interrelations and patterns within and between the developed categories and classifications, since NVivo provides the option to cross-tabulate coded content. The queries were used to ask questions about patterns in the data and to gain access to content that shows and explains them (QSR International, 2016). When using matrix coding, researchers usually seek to combine attribute values with different theme nodes. This process produces a table in which nodes define the rows and attribute values the columns. The resulting table displays counts of references coded for the respective cross-tabulation of codes and attribute values. Behind each of the cells content related to these particular combinations can be found. The numeric output from the queries creates a basis for comparative analysis as it illustrates ‘how often’ the different participant perspectives referred to a particular theme or topic (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). Most tables were converted into charts to exemplify a more meaningful view on the combined data, as they helped to isolate the underlying theory of the now structured results. All plotted charts had to be interpreted with caution, because of the possibility of gaining false impressions based on a variety of complex knowledge, assumptions, and interpretations. The charts represent total data values (i.e. coding references count) for specific node and attribute value combinations. The interpretations of total values should be treated with prudence, since they are possibly dominated by the existence of extreme values (e.g. references coded for strategizing = 21; highest extreme value = 4; lowest extreme value = 1).

Thus, ascertained proportions of the participant responses that illustrate how many participants actually referred to certain categories had to be identified as part of the comparative analysis (i.e. proportion of participant responses = participants responded/total number of participants). Such proportions were used to check whether the total values occurred due to higher or lower numbers of participants that responded. They were mostly applied while combining the case classification ‘practitioner’ (i.e. entire sample of interview participants) with one or more different theme nodes. In these cases, the comparison of total values and proportions was valued as a way to create more validity for the actual findings. Overall, comparing content of particular nodes for interviewees with different backgrounds accentuated in ‘what way’ the varying perspectives refer to particular experiences that potentially reveal “...previously unobserved dimensions...” in the data (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013, p. 141), and raise additional questions or even hypotheses about the distinctions between the surveyed participant groups. Using matrix coding queries has strengthened the reliability of the entire analysis and created a valid foundation for the interpretation of the interview findings.

During the research, the case classification ‘practitioner’ was created, and various demographic attributes were assigned to it. The comparative analysis primarily focused on the attribute ‘perspective’, whose values were based on the clustered perspectives, ‘academics’, ‘consultants’, and ‘executives’ – see Figure 5. Consequently, these perspectives or the total of all practitioners were

then compared with the different categories that emerged during the earlier coding process. The following analysis section is structured based on the array of the formulated research questions as well as sub-questions, and the categories that emerged while coding. Section 4.1.2 focuses on one of the theory related questions and the latter sections, 4.1.3, 4.1.4, and 4.1.5, continue with the practice related questions. The majority of the sections culminates in one or more hypotheses that are summarized and annotated in section 4.1.6.

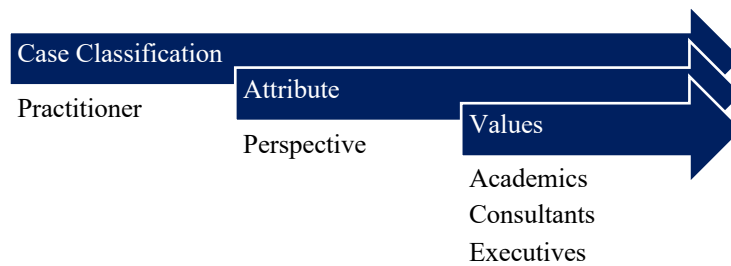


Figure 5: Case Classification ‘Practitioner’

4.1.2 Appreciation of relevant Terminology

Understanding the meaning of the three terms strategizing, strategy-as-practice, and strategy tools is essential when investigating theory related to their usage. Literature in the strategy-as-practice field provides several definitions with various commonalities and differences, which exacerbates the matter to contribute further developed definitions for all different types of strategists who appear to be the designated users of strategy tools. At the end of this section, a preliminary answer for research sub-question 1.1: ‘What is meant by the terms strategizing and strategy-as-practice, and what is a strategy tool?’ is provided. The section compares definitions and suggestions for all three terms that were referred to during the interviews. Based on the content, which was coded during the comparative analysis, it was possible to distinguish between the meanings of all respective perspectives. Later, the results are summarized to contribute a more consistent definition for the terms. In one of the first matrix coding queries the case classification ‘practitioner’ and the theme nodes ‘strategizing’, ‘strategy-as-practice’, and ‘strategy tools’ were combined to find out which category was most often referred to. Figure 6 presents the different coding references counts as well as the proportion of participant responses in relation to the terms. ‘Strategizing’ was the term that was least referred to (references coded = 21) and only 73.33% (participant responses = 11) of the interviewed participants were able to provide a definition or explanation for it. Interestingly, the meaning of ‘strategy-as-practice’ was more familiar to a bigger proportion of the interviewees (86.67%; participant responses = 13). Thirty-three references were coded that included either a definition or an explanation of the term. The term ‘strategy tool’ appeared to be the most prominent in terms of coded references (references coded = 37). Indeed, it was not surprising that all participants (100%, participant responses = 15) were able to refer to this term and contribute a definition or

explanation, as all cases of the sample population were selected based on their experience and familiarity with strategy tools.

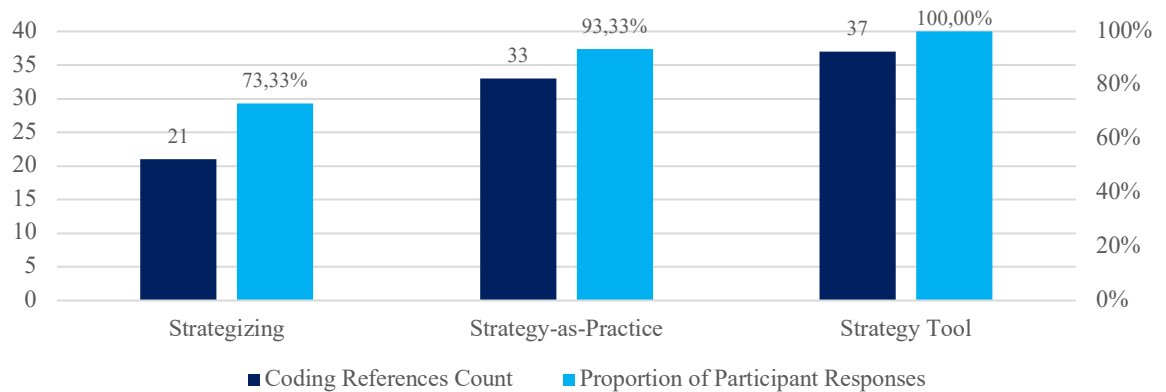


Figure 6: References coded for Practitioner vs. Terminologies (Proportions of Participant Responses)

The more interesting comparison examines the different practitioner perspectives, which illustrates insightful patterns on the knowledge, assumptions, and interpretations regarding the underlying theory of the terms. Figure 7 outlines the number of references coded for the terminologies based on the attribute ‘perspectives’ of the case classification ‘practitioner’. The attribute values ‘academics’, ‘consultants’, and ‘executives’ show distinct characteristics for the terms. Consultants (references coded for all terms = 36) represent the highest number of coded references for all three terms. Academics (references coded for all terms = 28) and executives (references coded for all terms = 27) represent similar numbers of coded references, albeit with varying characteristics.

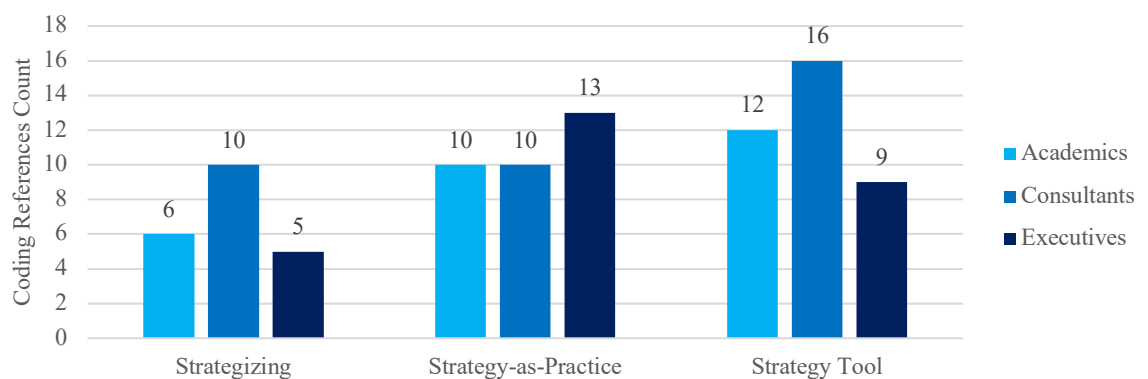


Figure 7: References coded for Perspectives vs. Terminologies

In the following subsections, the dominating characteristics for each perspective are explained based on the particular terms (strategizing, strategy-as-practice, strategy tool). Further, the content contributions of all interviewed participants are summarized.

4.1.2.1 Strategizing

The term strategizing is used to describe how strategy work is executed in practice. During the interviews, most participants either needed to construct a personal definition due to their lack of knowledge of the term or they knew or already used it. Only a few participants were unable to define or explain it. Others skipped the explanation and proceeded with their definition for strategy-as-practice. Several interviewees indicated that both terms have interchangeable meanings. Table 6 below displays an overview of the content that was collected in relation to the term strategizing. The highest number of coded references can be attributed to consultants, which was surprising considering the artificial and scientific origin of the term. Academics and executives had similar numbers of coded references. Interpretations and contributed explanations of the term, however, showed various commonalities as well as distinctions.

	Academics	Consultants	Executives
Strategizing	"...terms are somewhat interchangeable..."	"Strategizing means: putting a strategy into place."	"...the process of creating, changing, adapting, or updating a strategy."
	"activities that managers carry out while formulating or implementing a strategy"	"...both terms stand pretty much for the same."	"...let's bring strategy into our daily practice or let it stay in our thinking."
	"a more basic level of doing strategy work, and not those fancy top management ideas on how to formulate a great strategy that is based on gut feeling"	"Strategizing, for me, is the definition of the real 'doing' of strategy work - the true application of tools and frameworks - the daily routines that happen in a strategic environment."	"...incorporate strategic thinking in your everyday practice or business."
	"There are also some practical elements you have to add to your strategic initiatives and of course this 'give and take' results in the final strategy that you will be implementing at the point in time."	"The touchable strategy work, if you want to call it like that."	"...the daily strategy development could equally address this term..."
	"develop a plan to achieve some specific goals and in that case some strategic objectives"	"Strategizing is very much an action-based term. Something is happening."	"In a word (the terms strategizing or strategy-as-practice could mean): bringing strategy to life."
	"it describes the processes and routines of bringing the action into strategy work"	"Practical strategy making is daily work..."	
		"...strategizing might describes the actions you have to undertake to solve a problem in a strategic way; meaning using strategic tools while practicing strategy work."	

Academics	Consultants	Executives
	"...more a hands-on approach to find the right fit for the company and the market."	
	"...strategizing is more thinking about the potential..."	

Table 6: Strategizing References of Practitioners

Analysis

Only six references were coded in relation to strategizing that can be attributed to the interviewed *academics*. Participants agreed that strategizing "...describes the process and routines of bringing the action into strategy work..." (A5), which appears to be similar to the existing explanations of the term (Johnson et al., 2003). Such routines can be the application of tools, random hallway discussions, or even scheduled meetings where open questions are raised and plans are formulated. Therefore, strategizing represents "...a more basic level of strategy work, and not those fancy top management ideas on how to formulate a great strategy that is based on gut feeling..." (A2) of self-pronounced strategy experts. Hence, it should be interpreted as the foundation of strategy work that includes a variety of different activities a strategist needs to integrate while dealing with strategic problems and questions.

As stated, *consultants* referred to strategizing the most; 10 references were directly linked to that code. Similar to academic responses, consultants described strategizing as "...an action-based term..." (C2), in other words "...the real 'doing' of strategy work, the true application of tools and frameworks, the daily routines that happen in a strategic environment" (C2). Further, they demonstrated a deeper understanding of the term recognizing that strategizing is "...more a hands-on approach to find the right fit for the company and the market" (C5), which should be seen, as "...the touchable strategy work..." (C2). Overall, consultants view strategizing as the enabler of strategy work, grounded in the everyday work of a strategist that usually involves the application of strategy tools to solve strategic tasks and problems.

The *executives* directly referred to strategizing only five times. One of the interviewees contributed an explanation for strategizing which is very close to that of Johnson et al. (2003); he stated that it stands for "...the process of creating, changing, adapting, or updating a strategy" (E1). He further claimed, strategists should "...incorporate strategic thinking in [their] everyday practice or business" (E1), which added a new dimension to the meaning and definition of strategizing. Similarly, another executive claimed, strategizing describes "...daily strategy development..." (E4). They also referred to daily routines with regard to strategizing but did not elaborate. In total, only three executives could

refer to the term, and one actually provided a definition that could interchangeably be used for strategizing as well as strategy-as-practice – “...bringing strategy to life” (E5).

This interchangeability was also outlined by the other perspectives, since strategizing should be seen as a part of the strategy-as-practice thinking. Respondents even explicated “...these terms are somewhat interchangeable...” (A2), and “... both terms stand pretty much for the same” (C1).

Resulting Definition based on the Interview Analysis

Strategizing is the practical foundation of strategy work. It stands for the daily routines, activities, and practices that need to be incorporated while solving strategic tasks and issues. Using tools is part of these daily routines, and the hands-on approach to find the right fit for the respective organization and market. It is the process of devising, creating, changing, adapting, or updating a strategy, which can be summarized as the ‘doing of strategy’. Strategizing brings strategy to life, as it stimulates strategic thinking in everyone involved.

4.1.2.2 Strategy-as-Practice

The term strategy-as-practice needs clarification, as it covers a wide variety of different themes. Essentially, SasP focusses on the daily micro-activities of strategists, also called strategizing activities. During the interviews, almost all participants contributed a definition or explanation for the term, which can be attributed to its self-explanatory meaning. As mentioned, some participants understood strategizing and strategy-as-practice as interchangeable terms, or they claimed that strategizing is part of strategy-as-practice. The contributed content is pooled in Table 7 on the next page. The executives were accountable for the highest number of coded references, which was unexpected considering the academic origin of the term. Academics and consultants had the same number of coded references for the term.

	Academics	Consultants	Executives
Strategy -as- Practice	"Strategy is nice in theory, and we usually know it, but is it actually useful, is it used and how is it used in practice?"	"For strategy-as-practice I can only think very simple. I think the term already states it; it means practicing strategy."	"...it stands for being a strategist that practices strategy every now and then..."
	"...terms are somewhat interchangeable..."	"...both terms stand pretty much for the same."	"...let us bring strategy into our daily practice or let it stay in our thinking."
	"It is more about the activities that are related to the actual formulation and implementation processes that happens in organizations."	"I think the term strategy-as-practice describes a kind of meta-level."	"Using tools is probably part of this practical approach..."

Academics	Consultants	Executives
"...getting a better understanding of what people actually do, what they feel about strategy, and what their perceptions are related to it."	"It tries to analyze how strategy work is done, how it is organized."	"strategy-as-practice would mean to integrate daily business and practice in order to have a daily interaction..."
"...opposite direction to the more mainstream American focused research on strategy, which is at a more abstract level, and the stream of strategy-as-practice is probably the European way of perceiving strategy."	"The term does not stand for the concrete use of strategy tools or strategic frameworks, as it is rather a way of how to define such a method."	"Theoretical strategy knowledge and practical experience should always go hand in hand with each other, because true strategists should not think separately."
"For me strategy-as-practice is the initial idea of strategy work in companies."	"Strategy-as-practice tries to define the process and influences the frames or variables, which we are about to use for a concrete strategic approach."	"...the underlying idea is to turn strategy into practice, and to work in strategic ways by defining and implementing a real strategic approach, and not by just doing day-to-day work - the so-called gut-feeling strategy making."
"...to solve a strategic problem in the practical world..."	"Practical strategy making is daily work..."	"It is not about what the organization has, it is more about what the organization does with it."
"Strategy should always be practice driven otherwise there is no point behind it."	"Strategy-as-practice... when you consider practice or if you consider functions within a company e.g. controlling, sales, etc., and then you look at university teaching where you can learn all the basics for these functions; you should realize that strategy has to be explained in the most practical terms otherwise it is useless."	"Strategy-as-practice could mean: doing strategy in order to strategize. I could think of, bringing strategy to life, while strategizing, while establishing routines, while finding ways to properly conduct strategy work in practice."
"...taking the strategy elements and applying the theoretical concepts (tools) in a practical context."	"The combination of the two terms, strategy and practice, might be the answer to your question. Making strategy work touchable, understandable, or even action based for people that do not know what the purpose of strategy is."	"Strategy-as-practice covers basically the same, maybe with a more practical lens on everything."
"Strategy-as-practice probably focuses on bringing strategy theory to life."	"strategy-as-practice is more coming from what is possible with the given strategic circumstances within an organization."	"At the end of the day we have to make sure that we implement our strategies in companies and then we talk about things that really create value..."

Academics	Consultants	Executives
		<p>"...when strategy-as-practice is translated to 'bringing strategy to action or practice', then this is the actual implementation for me."</p> <p>"I think it is about implementing strategy as a very hands-on process with very down to earth results for all the people involved in strategy work."</p> <p>"In a word (the terms strategizing or strategy-as-practice could mean): bringing strategy to life."</p>

Table 7 : Strategy-as-Practice References of Practitioners

Analysis

For *academics*, ten references were coded regarding strategy-as-practice. The interviewed participants interpreted and explained strategy-as-practice as an approach to investigate the relationship between theory and practice in strategy work. One respondent stated accordingly, "...strategy-as-practice goes back to the initial idea of strategy work in companies" (A3), which seeks to combine theory with practice "...to solve a strategic problem in the practical world..." (A3). It aims at "...getting a better understanding of what people actually do, what they feel about strategy, and what their perceptions are related to it" (A2). Academics view it as "...the opposite direction to the mainstream American focused research on strategy, which is at a more abstract level, and the stream of strategy-as-practice is probably the European way of perceiving strategy" (A2). Overall, they agreed that SasP thinking concentrates on the micro-activities that strategists apply during their work (what people actually do) instead of solely focusing on corporate strategy making.

Ten references were also coded based on the transcribed consultant interviews. For *consultants*, the SasP approach means "Making strategy work touchable, understandable, or even action based for people that do not know what the purpose of strategy is" (C4). Generally, the approach "...tries to analyze how strategy work is done, how it is organized" (C2), but it "...does not stand for the concrete use of strategy tools or strategic frameworks, as it is rather a way of how to define such a method" (C2). In this sense, SasP is not limited to strategizing activities or practices only, as it includes various other elements that are part of practical strategy work (i.e. praxis and practitioners). The approach "...describes a kind of meta-level" (C2) of strategy work that strategists need to adapt to successfully combine the theoretical basis with the practical contexts they are facing. As a whole, it is important for strategists to make sense of their daily work and routines, as it enables them to understand what they do and why they do it.

Executives were accountable for the highest number of coded references in relation to the term, with thirteen. They were certain that strategizing is part of the SasP approach. According to the executives, strategy-as-practice means “...to integrate daily business and practice in order to have daily interaction...” (E1) and “...using tools is probably part of this practical approach...” (E1). One of them even referred to a familiar explanation and stated, “...it is not about what the organization has, it is more about what the organization does with it” (E2). When executives think about the approach “...the underlying idea is to turn strategy into practice, and to work in strategic ways by defining and implementing a real strategic approach, and not by just doing day-to-day work – the so-called gut-feeling strategy making” (E2). Hence “...theoretical strategy knowledge and practical experience should always go hand-in-hand with each other, because true strategists should not think separately” (E1), which was similar to the opinions of the consultants.

Resulting Definition based on the Interview Analysis

Strategy-as-practice is not only a term, it is rather a research approach that investigates the relationship between theory and practice in strategy work. Both elements need to be closely connected and strategizing with all its underlying activities and routines is part of the approach. Strategy-as-practice concentrates on micro-level activities (practices) that strategists apply during their work. Based on the research results, strategists can make sense of their practices, which enables them to understand what they do and why they do it. Thus, practice-oriented strategy work can only be enabled through practitioners with an advanced theoretical understanding of existing strategic methodologies.

4.1.2.3 Strategy Tool

As outlined in the literature review, strategy tools, frameworks, or knowledge artifacts are designed to organize strategic management and to structure strategy work in practice. However, before examining how these tools are actually used by practitioners in their day-to-day strategizing work it is important to clarify the meaning of the term strategy tool. For that reason, all interviewed strategists were asked to define and explain the term in their own words to draw a more consistent definition for people practicing strategy. All respondents were able to define and explain the term. Consultants provided the highest number of coded references, probably because tools are part of their daily assessments. Further, they tended to provide many different meanings, as strategy tools can cover a wide variety of problems. Academics provided a few less coded references than the consultants, which could be attributed to their roles in teaching and management research. Executives were accountable for the lowest number of coded references. Either they had a clear notion of the term or their deliberations were eclectic. An outline of the provided references is presented in Table 8.

	Academics	Consultants	Executives
Strategy Tool	"...a strategy tool is a standardized process, procedure or approach used to analyze a company's environment in order to draw major conclusions and describe business activities..."	"They are simply tools..."	"Strategy tools for me are a means to either visualize, bringing complex data into a meaningful set of ideas, and once you have done that you start to understand your surroundings better and they allow you to think what this data is telling me about where I should go."
	"...are a framework of standardized processes, rules and procedures..."	"Tools work as some sort of guideline or audit."	"...they are a means of structuring your thinking."
	"...tools are not a game changer..."	"...the framework is just a framework..."	"A tool itself is not solving a problem."
	"They are an approach to help people to deal with bounded rationality, to deal with complexity, and this is probably the main function of strategy tools."	"...strategy tools work like scouts..."	"Strategy tools are a vehicle of bringing people together in order to speak about one topic, and by that they can create prepared minds and structured thinking. Not less, not more."
	"A tool is more something heuristic that helps you to have an idea that matters when you look at a problem, and it provides you with some potential avenues of how to proceed."	"...tools secure your own process of managing and making decisions and recommendations..."	"...you work on something and then you suddenly realize you can universalize a certain pattern and this will always be prevalent, and that is the power of those tools that you can adapt them to various situations."
	"They force you to make your own assumptions."	"These instruments provide you with a way of how you can reach a conclusion."	"A strategy tool is a framework to get to a complex question and to a more schematic and transparent description."
	"...these models we are talking to you about are not going to solve your company's problems, but they might help you to identify them and then to identify what to do about them."	"A strategy tool most importantly provides you with structure or something that helps you to structure your own thoughts."	"...some focus product strategies, others on new business strategies, and yet others are portfolio strategies/frameworks..."
	"...a strategy tool is a tool to help managers to identify issues and solutions, which is the simplest way looking at them."	"90% of the frameworks are just structure combined with probably intelligent questions you could ask yourself."	"A strategic tool is a framework, or a basic concept on how to analyze external and internal information in a way that

	Academics	Consultants	Executives
	<p>"...these sorts of models, the traditional ones, are all ultimately based, like the Five Forces, on the competitive environment."</p> <p>"A strategy tool is something that you use to contribute to the strategic management process."</p> <p>"This usually is related to environmental analysis, whether it is at the macro or micro level, but certainly it may also have to do with the stage of strategy development or formulation."</p> <p>"...strategy tools are frameworks that support the strategy making process in a structured way."</p>	<p>"...ideally a strategy tool is a collection of a lot of knowledge about the questions that you have to ask in the right structure to tackle a problem..."</p> <p>"Strategy tools in my mind are frameworks or let us say clusters of questions you have to ask, and directions you have to walk through or you have to check in order to solve a problem. Strategy tools are frameworks to solve problems in a structured and question-based way."</p> <p>"They can work as eye-openers!"</p> <p>"... good strategy tool is just a tool like a hammer that I need to put a nail in the wall..."</p> <p>"...the main purpose of a strategy tool is to give some sort of a guideline to get an insight; an insight, maybe, that you would not usually see in a very complex situation."</p> <p>"A strategy tool will give you some structured guideline of how to look at all sorts of criteria and helps to get various insights."</p> <p>"If you apply them in your daily business, then it becomes your strategy."</p>	<p>you can use it for communication."</p> <p>"Tools are the supporting elements in the background of the process."</p>

Table 8 : Strategy Tool References of Practitioners

Analysis

Twelve references from the *academics* were coded in relation to the term. They define strategy tools, as standardized processes, procedures or approaches to analyze a company's competitive environment. One of them claimed, "A strategy tool is something that you use to contribute to the strategic management process" (A4). The academics mostly agreed that "...these models [...] are not going to solve a company's problems, but they might help to identify them and then to identify what to do about them" (A3). Accordingly, they clarified that such tools are heuristic methods to identify an organization's issues and solutions, as they support the strategy making process in a structured way. However, strategy tools should not be seen as a game changer, rather as helpful and supportive elements necessary "...to deal with the complexity..." (A2) of the strategy making process. One academic summarized, "...strategy tools are primarily frameworks that support the strategy making process in a structured way" (A5), which already creates a link to the explanations of the consultants, as some of them referred to structure as the key function of strategy tools.

With sixteen references, the *consultants* had the highest coding references count. Interestingly, they added different facets to the explanation, as some referred to the value of the questions that strategy tools tend to raise. One provided a general but appropriate explanation as he claimed, "Strategy tools [...] are frameworks or [...] clusters of questions you have to ask, and directions you have to walk through or you have to check in order to solve a problem" (C4). The structure that strategy tools can provide was core to the consultant explanations, typified by one consultant who claimed, "A strategy tool most importantly provides you with structure or something that helps you to structure your own thoughts" (C3). Nevertheless, the consultants agreed that most are simply tools and if strategists apply them, their results most likely become the strategy. Generally, they can "...work like scouts..." (C2) or directives, since they are one possible way to reach a conclusion for a complex strategic task, but their outcomes should not be taken for granted.

With only nine coded references, *executives* were responsible for the lowest references count, even though some of their responses added other attributes to the explanation. Executives see strategy tools as a way to communicate, since they "...are a vehicle of bringing people together in order to speak about one topic, and by that they can create prepared minds and structured thinking" (E3). A tool cannot solve problems, but it supports strategists to reach more complex questions that need to be asked while dealing with strategic issues. With tools "...you can universalize a certain pattern and this will always be prevalent, and that is the power of those tools that you can adapt them to various situations" (E3). Overall, tools are a means to visualize, communicate and to structure thinking. However, one executive scrutinized whether strategy tools can be compared easily, "...because some focus on product strategies, others on new business strategies, and yet others on portfolio strategies or frameworks..." (E4), which makes it difficult to create a general explanation for the term. Indeed,

it is hard to compare the different functional areas of tools, but they share common attributes that work as a basis to contribute a universal definition.

Resulting Definition based on the Interview Analysis

A strategy tool is a standardized process, procedure or approach to analyze a company's environment, to initiate or organize debate and to solve complex strategic issues in a structured and meaningful way. Tools themselves cannot solve problems, but they can be helpful and supportive elements to deal with the complexity of the strategy making process. As such, their main purpose is to provide practitioners with a structured guideline to reach valuable and recognizable insights. Strategy tools are heuristic methods that can be adapted to various situations, and for strategists they are a means to visualize, communicate and structure strategic decision-making.

4.1.3 Practice Lens of Strategy Tools

To clarify the practical role of strategy tools and to understand their actual use in practice, it is necessary to get an idea of those tools known and used by strategists in their work. For this research, the studies of Jarzabkowski et al. (2009) and Wright et al. (2013) were used as a basis to create a list of the 16 most popular strategy tools-in-use. Additional room for personally preferred tools/techniques (max. 4) was also provided, which resulted in a list of max. 20 per strategist.

Accordingly, the proceeding subsection outlines a revised version of the strategy toolkit (Jarzabkowski et al., 2009) to not only show which tools are mostly used, but also those which are mostly known. Yet again, the different practitioner perspectives are compared to provide a more accurate answer to research sub-question 2.1: 'Which strategy tools do strategists use for their strategy work?' Further, when investigating the utilization of strategy tools, researchers need to provide evidence and explain the rationale of why they use such during strategy work. Hence, the application experiences as well as advantages and disadvantages mentioned by the different perspectives have been compared to provide a provisional answer to research sub-question 2.2: 'Why do strategists use strategy tools to conduct their strategy work?'

4.1.3.1 The Strategy Toolkit – Stage 1

The strategy tools incorporated in this research were chosen based on the research of the AIM research group (Jarzabkowski et al. 2009) and compared to the most popular tools in leading strategy textbooks (e.g. Grant, 2013; Johnson et al., 2014; Wheelen et al., 2014), which resulted in the List of 16 below. To avoid losing information, room was provided for personally preferred tools, which led to the list of max. 20 tools. While investigating strategy tools-in-use it is crucial to understand which tools strategists most commonly use. The analysis of the strategy toolkit started during the interview process, but due to the small sample size the results should be treated with caution. As part of the second research stage, the analysis was revised on the basis of a substantially larger sample. During

both stages, the same set of tools was used to ensure the comparability of the results. Interestingly, the resulting list of personally preferred tools outlined in Table 9 shows a diverse picture, which is most likely due to the different knowledge backgrounds and focus areas of the participants.

Strategy Tools (List of 16)	Strategy Tools (preferred tools/techniques - List of 20) Stage 1 (Interviews)
Ansoff's Product/Market Matrix	Balanced Scorecard
Blue Ocean Four Action Framework	Business Model Canvas
Bowman's Strategy Clock	Cause and Effect Chain
Core Competences Analysis (Tree)	Critical Success Factor Ranking vs. Competitors
Corporate Parenting Matrices (Ashridge)	Delta Model
Industry Life Cycle	Dynamic Simulation
Key Success Factors	Eisenhower Matrix
PESTLE Analysis	Experimenting
Porter's Five Forces	Fever Curve
Porter's Generic Strategy Model	Game Theory
Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey)	Hypotheses
Resourced-Based Analysis (VRIO)	IP Analysis/Strategy
Scenario Planning	Kotler's Product/Marketing Model
Strategic Group Analysis	M&A Matrix
SWOT/TOWS	Minimal Viable Product Analysis
Value Chain	Strategic Decision Group Methodology
	Transformation Map
	Value Proposition
	Why? How? What?

Table 9: List of Strategy Tools incorporated during Research Stage 1

Considering the tools presented above, it appears that they are not all necessarily strategy tools. This could be explained by the different experience levels and the different work backgrounds of the participants. As outlined previously, a slightly different approach was taken in this research to better understand the tool preferences of strategists. Participants were first asked which strategy tools were known to them and subsequently which tools they use or have used during strategy work. The results of the interview stage are outlined below, but as mentioned these should be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size (n=15). Figure 8 illustrates which tools are known and used or have been used by the participants during strategy work.

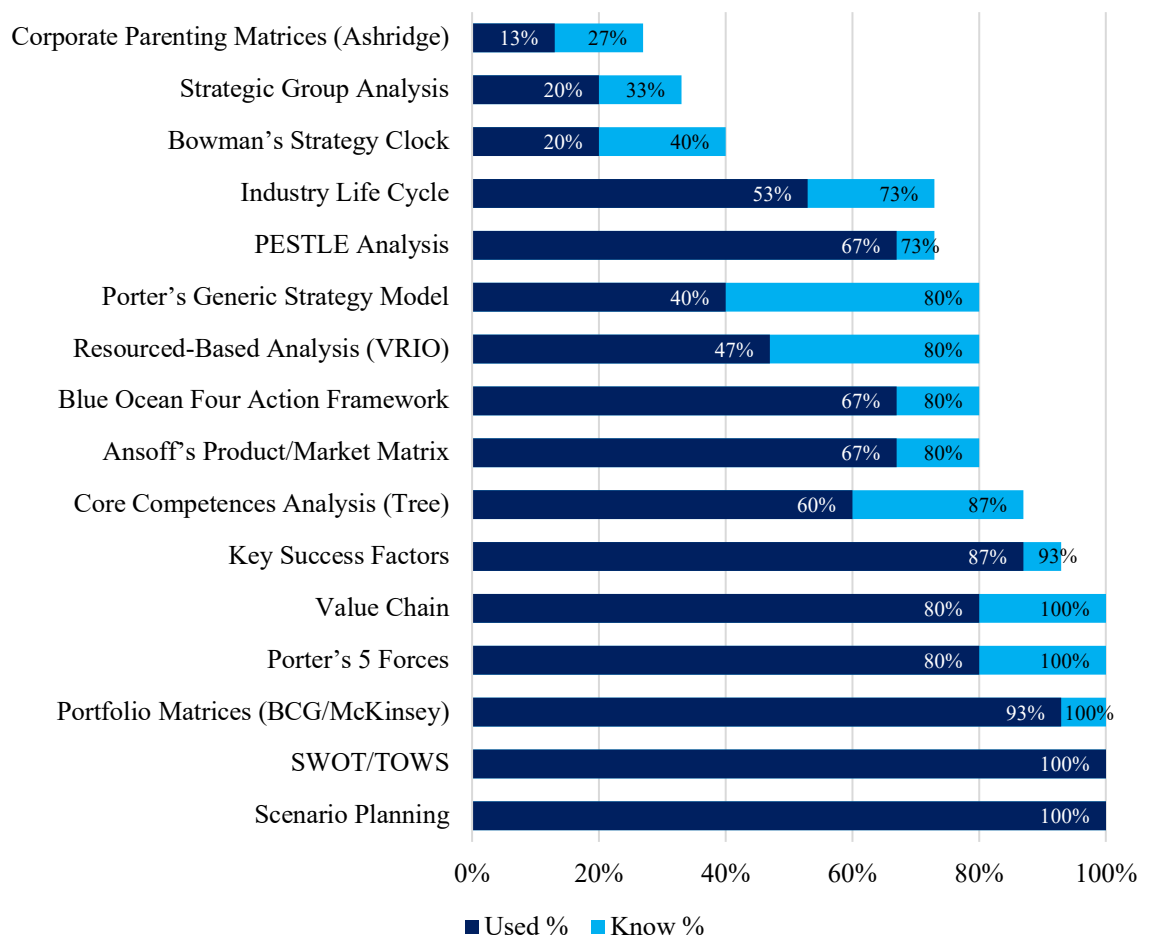


Figure 8: Strategy Toolkit – Know/Use (Interview Stage)

It is immediately apparent that the participants know more tools than they have used. On average the strategists knew 78% and used 62% of the 16 most popular strategy tools. The extension to the list of 20 tools which included the personally preferred tools/techniques, led to a decrease in these averages (i.e. knew 69%, used 56%), as not all participants added tools to that list. When considering all participants, the top three tools known and used are Scenario Planning, SWOT/TOWS, and the Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey). Subsequently, the clustered perspectives are directly compared to identify possible differences and similarities. The lists of known and used tools are illustrated in two separate figures. Figure 9 immediately below shows the averages of tools known by the different practitioner perspectives, and Figure 10 shows the averages of tools used.

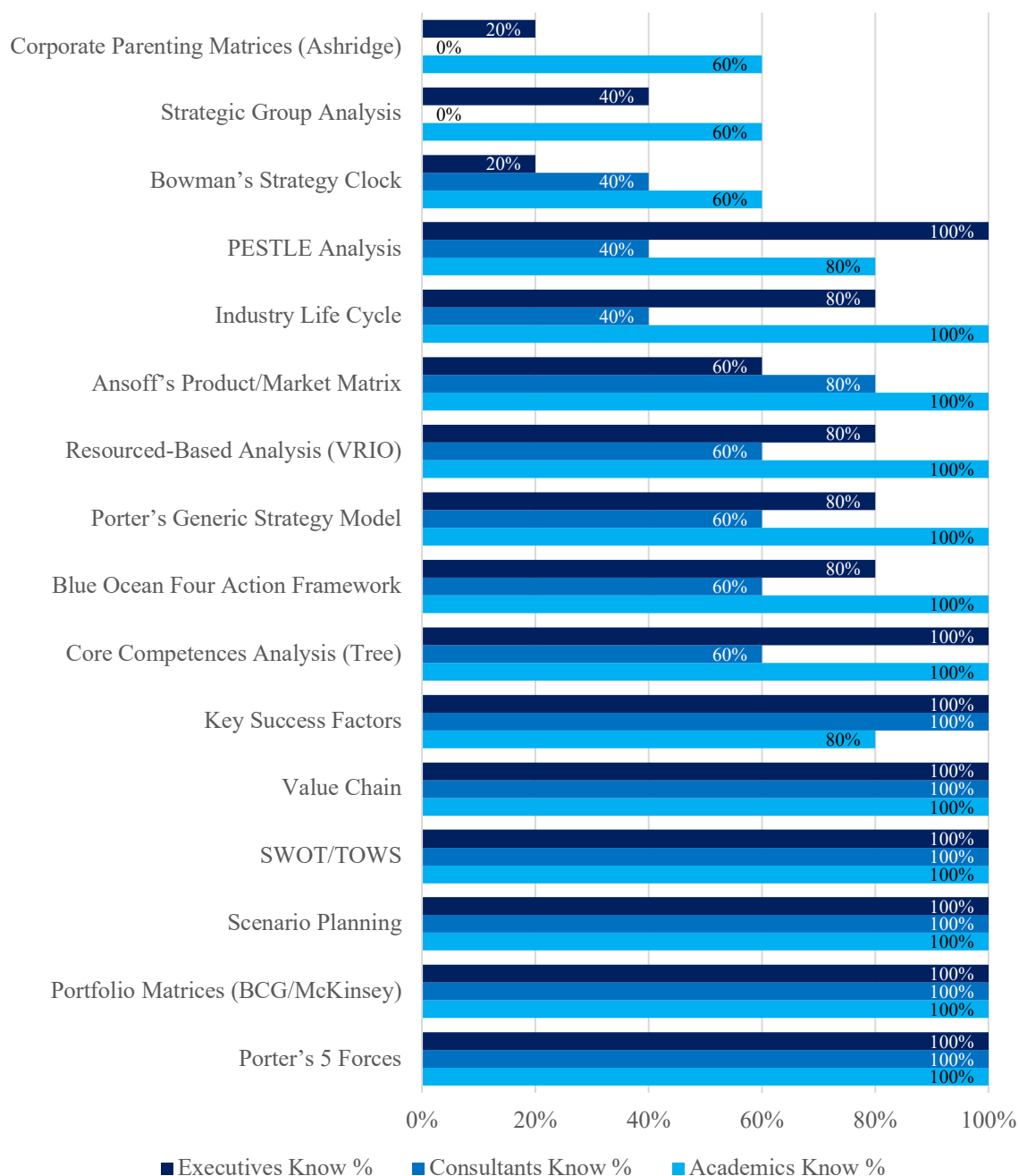


Figure 9: Strategy Toolkit – Perspectives/Know (Interview Stage)

With an average of 90%, academics knew most of the tools presented, which is an expected result. In comparison, with an average of 79% the executives knew more tools than the consultants, with just 65%. For all three perspectives the most prominent tools appear to be Porter's Five Forces, the Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey), Scenario Planning, SWOT/TOWS, Value Chain Analysis, and the Key Success Factor Analysis. Figure 10 below illustrates the results for the tools used by the different participant perspective groups.

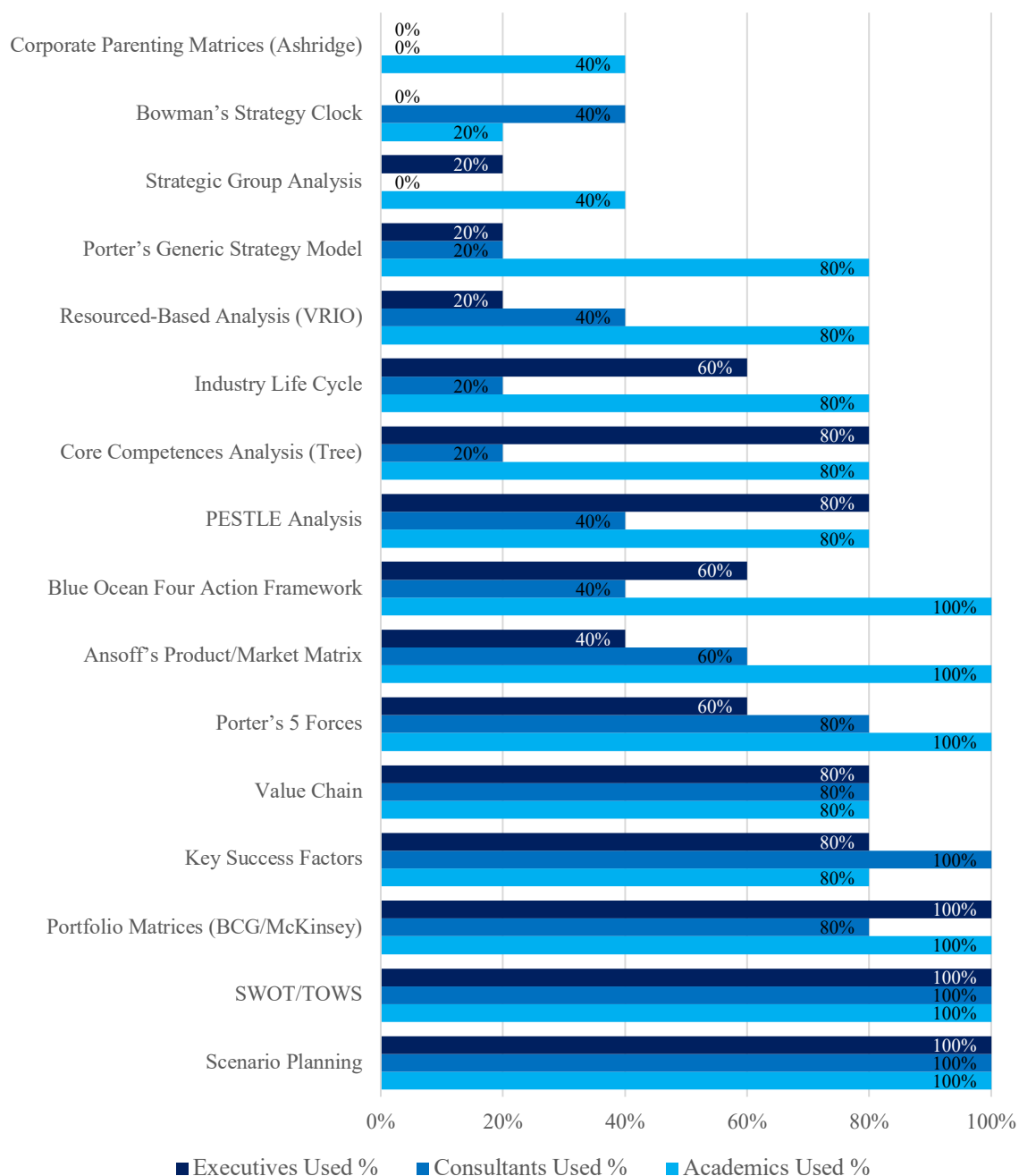


Figure 10: Strategy Toolkit – Perspectives/Used (Interview Stage)

With an average of 79%, the academics use or have used most of the tools presented in the list. Yet again, the average of the executives (56%) was higher in comparison to that of the consultants (51%), but slightly lower than the variance in the previous analysis. Similarly, the tools with the highest averages are Scenario Planning, SWOT/TOWS, Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey), Key Success Factor Analysis, Value Chain Analysis, and Porter's Five Forces. It is noteworthy, however, that even though everyone knew Porter's Five Forces and the Value Chain Analysis they had not been used by everyone.

Overall, the differences between the perspectives were small but discernible. It was no surprise that academics know and use the highest number of strategy tools, due to their role in teaching and research. It was unexpected that consultants knew and used the least number, especially when compared to the executives. Table 10 below supports these results, as it presents the average number of tools known and used by the different perspectives. This table shows, that the participants knew 12 tools and used 10 on average. The option to name up to four additional personally preferred tools/techniques increased the averages by approximately one tool.

	Academics		Consultants		Executives		Total	
	<i>AMT</i>	%	<i>AMT</i>	%	<i>AMT</i>	%	<i>AMT</i>	%
Know (16 Tools)	14,4	90%	10,4	65%	12,6	79%	12,5	78%
Used (16 Tools)	12,6	79%	8,2	51%	9	56%	9,9	62%
Know (20 Tools)	15,6	78%	11,6	58%	14,2	71%	13,8	69%
Used (20 Tools)	13,8	69%	9,4	47%	10,6	53%	11,3	56%

Table 10: Strategy Toolkit – Perspectives Know/Used – (Interview Stage)

Derived Hypothesis

Considering the results above, it can be noted that there are slight differences between the practitioner perspectives regarding the application of strategy tools. The presented averages show that strategists know more tools than they actually use to conduct strategy work. Thus, the following hypothesis can be derived to further examine this:

H1a: The more tools strategists know, the more are applied during strategy work.

4.1.3.2 Strategy Tool Usage

In this research, the clustered practitioner perspectives of academics, consultants, and executives have been thoroughly investigated to contribute a more elaborate and integrated explanation to why strategists utilize tools. Due to the sample structure, each interviewed participant was able to share thoughts and experiences regarding the use of such instruments. 156 references were coded under the parent node ‘usage’. Statements coded comprised explanations about what, when, where, and how tools are used. Selected remarks and statements from the different practitioner perspectives are outlined below. This section should solely be regarded as foundation for the discussion about the usage of strategy tools, which is why it does not derive any hypotheses.

Analysis

During the analysis, application experiences were coded under the parent node ‘usage’. In a subsequent matrix coding query, the attribute values ‘academics’, ‘consultants’, and ‘executives’ of the attribute ‘perspectives’ were combined with the parent node ‘usage’ to illustrate which practitioner group most frequently referred to the use of strategy tools (see Appendix F for full set of

coded references). All three perspectives show similar numbers of coded references for ‘usage’ with slight differences. Consultants account for the highest number, which could be due to their role in making and executing strategy for client organizations in different industries as well as regions. For academics, the number of references is marginally lower, but comparable to that of the consultants, even though they tend to implicitly apply tools. Interestingly, executives represent the lowest number of coded references for tool usage, which is possibly due to their engagement in a broad mix of strategic issues that requires a variety of different managerial skills. However, executives contributed the most diverse facets relating to ‘usage’ of strategy tools. Figure 11 shows the results of the query.

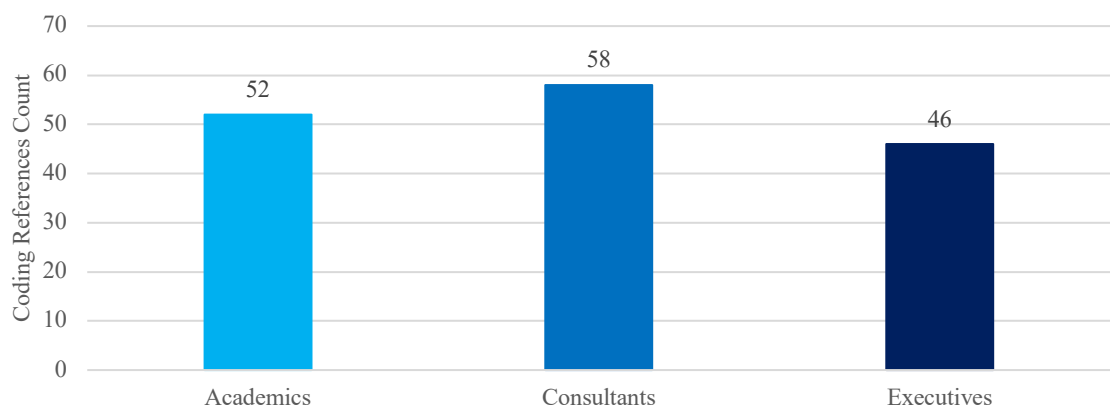


Figure 11: References coded for Perspectives vs. Usage

The view of most *academics* on the utilization of strategy tools was straightforward, as they stated that “...using strategy tools, maybe with a few exceptions, is absolutely necessary” (A4), but “...you have to understand the problem first and then these tools support you to shed light on them” (A2). Generally, “They are all used by practitioners because they are simplistic” (A2) and “If applied properly, they will definitely help...” (A5) to conduct strategy work. As a strategist “...you always use these tools to undertake a strategic task, and [...] there is usually no actual situation where you should plan with or definitely use a certain tool” (A5). Accordingly, one respondent was quite explicit and claimed, “...use them when needed, or at stopping points in your strategy work in order to simplify a complex problem” (A5). In practice, however, “...most of the ‘standard’ tools are actually applied” (A5). Thus, it appears that “...simple tools like the SWOT are inevitable” (A2), since “The more complex ones are rather not used” (A5). But it should be mentioned that companies “...use these tools in a very static way” (A4). To solve this issue and to respond to the rapid industrial conversions, strategists tend to apply them “With adapted categories on the axis...” (A1), which is something they need to be careful with.

Consultants referred to tool usage the most and revealed a more distinct connection to them in their everyday work, as most referred to specific frameworks they utilize in practice. One participant emphasized, “As a management and strategy consultant we use strategy tools or methods within our daily project work” (C2). To the consultant, “...these tools are used to develop a strategy...” (C1)

and "...the most common frameworks that [...] we use, are the simple ones, because those are the ones that are most thought through" (C4). As strategists, they "...approach every strategic problem very systematically, and [...] try to ease up the process by applying tools that are readily available" (C2). Consultants also stressed the utilization of traditional instruments, but also admitted, "...we do not say let us do the SWOT or let us look into the Five Forces, we are rather interested in the questions within these frameworks that appeared in our thinking process" (C4). Meaning, they apply traditional tools "...but probably under a different name" (C3), which was congruent with the assessment of the academics. They further claimed that most practitioners believe "The work is done by filling in the framework" (C1), but "Sometimes it just takes time to get the right data in place" (C1). Obviously, "Some tools are simply commodity and you have to know them, because it is part of your daily business" (C2), which is typical but at the same time unique for the consultant perspective. Therefore, they mostly rely on information of former cases and claim, "Of course, we have those tools written down in our knowledge documents and we also have templates that are usually ready to present..." (C4), but "If you do not have some sort of knowledge management, and at the next stage it is called experience management, you will not be able to successfully use strategy tools in practice" (C2).

The *executives* had the lowest references count for 'usage' and mostly referred to situations, problems or events, when using tools was/is necessary or needed. Accordingly, one participant stated, "Ideally you use these tools when you are facing an unknown situation, or when you feel something is happening, changing, or commoditizing, so that you really need to change your entire company" (E3). While applying them, strategists "...are trying to create sense in a world that you cannot really grasp, as you of course cannot know anything, but you need to make decisions to move forward, and you need something that guides you" (E1). However, the utilization of tools will mostly "...lead to more precise questions rather than results..." (E3), which is perceived with mixed views. In reality, this has something to do with the established "...expectation management" (E4). Meaning, what can be expected from a tool? This depends on the input of the practitioners involved. Similar to the other perspectives, executives primarily mentioned traditional frameworks to describe their application experiences. One candidate explained, "When thinking about the outside world for sure the PESTLE and the Five Forces pop up and for sure you can use them, but it depends on where on my strategic level I am" (E1). This means that particular tools will not fit every context or even hierarchical level within an organization. Simple tools such as "...the SWOT, for example, can be used for almost everything, but some [...] tools are only useful for certain aspects of strategy development" (E4). Unfortunately, the descriptive instruments like "...SWOT and core competences analysis are mostly prefilled by some self-announced experts in the company and then they are presented and nobody really cares" (E3), which clearly jeopardizes their strategic applicability. The executive added, "If anything really helps then it is scenario planning, because when moderated correctly it generates new ideas and new insights" (E3). Scenario planning is considered as rather complex and sophisticated,

due to its problematic integration into other planning or forecasting techniques that are part of an organizational process. Accordingly, one participant formulated a basic rule: "...the more complex a tool is, the less useful it is in your strategic process" (E5), which is consistent with the prevailing opinion of most interviewed participants. Interestingly, executives were the only perspective that referred to the coherence of tool usage and the underlying strategy process. They stated, that strategists should "Use them as a support or right next to [the] established process..." (E1), and further stressed that "...one of the biggest mistakes is to use [tools] isolated from your process, since the integration is much more important than most strategists think" (E1). Nevertheless, when organizations face complex strategic problems, "It is always a combination of doing tool work and the reflection of the reality (E2).", which includes discussions between all participants involved alongside the process.

Summary of Results

It can be postulated that tools are most useful during the strategic management process, but it clearly depends on how practitioners apply them in practice. Tools can be applied in different contexts and make a significant contribution. According to the *academics*, traditional tools are still utilized to conduct strategy work, even though true practitioners like consultants and executives use other expressions or names for them. The academics recommended that practitioners should at least try to think in these structures to ensure sufficient strategic decisions. For *consultants*, strategy tool usage is central, since most see these frameworks as part of their daily strategy work. They were quite unambiguous and claimed that tools should be used while doing strategy work, otherwise they would not have been developed. As with the academics, traditional and rather simplistic tools were considered fundamental. Their utilization success depends on the content filled in by the responsible practitioners. The structure of tools should be clear and not complex, and it should be obvious what results they can deliver if accurately applied. *Executives*, however, agree that tool application is clearly situation or context specific and strongly dependent on the practitioner as well. Systematic work can help organizations to overcome strategic problems, but most organizations fail to use the tools and concepts in an appropriate manner. Therefore, they usually look at the tools and decide to use one based on the situation or problem they are facing. It appears unusual to use simplistic tools, but they admitted that they always implicitly use at least elements of those tools. Moreover, the executives stressed the fact that strategy tools should be applied alongside the overall process, but practitioners should not use them without a rationale.

4.1.3.3 Advantages and Disadvantages of Strategy Tools-in-Use

Investigating advantages and disadvantages of strategy tools-in-use is a crucial task of SasP research, as it aims to generate a better understanding and perception of why strategists should consider their usage, and what difficulties they possibly face when relying on them.

Analysis

As part of the analysis, the attribute values ‘academics’, ‘consultants’, and ‘executives’ were compared with the child nodes ‘advantages’ and ‘disadvantages’ of the parent node ‘usage’ to explain the assets and drawbacks of strategy tools-in-use. As illustrated in Figure 12 below, the advantages of using strategy tools clearly outweigh the disadvantages, which is consistent for all perspectives. However, the varying characteristics leave room for further interpretation. The greatest gap between advantages and disadvantages, in terms of coded references, can be identified for the consultants. Academics and executives similarly referred to advantages and disadvantages of tool usage, but for both the gap was smaller when directly compared to the consultants.

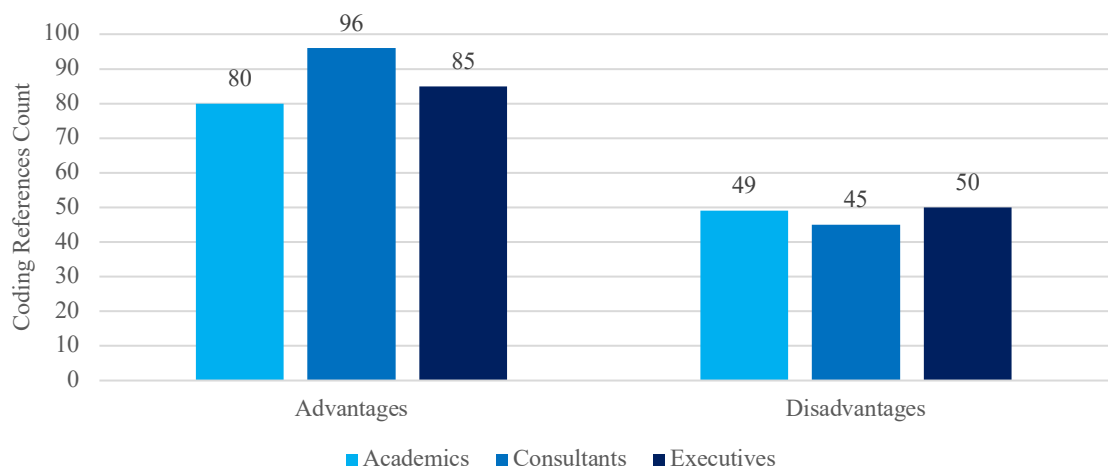


Figure 12: References coded for Perspectives vs. Advantages & Disadvantages

As elaborated, the aggregated number of references coded under the child node ‘advantages’ (coding references count = 305) exceeds the number coded references for ‘disadvantages’ (coding references count = 162), which implies that utilizing strategy tools potentially influences strategy work in a positive way. The coded references exemplify how tools-in-use are or can be helpful and supportive on the one hand, and what, when, how, and where problems and complications could occur on the other. Once coded, the resulting sub-categories under the child nodes ‘advantages’ and ‘disadvantages’ express that the participants identified more different advantages than disadvantages (i.e. 6 categories under advantages and 5 under disadvantages). Figures 13 and 14 outline that ‘structure’ (coding references count = 71) was the most significant advantage, and ‘misleading-dysfunctional’ (coding references count = 38) and ‘oversimplification’ (coding references count = 37) were the most noticeable disadvantages for all interviewed practitioners.

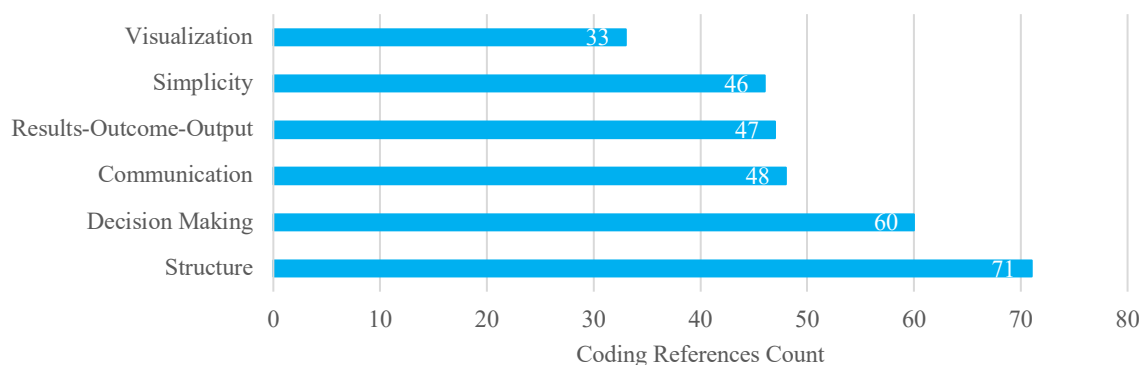


Figure 13: References coded for Practitioner vs. Advantages of Tool Usage

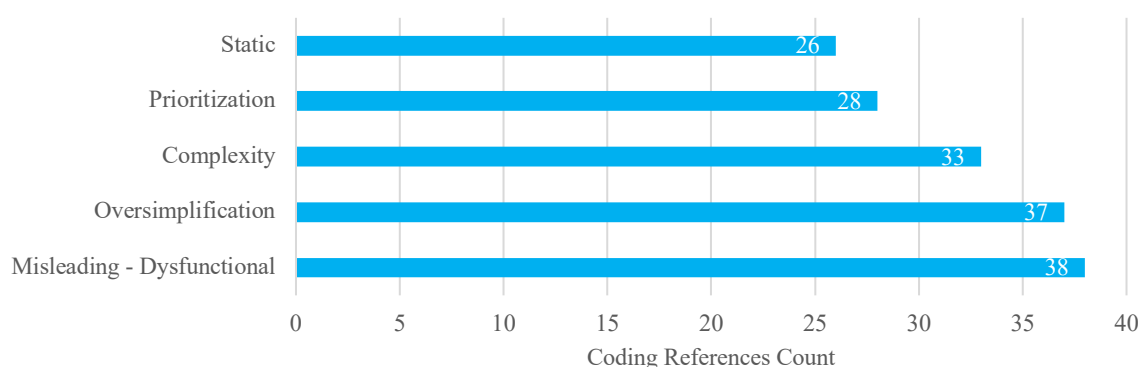


Figure 14: References coded for Practitioner vs. Disadvantages of Tool Usage

Figure 15 illustrates the advantages with regard to the respective practitioner perspectives. Academics referred to the advantage ‘decision making’, consultants to ‘structure’, and executives to ‘communication’ the most. However, ‘structure’ was at least the second most referred to advantage for all perspectives (see Appendix G for full set of coded references)

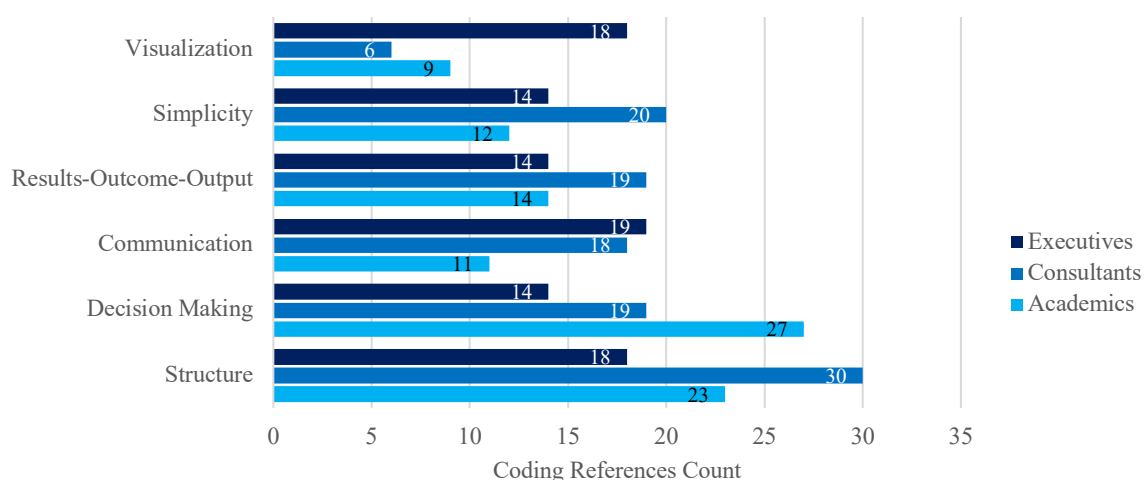


Figure 15: References coded for Perspectives vs. Advantages of Tool Usage

The advantage most referred to by *academics* was ‘decision-making’. They claimed that such instruments systematize the decision-making process and if applied properly “...tools might even bring a better solution than something that is just lying in front of you (e.g. annual reports, growth rates, etc.)” (A1). Overall, tools provide strategists “...with a pathway and a structure to reflect on what is going on outside and inside the business, and how you can bring these two together in terms of what the business should be doing in the future” (A3). As apparent in the previous quote, the advantage ‘structure’ also appeared to be significant for the academics. According to an interviewee, strategy tools “...can be used to structure a problem, to structure your thinking, to structure the entire process so to say” (A2). Thus, tools offer their users “...a clear and structured framework... (A5)” to conduct strategy work. The ‘results-outcomes-output’ that tools deliver was also a noticeable advantage for academics. Strategists involve them “...to gain additional insights besides the gut feeling and experiences that managers and employees do have...” (A1). Moreover, they “...help to raise questions in order to predict future outcomes, and to get closer to the desired results” (A4). However, “...the main part for using these tools is about gathering information, because the better your informatory basis, the better the decisions will be that are related to your strategy” (A2). Academics only marginally referred to the other categorized advantages ‘simplicity’, ‘communication’, and ‘visualization’. According to them, “...simple tools like the SWOT are inevitable” (A2), as they “...help you to make some very complex issues more manageable...” (A2). Strategy tools can also “...help to communicate...” (A1), since they can “...serve as a basis for discussion with others” (A5). In terms of ‘visualization’, the academics were rather cautious, as only two referred to it. Both agreed, however, that “They help you to solve your problem in a clear and visible way...” (A2).

Consultants view ‘structure’ as the most significant advantage of strategy tools-in-use. They agreed that “A strategy tool most importantly provides you with structure or something that helps you to structure your own thoughts” (C3). With tools strategists can “...approach every strategic problem very systematically...” (C2), since they “...provide you with a set of good questions in order to grasp the problem...” (C4). Additionally, they function as an “...immediate starting point...” (C2) and “...give some sort of a guideline...” (C5) to approach a strategic problem. The other categorized advantages ‘simplicity’, ‘decision-making’, ‘results-outcome-output’, and ‘communication’ received similar numbers of references. Regarding simplicity, consultants stated that tools are a “...simple way of looking at issues... (C3)” and “Overall, they were invented to make things easier...” (C2). In fact, tools “...will grant you new dimensions or questions to solve your problem” (C4) and “...when applied properly they open up the mindset” (C5) to reach strategically complex decisions. They have the power to generate results, but strategists working for consultancies are mainly “...interested in the questions within these frameworks that appear in [their] thinking process” (C4). All results, outcomes, or outputs produced through tools stimulate communication, and

according to one of the consultants “They are used to communicate and that is really what strategy tools should be about...” (C1). The least relevant advantage ‘visualization’ was referred to by just two consultants. However, in their view visualization is important, because “...tools allow you to visualize your findings in a very transparent and well understandable way” (C4).

Participants from the *executive* perspective most frequently referred to the advantage ‘communication’. Tools lead to discussion, dialog, or even more transparency while conducting strategy work. One executive claimed that “Strategy tools are a vehicle of bringing people together in order to speak about one topic, and that they create prepared minds and structured thinking” (E3). A connected side effect is the tools’ ability to “...create the needed transparency” (E4), while discussing strategic tasks. ‘Structure’ is also important, as tools help strategists to bring “...complex data into a meaningful set of ideas...” (E1). One executive accented, “...tools are structuring your thinking, which is really the core advantage” (E2). In addition, tools are a good starting point for strategy work and while applying them “...you start to understand your surroundings better...” (E1). The executives also referred to ‘visualization’ quite often, even though the majority of references came from only one participant. Accordingly, they stated that “...you always have to visualize your portfolio along various dimensions, and therefore the tools are so far the easiest approach” (E4). The other three categorized advantages ‘results-outcome-output’, ‘simplicity’, and ‘decision making’ received the same number of coded references. Regarding results and outcomes, one executive claimed, “...tools are about information processing...” (E5) and “...when moderated correctly they can generate new ideas and new insights...” (E3). Further, they explicated that tools “...simplify things... (E1)”, and this “...simplicity is clearly an advantage” (E1). Fortunately, tools work as “...something that guides you...” (E1), especially while reaching a strategic decision.

When looking at the list of disadvantages (see Figure 16 below) it is noteworthy that academics referred to ‘static’, and not to ‘misleading-dysfunctional’ nor ‘oversimplification’, the most. For them, tools often draw on static pictures by outlining industry environments with narrow dimensions. Consultants and executives both referred to ‘misleading-dysfunctional’ as the most significant disadvantage of tools-in-use, because tools can sometimes be a distraction (see Appendix H for full set of coded references). This assessment should however be treated with caution, as all reference counts for the underlying disadvantages were relatively similar.

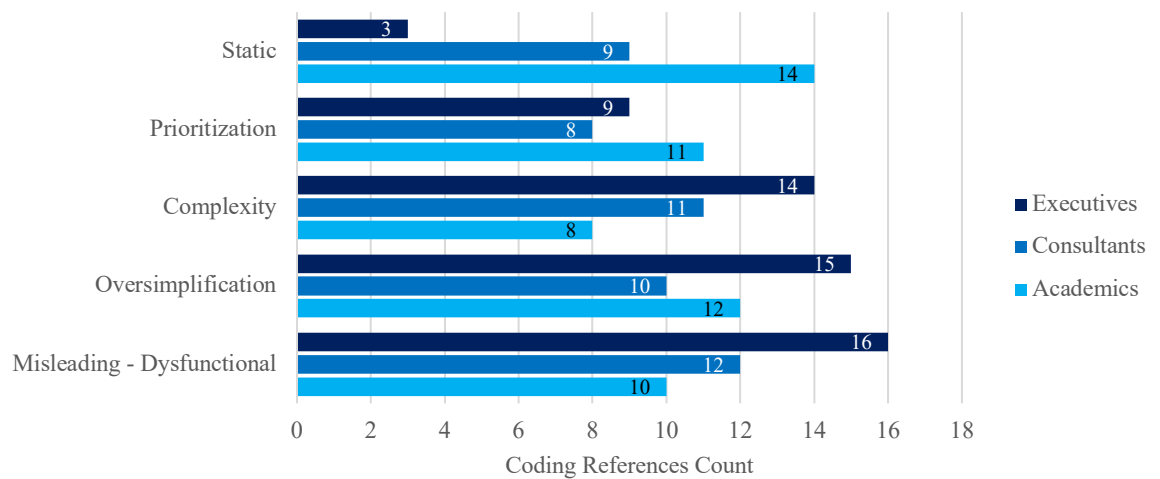


Figure 16: References coded for Perspectives vs. Disadvantages of Tool Usage

The predominant disadvantage referred to by *academics* has been ‘static’, which could be traced back to the initiation period of most tools, since many were “...rather developed for static industry landscapes and not for the very disruptive innovation cycles we are facing today” (A2), and in these “...rapid industries people rather see them as a distraction” (A3). ‘Oversimplification’ was also a considerable disadvantage for academics while employing tools. In fact, many strategy tools can be easily criticized “...for being over-simplistic...” (A2). Once strategists apply tools, there is always the “...risk of over-standardizing and feeling too safe...” (A1), and naturally “...a lot more dimensions play a role” (A5), than offered in them. However, this simplicity can be a disadvantage and advantage at the same time. Another disadvantage highlighted by the academics was ‘prioritization’, because some users tend to lose their focus or put too much faith in the application of tools, which possibly results in biased results. The biggest problem is “...feeling too safe...” (A1), since “...blindly relying on them while conducting strategy work will not lead you anywhere...” (A2). Tools-in-use can also be ‘misleading-dysfunctional’; a disadvantage academics frequently referred to. When applying tools in a static way or without adapting them to the actual situation their use “...sometimes leads to absolute nonsense...” (A3). Regarding ‘complexity’ academics only had a few comments. One explained “...when used properly using strategy tools can be a very timely process...” (A4), and “When it is getting too abstract their convincing power is quite low” (A5).

Consultants were accountable for the lowest number of coded references with regard to ‘disadvantages’. The disadvantage they most referred to was ‘misleading-dysfunctional’. Misleading or dysfunctional tools tend to lead to no real outcome, are a distraction, and are sometimes meaningless or even too theoretical. Interviewees claimed, “If you are only looking into the things that are mentioned in the tools you will probably develop a misleading strategy, because not every tool can be generalized for any situation” (C1). Without any adaptation or adjustments, “...most of them do not really matter in the real world...” (C3), since “There are always other indicators that you

might not see while using these tools” (C1). Another important disadvantage for the consultants was the ‘complexity’ of tools-in-use, even though only two of them actually referred to it. They claimed that due to their complexity they can be very “...time consuming and not as easy as it seems...” (C2) and “...if you put in too much time and effort to formalize things that you already know without a tool, then you just waste a lot of time with academic discussions...” (C5). Consultants also referred to the disadvantage ‘oversimplification’, because “Sometimes they are just too simple” (C2). Of course, “...there is a need to simplify complexity, but the oversimplification of the tools can be problematic” (C5), as their application can “...sometimes hinder you to extract the whole value of your solution” (C4). Only a few participants from this perspective referred to the disadvantages ‘static’ and ‘prioritization’. Some tools appear to be quite static, especially “...if we think about the rapidly changing markets we are currently facing...” (C1). Further, it was argued that strategists only utilize them as prioritization instruments, but most are not aware that their application “...can be something that prevents you from thinking outside the box...” (C3).

Executives referred to ‘disadvantages’ the most, and the most frequently referred to disadvantage was ‘misleading – dysfunctional’, which stands for political decisions based on the outcome of applied tools, or tools that have no real outcome, or tools that are perceived as a distraction. One of the major issues is the expectation of tool users, since “Tools can help here and there, but they do not provide the solution” (E4). However, the greatest “...danger of strategy tools is their virtue of being a simplification of reality [...], but if you use a framework and the most important aspect for your industry is not even part of it, then it can be totally misleading” (E4). The second most referred to disadvantage was ‘oversimplification’. Interviewees claimed that some of the tools are simply “...reducing complexity too much” (E5), which is why another clarified that “a tool is just a tool...” (E2). The executives also referred to ‘complexity’ a lot. The tools complexity can be very problematic, as “Using them is clearly very time consuming...” (E2). Their systematic and structured nature “...can create an administrative burden, as they force people to fill out templates, which should rather be done in a dialog format... (E3).” Tools can simply be applied, but this “...does not mean that it is simple to fill them with valuable content” (E3). The disadvantages ‘prioritization’ and ‘static’ received only marginal references counts. Regarding prioritization, the greatest “...danger is that you rely on everything they tell you...” (E1), because “...strategy and numbers have often become an obsession of management to make a decision count” (E5). As explained, “...tools cannot really reflect the whole complexity of the world...” (E2), because they are simply “...very static...” (E4) and therefore “...not designed for each and every problem...” (E1).

Summary of Results

Academics explained that tools are used to examine a strategic task, but, most importantly, they should guide the decision-making of strategists, as they help them to prioritize. They systematize complex issues and regulate uncertainty, since they not only structure the thinking of their users, but

also the entire strategy process. Overall, academics claimed that tools help strategists to raise questions and to identify issues and solutions, which enables them to see the bigger picture. Their communicative power is not only based on dialog or discussion, but also on the ability of strategy tools to visualize results and outcomes in a more comprehensible way. However, strategists should be aware that most tools are too static, since they were developed during less dynamic times. The over-standardization of strategy work bares the risk of analyzing too profoundly and formulating too simply. Obviously, their application can be a timely process and if they are too complex they should not be employed.

According to the *consultants*, many changes in the markets have led to increased tool usage, but they are mainly interested in the questions that these frameworks evoke. Therefore, the structure that tools deliver is their most significant attribute, as they force its users not to forget certain issues. Moreover, consultants considered them troubleshooters to get a holistic view of a situation that inevitably leads to results that are more transparent. Once applied, they stimulate communication and build a common ground for discussion. Unfortunately, not every tool can be generalized, and some of them simply do not matter without adjustment and adaption. Further, their application sometimes takes too much time and effort to formalize aspects everyone involved might already know. They are obviously not a one-size-fits-all solution and due to oversimplification they sometimes have no real use at all. In the worst case, a tool-in-use prevents strategists to think outside the box, and unfortunately at this point people base everything on their results.

Interestingly, *executives* see communication as the most important motive for the utilization of strategy tools, because they are a vehicle of bringing people together to speak about issues and create prepared minds. Structure is central for the executives as well, since people might forget crucial elements without such structured and logical ways of thinking. In the corporate landscape, tools are appreciated to visualize results, ideas, gaps, and possibilities to present all information used to make a decision. They primarily generate new ideas and insights, which ultimately lead organizations to the necessary conclusions. However, most tools are merely one-dimensional and therefore strategists can miss important aspects while relying on them. One of the biggest problems is the inability of tools to portray reality, and therefore it is most likely a simplified version that is presented. Some of the instruments reduce complexity too much, and others in turn are too complex, which possibly leads to an administrative burden. Tools also lead to prioritized decisions making, which is why strategists should be aware that they are not applicable for every problem. The rather static tools are not necessarily suited to today's dynamic market situations.

Derived Hypotheses

In practice, practitioners experience various advantages as well as disadvantages while applying strategy tools that speak for and against their utilization. As the results indicate, there are several commonalities as well as distinctions between the different practitioner perspectives, which is why the following hypotheses have been generated:

***H2a:** Perceived advantages of tools-in-use differ between the different practitioner perspectives.*

***H3a:** Perceived disadvantages of tools-in-use differ between the different practitioner perspectives.*

4.1.4 Temporal Integration of Strategy Tool-in-Use

The utilization of strategy tools is usually initiated through a problem, an unknown situation, an unusual event, or an objective. It is not uncommon that they are applied alongside a dedicated strategy process to support the decision-making. This section therefore concentrates on the temporal integration of strategy tools-in-use to preliminarily answer research sub-question 2.3: “When do strategists use strategy tools?” in order to understand which problems and objectives initiate tool utilization, and whether strategists apply them before or after making a strategic decision.

In the proceeding subsections, typical strategic problems and objectives are outlined based on the knowledge and experiences of the interviewed participants. Subsequently, references from all three perspectives are compared to further specify the temporal integration of tools in relation to the different stages of the strategy process. In a last step, the rationalization issue is juxtaposed to explain whether tools are used before or after a strategic decision, and whether they are used to reach rational rather than post-rational answers.

4.1.4.1 Strategic Problems and Objectives

Participants were asked to identify problems, objectives, questions, tasks, and projects they are typically confronted with. Reflections from the three perspectives are outlined below to determine potential differences and commonalities.

Analysis

The different strategic problems and objectives mentioned by participants were outlined and references related to ‘Strategic Problems – Objectives’ were coded as parent node under the theme node ‘strategy work’. To differentiate between the different perspectives another matrix coding query was conducted to assemble the values ‘academics’, ‘consultants’, and ‘executives’ of the attribute ‘perspectives’ with the parent node ‘Strategic Problems – Objectives’ (see Appendix I for full set of

coded references). The results demonstrate similar coding references counts for all three groups shown in Figure 17.

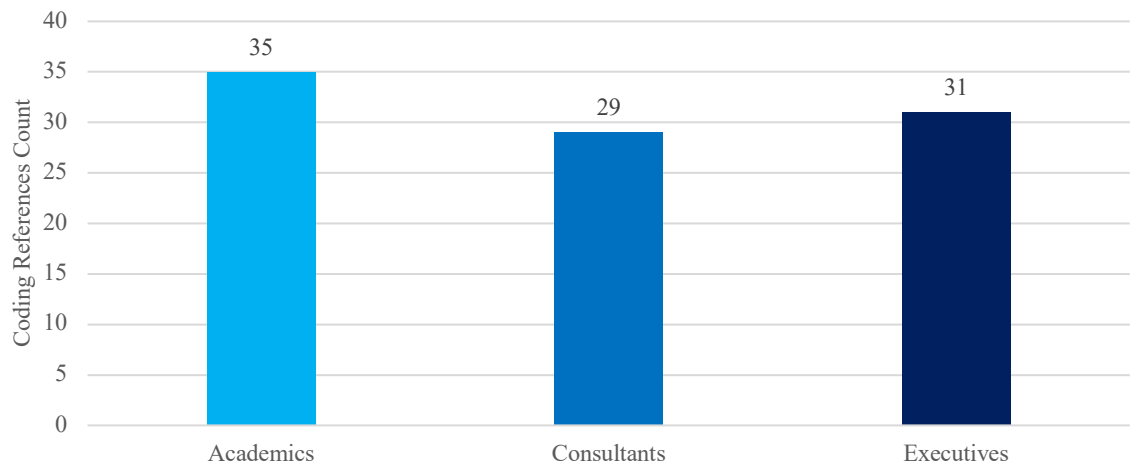


Figure 17: References coded for Perspectives vs. Strategic Problems - Objectives

With 35 coded references, *academics* referred the most to strategic problems and objectives, which was unexpected considering their rather implicit practitioner role. Their count was mainly induced by an exceptionally high number from one interviewee. The academics agreed that the “...key strategic problem of all types of organizations” (A2) is “...securing the company’s position for the future, since everyone knows industry environments are changing, and sticking to an old-fashioned business model will not last forever...” (A1). Other problems referred to were the “...assurance of constant growth [...] to avoid becoming redundant [...] and for sure this is also linked to cost efficiency...” (A1), “...the digital transformation...” (A2), and the allocation of “...limited resources...” (A5). Other than these, academics mostly referred to strategic problems in general terms or gave practical advice.

Although *consultants* referred to problems and objectives to a lesser extent (29 coded references), their contributions were substantially different and more in-depth due to their actual role in practicing strategy. Similar to the academics, they referred to repositioning the most, since strategy has always something “...to do with how the company wants to position itself in the future” (C1). However, strategy work is nowadays rather about the “...overarching topic of digital transformation” (C4) and “...by ignoring a disruptive trend or sleeping over it” (C5) organizations may undertake catastrophic strategic decisions. Another participant acknowledged that “...cost reduction is still one of the most common strategic questions consultancies usually have to work on...” (C2). Yet another, responded with an enumeration of problems and objectives clients confronted him with: a company “...either wants to expand, it wants to increase its quality, it wants to reduce its costs, it wants to search for synergies, it wants to consolidate, or it wants to find new collaborative agreements” (C1). However, the responsible strategists need to solve the questions “...where should we put our focus on and what

are the success factors that really need to be in place to become effective in order to develop a strategy” (C1).

The *executives* provided a different angle. In one of their 31 coded references, it was outlined that most companies start thinking about strategic problems and objectives with the question: “...why do we have to have a strategy?” (E2). Unlike the other perspectives, they could share actual problems and objectives currently faced by their companies. Asked about strategic issues, one executive started with a general response “When a problem occurs you have to put the right resources behind it” (E3), which emphasizes that executives rather approach strategy problems with a resource-based focus. Yet again, the key problem appeared to be repositioning. One participant was quite specific and described a recent example, “We want to reorganize the structure from the top down to become more customer focused, which involves 35.000 of the 47.000 employees at our company. How do we create a basic framework for this issue?” (E1). The example demonstrates that executives view problems and objectives as two sides of the same coin. This can be problematic, because “The more complex your business becomes, the more important it is to simplify the direction you want to go to as an organization...” (E5) and due to the existence of certain problems “The long-term plans often times have to be sacrificed for the sake of short-term results” (E3).

Summary of Results

Typical strategic problems and objectives for *academics* were the positioning with regard to changing industry environments, the assurance of constant growth in conjunction with cost efficiency, the digital transformation, and the allocation of limited resources. Generally, they pointed out that all organizations face numerous different strategic problems in their macro- and microenvironment, but they need to be aware that strategy work is today more emergent and dynamic than ever before. *Consultants* argued from a different angle, but fundamentally indicated similar problems and objectives. For them, positioning and cost efficiency play a subordinate but significant role. Organizations should care about the overarching topic of digital transformation, since ignoring or sleeping over a disruptive trend might cause catastrophic strategic decisions. Further problems and objectives consultants mentioned were growth, differentiation, synergies, consolidation, or collaborations, which emphasizes the wide variety of tasks strategists are confronted with. In contrast the *executives* referred to actual problems and objectives they currently face, but in essence they identified resource allocation and positioning as core issues of their strategy work. For the surveyed participants, it was difficult to separate problems and objectives, as they rather view them as intrinsically linked. Overall, they claimed that organization should focus on their key drivers, which occasionally means that long-term plans need to be sacrificed for short-term results.

Derived Hypothesis

Different practitioner perspectives appear to identify similar but still differing situations that initiate strategy tool usage. Considering that, it should be clarified whether certain situations do in fact cause their utilization. As a result, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H1b: *Situations that initiate tool use differ between the different practitioner perspectives.*

4.1.4.2 Tool Utilization as Part of the Strategy Process

Strategic problems and objectives might induce tool application, but it is also imperative to gather information regarding the different stages of the strategy process for which most tools were developed for, which indicates that they are meant to be utilized during and not separately from the strategy process. In this research, this process has been separated into two building blocks, namely planning and execution (see Figure 18). The stages illustrated in the planning phase usually result in a strategic decision and those illustrated thereafter execute it. Below, the assessments of the three perspectives are elaborated to emphasize during which stage strategists typically apply strategy tools.



Figure 18: Planning and Execution Phase of the Strategy Process

Analysis

In a first matrix coding query, the case classification ‘practitioner’ was combined with the child nodes ‘analysis’, ‘formulation and planning’, ‘implementation’, and ‘evaluation and control’ of the parent node ‘process’ to comprehend during which of the four stages strategists most commonly refer to strategy tools-in-use. As illustrated in Figure 19, practitioners referred to analysis the most. Formulation was mostly mentioned in combination with the previous analysis stage, as both stages are considered interlinked. Interestingly, practitioners quite frequently referred to implementation although several claimed that the number of available strategy tools is limited. References explaining tool usage during the evaluation and control stage were few.

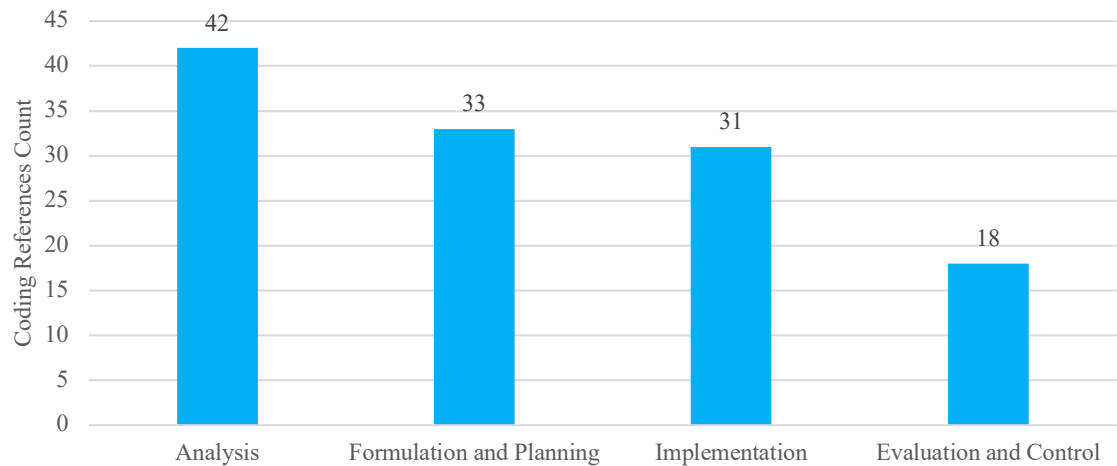


Figure 19: References coded for Practitioners vs. Stages of Strategy Process

In a subsequent matrix coding query, the values of the attribute ‘perspectives’ were paired with the four child nodes ‘analysis’, ‘formulation and planning’, ‘implementation’, and ‘evaluation and control’ to have a more distinct consideration of the differences between the respective practitioner groups (see Appendix J for full set of coded references). The results are outlined in Figure 20 and further explained below.

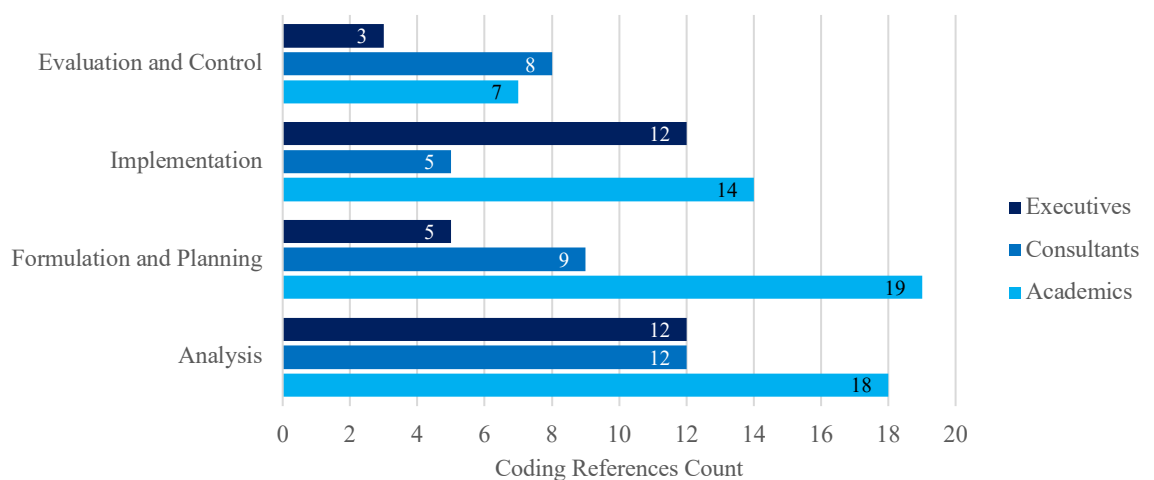


Figure 20: References coded for Perspectives vs. Stages of Strategy Process

Academics showed high coding references counts for all four stages. They mostly referred to analysis and formulation, as they claimed that tools are primarily used “...in early stages [...] to structure the problem...” (A2), albeit this “...often causes tremendous complications in firms, as it is difficult to reach consensus throughout the entire organization” (A5). Regarding the first stage, participants argued similarly, “...most tools that are currently used are related to the analysis stage...” (A4), or “The major portion is definitely applied in the analysis phase” (A5). Generally, the perspective viewed analysis and formulation as interlinked. Concerning available strategy tools, academics noted that “...only a few of them are directly related to the formulation stage” (A4) and these “...might be

helpful, albeit we have to question the traditional work of Porter for example...” (A1). Implementation was less referred to, as it “...is just so particular for every single business” (A1). Generally, it is considered to be the “...blind spot of strategy work, because researchers claim that it is not taught in business schools and therefore organizations lack to conduct it properly” (A1). Interestingly “...it is rather the implementation and evaluation that put strategy into action...” (A5). However, the availability of appropriate tools is limited. Although, academics referred to evaluation and control the least they agreed that the stage should not be underestimated, because strategists need it to “...benchmark the results with the initial plan” (A5).

The *consultant* perspective also referred to the first two stages the most, which again emphasizes the connection between analysis and formulation. While coding the interviews, respective references were assigned to both nodes, e.g. “...we often use these tools in analysis and formulation...” (C2) or “In reality there is a very strong use in analysis and formulation” (C5). The majority of consultants, however, underlined, “...we most frequently use these tools during analysis” (C4). Most frameworks were developed for analysis and only a few for formulation, “...but the real formulation is more about being creative” (C1). Consultants further explained that they usually “...stop at the formulation milestone...” (C2), because “...when it comes to implementation and evaluation and control you are normally not at the client’s side anymore” (C3). Consequently, the amount of coded references for implementation and evaluation and control was limited. Regarding the last stage, one participant noted that organizations “...spend very little time in evaluating and controlling...” (C3), which is truly a weakness because “From evaluation and control you usually restart the analysis process again” (C5).

The *executives* on the contrary, mostly referred to analysis and implementation and neglected the other two stages. Regarding the first stage one executive generalized, “With every change in an organization’s strategy, there has to be some analysis, and here we can use the given tools to structure our thinking...” (E4). Formulation was referred to much less, but the executives also explained that “Some tools create interlinks, e.g. the SWOT analysis delivers valuable information in order to formulate objectives or to develop hypotheses” (E2). The number of references about implementation were high, but contributions quite diverse. According to one executive, “...implementation is not strategy” (E1), it “...is actually project management, as you are suddenly able to demonstrate where exactly you are by making connections to the tools you have used in previous stages” (E1). This implies that the stage can hardly be standardized with a certain set of strategy tools. Executives referred to evaluation and control the least. If executives use tools for that it is “...only in a way to look how things change over time in order to compare it to the original assessment or setup” (E4) and to “...simply start the entire process all over again” (E1).

Summary of Results

Academics clearly stated that tools are primarily used during the early stages of the strategy process to structure the problems they are facing. Organizations predominantly focus on the analysis phase, which is potentially correlated with the vast majority of available tools. Participants agreed that analysis and formulation are interlinked, as several tools sit on the bridge between both. However, there are only few tools available that are directly related to the formulation stage. Implementation is the blind spot of strategy work, which is why the academics do not teach it in business schools. The last stage, evaluation and control, is mostly ignored by organizations but the academics agreed that it should not be underestimated. *Consultants* also claimed that strategy tools are mostly used during analysis and formulation. For them, the analysis stage is used to map out what is happening to create a holistic view, but it neglects long-term developments. Most tools were developed for the analysis and only a few for the formulation stage, which is where the work of consultants often stops. They explained implementation as a rather hands-on approach, where tools are used much less compared to the earlier stages. For evaluation and control it is a similar scenario, even though it is the point when the strategy process usually starts all over again. In line with the other perspectives, the *executives* expressed that the majority of tools is used for analysis, because in all other stages this information is needed. Formulation received less attention, but they claimed that there are some tools that create interlinks to the other stages. Unlike the others, the executives extensively referred to implementation. According to them, that stage can hardly be standardized with tools, but it forces organizations to execute their formulated ideas and strategies. Executives stated that most organizations barely consider evaluation and control.

According to these findings, it can be postulated that strategy tools are used predominantly before the strategic decision, as the majority of tools is used during the planning phase. This notion already creates a connection to the next subsection, which analyses whether tools are used to reach a decision or to proof/validate a decision already made.

Derived Hypothesis

The use of strategy tools during different stages of the strategy processes must be discussed from different angles, since not all organizations follow a dedicated process. Assuming there is a process, they are most commonly used during the analysis and formulation stage, but much less during implementation and evaluation and control. Hence, it can be postulated that tools are applied before the strategic decision has been made. Based on this notion, another hypothesis can be derived:

H2b: *The number of tools used before the strategic decision, exceeds the number of tools used after the strategic decision.*

4.1.4.3 Rationalization vs. Post-Rationalization

Hereinafter, the views of the different perspectives are expounded and compared to assess whether strategists use tools to reach rational or post-rational decisions. Figure 21 illustrates post-rationalization with regard to the two phases of the strategy process. It is assumed that post-rationalization most likely happens when strategists apply tools to simply validate or justify a strategic decision. In this case, tools from the planning phase are mostly affected, as they are usually applied to reach a strategic decision. If tools are used to post-rationalize it can be assumed that they are applied after the strategic decision has been made to proof its reliability, but if effectively employed to reach rational results they are already used before. For this reason, not only should it be discussed when tools are applied to conduct strategy work, but also whether they are utilized to reach rational rather than post-rational answers on issues already known, which possibly spares the question about when strategy tools are applied by strategists. This section should be regarded as addition to the discussion about the temporal integration of strategy tools, however it does not derive a hypothesis.

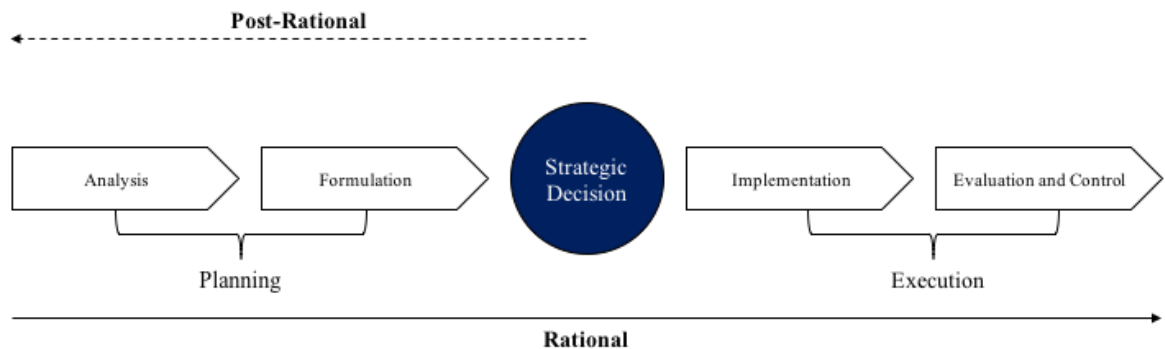


Figure 21: Post-Rationalization during the Strategy Process

Analysis

References regarding post-rationalization were coded under the child node ‘rationalization’ of the parent node ‘usage’ and separated in two sub-categories ‘rational’ and ‘post-rational’. Two matrix coding queries were conducted to compare whether practitioners use strategy tools to either rationalize or post-rationalize. The first query combined the case classification ‘practitioner’ with the child nodes ‘rational’ and ‘post-rational’ to outline a general tendency. Post-rationalization was clearly more referred to by all interviewed practitioners, which is outlined in Figure 22.

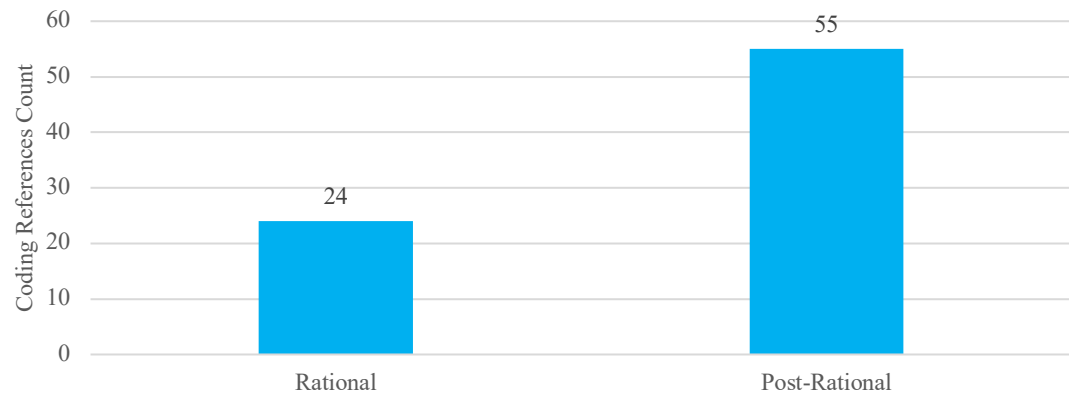


Figure 22: References coded for Practitioners vs. Rationalization

In the second query (see Appendix K for full set of coded references), both sub-categories were brought together with the attribute values ‘academics’, ‘consultants’, and ‘executives’ of the attribute ‘perspectives’ to outline the different coding references counts with regard to the practitioner perspectives, as shown in Figure 23. Executives referred to ‘post-rational’ the most, whereas academics and consultants had lower but comparable references counts. However, for ‘rational’, consultants and executives referred similarly, but academics made only two short references, which again could be explained by their implicit role as strategists. The proceeding discussion outlines the different impressions to create a better understanding of the rationalization issue.

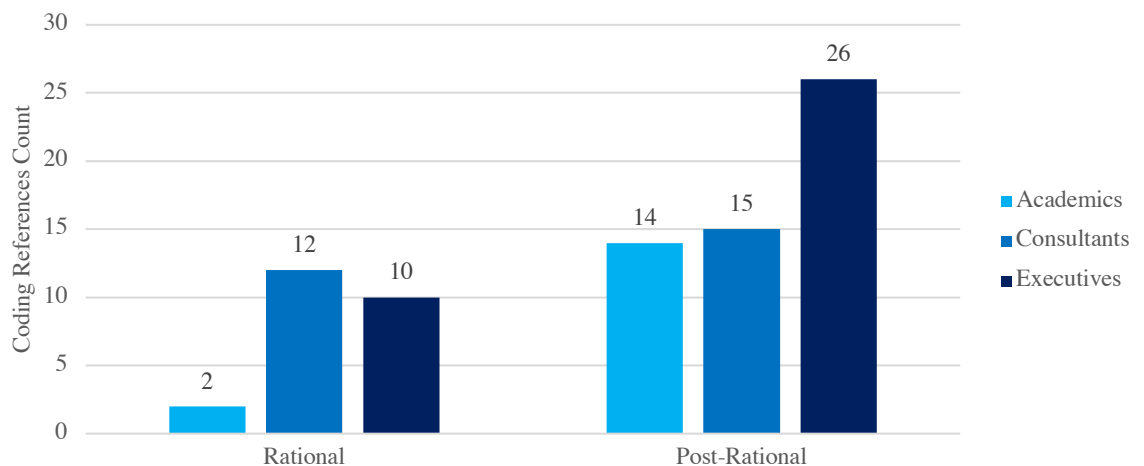


Figure 23: References coded for Perspectives vs. Rationalization

The interviewed *academics* referred significantly more to ‘post-rational’ than they did to ‘rational’, while discussing the utilization of strategy tools. One academic generalized, “In practice, they are not really used to achieve a goal, but rather to post-rationalize a decision...” (A1) and eventually organizations encourage this “...by using one of the top consultancies, because they put their stamp below the findings...” (A1). Another added, in reality it often happens “...that decisions are taken

and then strategists go into the aftermath with a tool to build a convincing case for the board of directors” (A4) or their clients, which indeed implies that tools are frequently used after the actual strategic decision. For this reason, it is the responsibility of strategists to question the forced use of tools, because “...ultimately using a significant tool is to justify a decision that they are probably not confident about” (A3). Hence, the academics agreed that post-rationalization is common practice, but if tools are properly used in the right situation “...they are much stronger to reach rational answers...” (A3).

Consultants equally referred to both terms with a slight majority for ‘post-rational’. Their attitude was mostly defensive, as they argued, “...we use tools or frameworks to reach a rational answer and we are not post-rationalizing decisions” (C3). Should they not be used to reach rational answers “...there would be no surplus for us to spend time with them” (C4). But it “...depends on your management style” (C2), because “...clients know that we are famous for specific tools and therefore our bosses occasionally force us to come up with the [company] solution, which is for sure not always the right way to approach a client’s problem” (C4). At this point, “...tools are used to justify findings, or to proof that the idea of the C-level manager was right...” (C2). Evidently, these statements raise the assumption that strategy tools are regularly applied once the strategic decision has been made. However, the consultants still claimed that “...tools should be used to reach rational answers, but in practice the limited knowledge on strategy and its tools is the core problem” (C1). Thus, working with such instruments requires proper experience, which is why “Somebody who is capable of using a tool to reach a rational answer is a true strategist” (C2).

The *executives* referred to ‘rationalization’ the most. The majority of their references dealt with ‘post-rational’, but they made substantial reference to ‘rational’ as well. One executive noted, applying tools is unfortunately “...a mixture of post-hoc rationalization and really finding the right answer” (E3). Another participant even postulated that “...in 95% of the cases within business practice it is a post-rationalization, if not more” (E1). Thus, tools are used to “...justify the advantages of management decisions that have already been made” (E5). Generally, the executives confirmed that tools are utilized after the decision-making process has been completed, which supports the earlier assumption regarding their temporal integration. Nevertheless, the greatest danger of tools is to “...rely on everything they tell...” (E1), which is why strategists “...have to make sure [...] that they are not abused for certain interests” (E4). Fortunately, post-rationalization “...is not an intrinsic feature of such tools, it is rather a matter of how you conduct strategy work...” (E4). When “...tools are actually used for what they have been developed for...” (E1), the executives concur “...there is always a rational answer coming out of...” (E2) them.

Summary of Results

The *academics* were quite clear about rationalization, as they stated that tools tend to be used to post-rationalize a decision. In practice, this is often encouraged by the employment of consultancies, since they substantiate the achieved findings. Naturally, tools were developed to reach rational answers, but in reality they are mostly used to prioritize and justify decisions. *Consultants* had a defensive attitude towards rationalization, as they claimed that they apply tools to reach a rational answer instead of post-rationalizing a decision. In some cases, however, clients expect them to use certain tools, which is why post-rationalization occasionally happens. At this juncture, tools are used to proof or justify an already set goal or strategic decision. In view of that, the consultants stated that post-rationalization mostly happens, because of inexperienced tools users. The *executives* claimed that the utilization of tools is usually a mixture of post-rationalization and achieving rational results. However, they critically assessed post-rationalization as one of the main problems of strategy work, as managers usually have a strong tendency to proof decisions that have already been made. Due to this abuse, strategists should be aware that they cannot rely on everything that tools tell. Indeed, post-rationalization is not an intrinsic feature of the frameworks, which is why it is always possible to find rational answers if they are employed in a proper manner.

4.1.5 Role of Strategy Tools-in-Use

Which strategy tools are the right ones, and what role do strategy tools-in-use play while conducting strategy work? Discussing their role clearly raises the question about the impact and importance tools potentially have on strategy work, which was something the interviewed strategists were referring to in the present research. Hence, the discussion presented in this section provides preliminary answers to research sub-question 2.4: “How do strategists evaluate the role of strategy tools?”

First, it is explored upon which aspects the application of tools depends. Relating thereto, the adaptation of such tools is examined, as it potentially challenges, but also promotes, their role while conducting strategy work. Afterwards, their general impact, meaning, and importance is outlined. In this regard, their efficiency and effectiveness are also discussed to explicate potential influence factors. Lastly, the future development requests for tools-in-use are outlined.

4.1.5.1 Dependencies of Effective Tool Application

The application of tools has various dependencies of which strategists should be aware. The interviewees were asked to explain what influences the tools’ effective utilization in practice. After coding and categorizing the gathered data four main dependencies were identified – the ‘practitioner’ that applies the tool, the ‘acceptance’ of tools in an organization, the ‘context or situation’ a tool is used for, as well as the ‘content’ available and ability to work with it.

Analysis

The principal dependencies of effective tool application were one of the core categories that emerged while coding the interview results. While analyzing the interviews, it directly became apparent that their utilization does not only depend on a problem an organization is confronted with, but also on the practitioners' competences in using them, and the corporate-wide acceptance of such frameworks. All references related to these aspects were coded under the child node 'dependence' of the parent node 'usage'. The evolved subordinate categories of the child node have been 'practitioner', 'acceptance', 'context-situation', and 'content'. Figure 24 illustrates the coding references counts based on the conducted matrix coding query that combined the sub-categories of the child node 'dependence' with the case classification 'practitioner' to get a general impression about the tendencies of the interviewed participants. The interviewees predominantly referred to 'practitioner' as main dependency. Similar numbers of references were coded for 'acceptance' and 'context-situation'. All three aspects have already been identified and discussed in previous studies, but 'content', which practitioners also frequently referred to, has not.

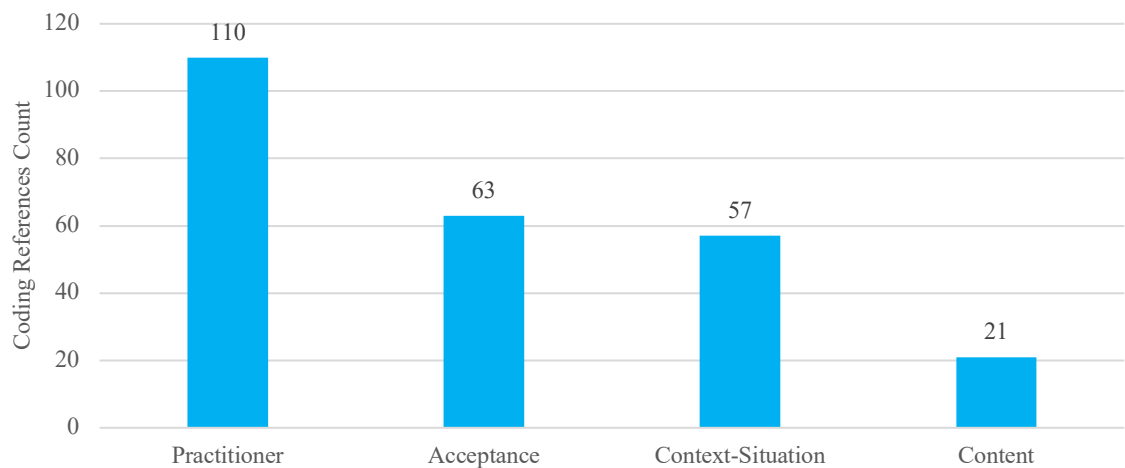


Figure 24: References coded for Practitioners vs. Dependence

To outline a more in-depth look on the differences and commonalities of the surveyed practitioner perspectives a subsequent query was conducted to pair the attribute values 'academics', 'consultants', and 'executives' with the four sub-categories of the child node 'dependence' (see Appendix L for full set of coded references). As delineated in Figure 25, academics and consultants clearly referred to the dependence 'practitioner' the most, while executives similarly mentioned the 'acceptance' of tools and the role of the 'practitioner' regarding their utilization. Interestingly, consultants contributed more statements in relation to 'context-situation' than 'acceptance'. For them the role of tools is also dependent on the 'content' that strategists integrate, whereas the other perspectives only marginally referred to it. To further emphasize the different contributions of the perspectives, the gathered data is discussed below.

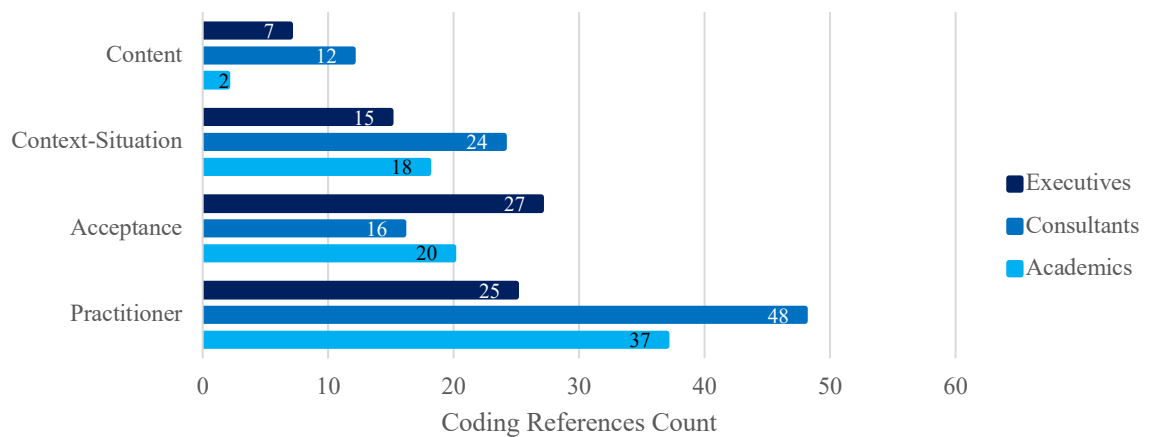


Figure 25: References coded for Perspectives vs. Dependence

Academics frequently referred to ‘dependence’ (i.e. coding references count = 77). For them, successful tool application is mostly dependent on the ‘practitioner’, as “The people involved in strategy work are by all means responsible for the successful utilization of strategy tools” (A4). However, “Tool users often lack to achieve clear outcomes” (A1), as people tend to have “...a bounded rationality and only limited cognitive capacities to capture all...” (A2) information that needs to be gathered. The academics equally referred to ‘acceptance’ and ‘context-situation’, while discussing the dependencies of effective tool utilization. The ‘acceptance’ of strategy tools plays a significant role in strategy making, as the “People have to be willing to use them and have to be familiar with them...” (A1). Most academics agreed, “...you have to make sure that all people involved in your strategy process, even the technicians or engineers, accept the tools and frameworks you want to use to solve strategic tasks” (A4). Therefore, strategists “...should not forget the effect of corporate culture as the application of tools has to be accepted throughout the entire organization” (A5). Regarding the dependence on the ‘context-situation’ an organization is facing one academic postulated, “...tools [are] dependent on your specific problem, on your specific context, and your specific environment” (A2). In contrast to this notion, other academics claimed, “...there is no actual situation where you should plan with or definitely have to use a certain tool...” (A5), because “...most of these tools can be applied in different contexts and have a significant contribution...” (A4). In such a case, tools will be “...adapted to the specific organizational context...” (A2), and “...if you are not able to do this, you are probably not the right person to apply them” (A4). Academics barely referred to ‘content’ as a key dependency. For them, content, information, or data used to apply a strategy tool is usually given. One academic, however, stated, with strategy tools “You want to foresee the future of your organization for the next couple of years and therefore you need a lot of information to do that” (A2).

Consultants referred to ‘dependence’ the most (i.e. coding references count = 100), which was unsurprising as consultancies consider strategy tools as part of their distinguishing features. The perspective recognized the ‘practitioner’ as a central dependency of tool-based strategy work. Interviewees agreed that the successful utilization of tools is mostly “...dependent on the people that are involved in this process...” (C3), and as a strategist, “You need to have the proper experience to apply them...” (C2). However, strategists and especially consultants “...cannot do everything, because in some cases tools simply will not work, as the people in an organization are unable to work with them” (C1). Consultants second most referred to ‘context-situation’ as influential dependency of successful tool application. They generally explained that their effective utilization “...clearly depends on the topic you are working on...” (C1), “...the context you are facing...” (C2), “...the exact problem you are trying to solve...” (C3), but also “...on the type of project...” (C4) a client assigns you to. For consultants “...this is really client specific...” (C4), which is why the applied “...tools should be adapted to their specific situation...” (C5). They also referred to ‘acceptance’ quite frequently, as it obviously influences the success of tool-in-use. In case, “...people are not familiar with the tools, it is sometimes almost impossible to create the acceptance for them” (C2). Especially, “...for the normal guys in an organization a strategy tool is nothing that really bothers them in their daily operations” (C3), which is why “You have to explain their surplus to the average people, middle managers, but also engineers...” (C1). The perspective referred the least to ‘content’; only three of the five interviewees mentioned it with regard to the application of tools. Yet, they all agreed, “...you of course need the right tools, but you also need the right content like best practices, figures, and documented experiences...” (C2). Here, strategists should “...decide which content truly fits for [their] purpose” (C2). However, “...including the right data will definitely help you to speed up the process to come to meaningful answers and to stop the gut feeling competition” (C3).

Executives least referred to the category ‘dependence’ (coding references count = 74) when compared to the other perspectives. They equally mentioned ‘acceptance’ and ‘practitioners’ as most influential dependencies. Overall, references to ‘acceptance’ had a slight majority, primarily due to one of the interviewed candidates. In his central statement he claimed, “...you need to have the acceptance for the process and the tools within the organization, and if you do not have that you better close the strategy department and save the money” (E2). But to create acceptance, and here the interviewees agreed, “...you have to be very clear about what to expect from the tools and what their boundaries are, and which answers cannot be delivered” (E2). By the time an “...organization has reached a stage where everyone sees the added value of using tools, [it is able to] enhance the overall process itself” (E2). The executives similarly often mentioned the ‘practitioner’ as key dependency. They agreed, “The performance of a tool depends on its users and acceptance (E2).” However, if organizations rely on “...people that are not experienced in working with these tools they oftentimes can rather be useless” (E2), as they “...need to understand the problem first and then certain tools

will help to come up with a solution” (E1). Hence, it is foremost “...the responsibility of the strategists to make the tools chosen usable” (E1). Based on the coding references count it appears that executives attach less importance to the ‘context-situation’. However, they still agreed that their effective utilization also “...depends on the situation and the context you are facing” (E1). Accordingly, one candidate claimed, “Ideally you use these tools when you are facing an unknown situation, or when you feel something is happening or changing, or commoditizing so that you really need to change your entire company” (E3). But, “Not all tools are helpful in any situation...” (E1). Therefore, strategists first need to “...look at the tools and decide to use one based on the situation or problem [they] are facing...” (E2). Executives least referred to ‘content’ as an influential dependency of successful tool use, which was congruent with both other perspectives. However, the content that organizations fill into the tools “...can sometimes change the initial purpose of a tool” (E3) and “The fact that they are simply used does not mean that it is simple to fill them with valuable content” (E3). Today, content plays a much more pivotal role than before, which is why “Strategists should invest their time in existing [tools] and take all the data they have...” (E2) to create meaningful results.

Summary of Results

For *academics*, successful tool application is mostly dependent on the practitioner, as organizations need strategists who understand both the theory behind and the practice of applying them. Moreover, interviewees identified acceptance and the context or situation, as significant dependencies. While applying tools, organizations should ensure that everyone involved accepts the tools applied. Unfortunately, that takes time, as non-strategy people usually see little value in such artifacts. Their application is dependent on an organizations’ specific problem, context, or environment as well. In that respect, the participants pointed out that there are no definite situations for their utilization, as most tools can be applied for various problems, which is why they are regularly adapted to suit the specific organizational context. Lastly, academics assessed content as a subordinate dependency.

Consultants viewed the practitioner as a central dependency of successful tool application, as it decidedly depends on the people involved. As with the academics they claimed that organizations need open-minded strategists, such as a senior consultant that guides the debate around the strategic artifacts. However, effective tool application is not only dependent on the practitioner, but also on the context or situation a respective client faces. Therefore, it is the strategist’s responsibility to choose the appropriate tools for the situation. As mentioned, this is very client specific. Further, the effective application depends on organization-wide acceptance, because if people are not familiar with their utilization it will be problematic to implement them. Regarding content, the consultants were rather cautious. However, a few claimed that successful tool application is also dependent on the content, as the inclusion of the right data enhances the process of reaching meaningful answers.

Executives view the acceptance within an organization and the practitioners that apply strategy tools as the fundamental dependencies for effective utilization. Primarily, they indicated that organizations should create the needed acceptance for a tool-based process to conduct sufficient strategy work. Therefore, the strategists involved should be very clear about the opportunities and boundaries of the incorporated instruments. The core responsibility of such strategists is to choose the right tools to make sense of the existing problems. Executives drew less attention to the context or situation as a dependency of successful tool use. According to them, there are various situations where organization should consider tools to conduct strategy work, but unfortunately not all are applicable for every problem. Choosing the right tool is dependent on the case, but strategists need to decide whether it makes sense or not. Yet again, the dependency content played a rather marginal role. However, they stated that content has a much more decisive role than in the past, but that not all answers lie in the data available.

Another influencing factor of tools used in practice is their ‘adaptation’, which is separately discussed in the following section. While coding the interviews, the category ‘adaptation’ appeared to be quite prominent for all perspectives, which is why it has been detached from the category ‘dependence’.

Derived Hypothesis

As presented above, effective tool application is dependent on various elements. The synopses illustrate that the practitioner is the core dependency for the successful application of tools. Nonetheless, the other dependencies should not be neglected, wherefore the following hypothesis has been developed:

H1c: *The dependencies for effective tool application differ between the different practitioner perspectives.*

4.1.5.2 Adaptation of Strategy Tools

Researchers should not avoid examining the centrality and importance of user adaptation of tools-in-use, which is not unusual during corporate strategy work. Nonetheless, strategists should always bear in mind that adaptations might violate the intended purpose of a tool, which possibly leads to far-reaching mistakes that affect an entire organization.

Analysis

Due to the existence of this phenomenon, practitioners were asked whether tools are adapted when applied for a specific organizational problem or context. The respective data was analyzed with a matrix coding query to combine the values of the attribute ‘perspectives’ with the child node ‘adaptation’ of the superior parent node ‘usage’ (see Appendix M for full set of coded references). Figure 26 presents the coding references counts for all perspectives. Academics referred to adaptation the most, although they represent the implicit users in this research. Consultants similarly referred to

adaptation, which is understandable, as it is somewhat part of their unique selling proposition. The executives made various statements about the adaptation of tools, but less than the other two perspectives. To further investigate tool adaptation, a summary of the practitioner contributions is outlined below.

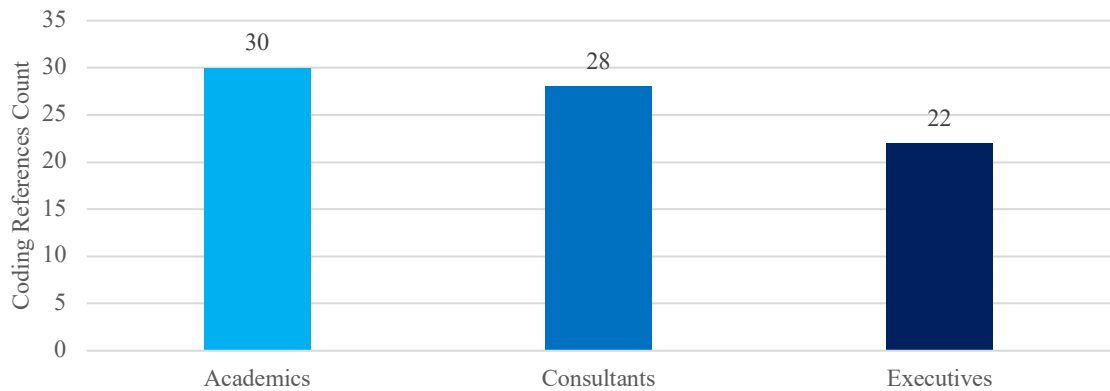


Figure 26: References coded for Perspectives vs. Adaptation

The fact that *Academics* referred to the ‘adaptation’ of tools-in-use the most may either be linked to their familiarity with the relevant literature or their preceding professional careers as actual practitioners. When referring to tools academics argued, “...most of them are adapted once in a while... (A2)” and as a strategist “You have to adjust them to the specific context you are facing and if you are not able to do this you are not the right person to apply them” (A4). Another academic added, “Each industry is different, and each company is different, as they all have different resources and competences available, which is why you have to adjust the tools at some point” (A5). But sometimes “...it is more about amalgamating models together” (A3). Meaning, combining two or more frameworks with each other. In such a case, “It only needs some modifications to get a little bit further” (A1), e.g. using tools “With adapted categories on the axis...” (A1). Nonetheless, strategists “...should be careful, since most tools were developed to solve a certain strategic problem, and here you can make tremendous mistakes” (A2).

The *consultants* similarly referred to the ‘adaptation’ of strategy tools. They widely confirmed that “...tools should be adapted to their specific situation (C5), since most “...original tools have their boundaries and finding a way to circumvent them is sometimes the biggest part of the work, because in many cases they simply will not fit as they are” (C2). In such a case, strategists have “...to be very experienced and creative to think of alternative ways” (C2), but they should also be aware that “...everyone involved [has] the same understanding” (C2). Others exemplified, “Some [tools] we use as they are e.g. the Value Chain, but others like the Key Success Factors or the Core Competencies we use to pick the main issues or questions [...] that apply best to the particular case of our clients” (C4). The five forces analysis was another example, as there are occasionally forces that “...do not really matter and therefore you do not have to focus on them...” (C1), which explicates

that “Leaving out or adding things can be quite helpful...” (C1). One interviewee even postulated, “Adaptation [...] is inevitable, as you are always facing different situations while applying [tools]” (C3), and as consultants “...we do much more than what the textbook solution says...” (C3). Nonetheless, like the academics they concluded that changes should always be treated with caution, as failure “...can be really harmful...” (C1), especially when working for somebody else.

Compared to the other perspectives, *executives* referred much less to ‘adaptation’. Interestingly, their perceptions differed, since not all were convinced that tool alteration is expedient in any case. Most executives, however, concurred with the following statement, “We absolutely adapt the tools to our context, but maybe we do not adapt them, we rather apply them in a different or let us say our way...” (E2). This is dependent “...on what your question is, and here the need for adaptation usually comes apart” (E1). To customize them, “...[you] for sure add more dimensions to [your] tools, or [you] connect 2-3 variables to make them more meaningful...” (E1). In other words, you add “...some complexity to give people a feeling that more than a single variable was used to come to an advice...” (E5). Another executive emphasized, there are simple tools, such as the SWOT, that “...we do not really adapt... (E4)”, but others like the portfolio matrices of BCG or McKinsey, are frequently adapted. However, one participant claimed, “...if you apply an already established tool you should not change its entire meaning, because when I think about the content that we fill into the tools it can sometimes change [their] initial purpose...” (E3).

Summary of Results

Academics mentioned that tools are commonly adapted in practice. It is the strategist’s responsibility to adjust or alter them to the specific organizational context. They further stated that tools should be unique for every organization, since they all have different available resources as well as capabilities, and their industries confront them with different circumstances. But strategists should be aware of the tool’s initial purpose, as unsupervised adaptation can lead to far-reaching mistakes. *Consultants* stated that tools should be adapted, because most original tools have too many theoretical boundaries. While adapting tools, strategists should be experienced and creative to develop an alternative approach. For them adaptation is necessary, since organizations face different situations while utilizing tools, which is why consultants offer more than standard textbook solutions. Nonetheless, all changes should be treated with caution, as they could lead to failure. Even though the *executives* concurred that tools are often altered, they claimed that their adaptation is not expedient in any case. The executives viewed their adaptation approach as a customization of the initial tools, as they change dimensions, variables, or indicators, but also pointed out that strategists should not change their entire meaning.

Derived Hypothesis

All interviewed practitioner perspectives agreed that tool adaptation is common practice during strategy work. Therefore, the reasons for their adaptation need further investigation, as they probably differ between the perspectives. Thus, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H2c: *The reasons for tool adaptation differ between the different practitioner perspectives.*

4.1.5.3 Influence of Strategy Tools

With tools, strategists are able to focus upon key issues and priorities, as they provide integral dimensions for interrogation, offer clear analysis structures, and build uncomplicated guidelines for strategizing activities. Nevertheless, strategy tools first and foremost have a supporting role. They enhance the strategy process and improve a strategist's ability to comprehend complex issues from various perspectives.

Analysis

To examine what role strategy tools play, participants were specifically questioned about their influence when used in practice. All related information was coded under the parent node 'role' of the superordinate theme node 'strategy tool'. References coded depict the impact, meaning, and importance of applied strategy tools, as well as the success they lead to. Another matrix coding query was used to combine the attribute values 'academics', 'consultants', and 'executives' of the attribute 'perspectives' with the parent node 'role' (see Appendix N for full set of coded references). Figure 27 outlines the results of the query and shows that consultants referred the least to the role of strategy tools-in-use, whereas academics and executives had similar, higher counts of coded references. In the following, the participant contributions are discussed to discover existing differences and commonalities.

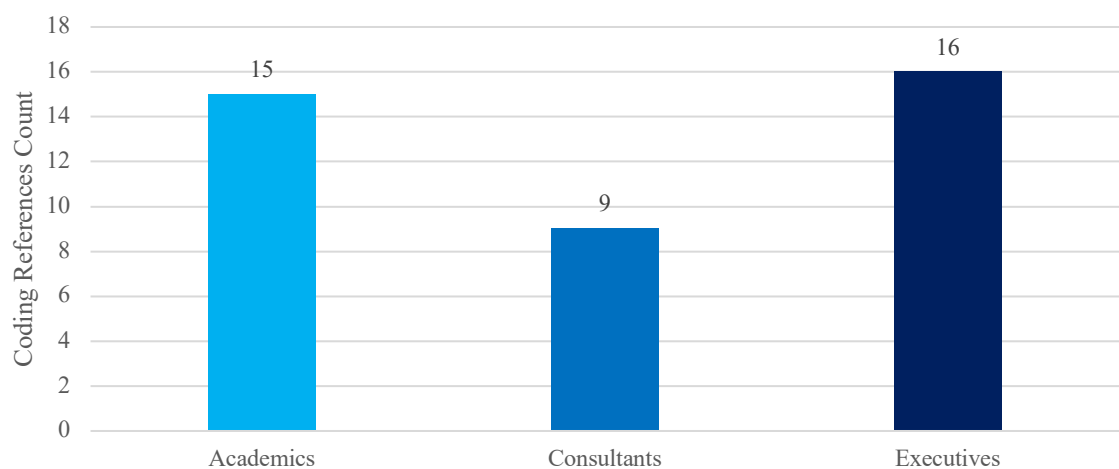


Figure 27: References coded for Perspectives vs. Role

Academics critically interpreted the role of strategy tools, since tools in isolation “...are not a game changer...” (A1). One interviewee claimed that their “...impact extremely depends on your experience, on your background, and your general openness towards such tools, and of course this is also highly dependent on the acceptance within the organization itself” (A2). Tools can have “...a great impact when applied correctly...” (A5), but strategists also need a realistic perception “...what the true function of such tools is, [and] if you are too naive in using them, if you believe that these tools will do the work for you, it will probably not work out that well” (A2). Above all, the answers that tools deliver “are supportive – not more, not less” (A2) and “As tools to help managers to make decisions they might have an impact in terms of their facilitation skills, but they do not change things” (A3). Nonetheless, the appropriate application of tools “...will certainly contribute to better outcomes and attainment of strategic objectives” (A4).

The *consultant* perspective maintained a low profile concerning the role of tools-in-use. One claimed that tools are not able to “...solve everything or completely enlighten the strategy process...” (C5). However, they can “...have a huge impact, but that does not mean [strategists] can simply use a tool and have immediate success” (C4), which is in line with the notion of the academics. Overall, the consultants were certain that tools play a significant role in strategy work and with a standard toolkit at their disposal “...[strategists] can be very effective, because [they] have an immediate starting point...” (C2) to solve the problems they are facing.

Executives referred to the role of strategy tools the most, but like the other perspectives they indicated various dependencies that influence their utilization. One executive generalized, “You always implicitly use at least elements of those tools, otherwise there would be none of them in actual use” (E3). Another expressed, “Companies can be very successful when they use tools, but they need to have the knowledge, they need to have the resources, and they need to adjust time to it” (E1). Beyond that, “You have to give them to the right people, strategists, and leaders, and make sure they are used correctly” (E3), because “...applied in a very proper way the impact is quite high” (E2). Not all executives were completely convinced of their importance. Some claimed, one should “...not overestimate the impact of strategy tools” (E4) due to the danger “...that you rely on everything they tell [...], that is why post-rationalization can be so dangerous...” (E1). Hence, their role should always be questioned or at least challenged while doing strategy work.

Summary of Results

The *academics* critically evaluated the role of strategic frameworks, because tools themselves have no real impact. Their impact is strongly dependent on practitioner experiences, background and expectation, acceptance in the respective organization, and the proper application. Overall, they claimed that the utilization of strategy tools helps to obtain better outcomes and the attainment of strategic objectives. According to the *consultants*, tools-in-use have an impact, but that depends on the context. They might have communicative powers, but they are mostly unable to influence the

strategy process. However, the consultants agreed that tools play a significant role in strategy work, as strategists have an immediate starting point to approach the problems they are confronted with. For *executives*, strategy work can be sufficient when organizations apply strategy tools, but they need to have the knowledge, the resources, and adjust time for them. They further stated that tools have an impact if organizations have practitioners that are able to properly utilize them. Nonetheless, not all executives were convinced of their importance, as practitioners employ them as prioritization elements and rely on their assessments. Consequently, the executives recommended that their role should be questioned when organization consider their application.

Derived Hypothesis

The synopses regarding the influence of strategy tools outline the differing assessments of the three practitioner perspectives on a qualitative basis, which were to some extent diverse. Consequently, it needs to be assessed whether there are true differences with regard to the influence of strategy tools used during strategy work. In consideration of the subsumed findings, the following hypothesis can be derived:

H3c: Strategy tools-in-use have a significant influence on strategy work.

4.1.5.4 Efficient and Effective Utilization of Strategy Tools

Due to ever-present time constraints, strategists need to prioritize when deciding how to move forward with a complex situation. At this point, strategy tools become attractive to save time and resources. Indeed, tools allow managers to undertake more reasonable and adequate decisions as a result of their application. Nevertheless, how efficient or effective are strategy tools when applied as a medium of day-to-day strategizing?

Analysis

To answer this question, participants were asked to share their thoughts on the temporal effort in proportion to the achieved outcomes when using tools. In other words, whether the value of the outcomes justifies the time spent on strategy tools. References coded under the parent node ‘efficiency-effectiveness’ of the theme node ‘strategy tool’ described efficient or effective use of tools and elements that drive and increase both. Based on another matrix coding query that combined the values ‘academics’, ‘consultants’, and ‘executives’ of the attribute ‘perspectives’ with the parent node ‘efficiency-effectiveness’ it can be delineated that academics referred to efficiency-effectiveness in relation to the application of tools the most. However, the number of coded references was similar for all perspectives as can be seen in Figure 28. The differences become apparent when the content is explicated in more detail (see Appendix O for full set of coded references).

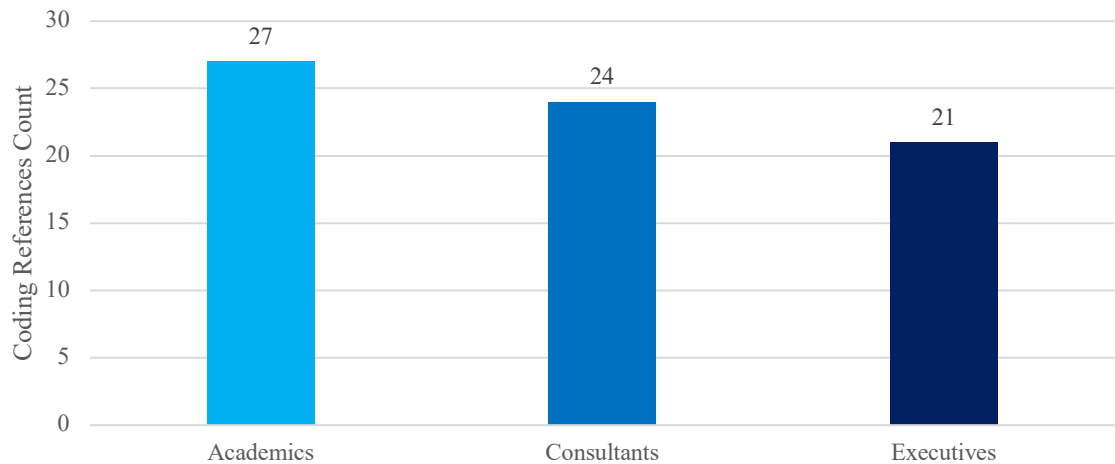


Figure 28: References coded for Perspectives vs. Efficiency – Effectiveness

Academics referred the most to the ‘efficiency-effectiveness’ of strategy tools-in-use. They claimed that the majority of tools could be considered as efficient when contemplating workload with achieved outcomes, but “It absolutely depends on the tool” (A1) and “...the project you are facing” (A3). Indeed, most of them “...are pretty useful and their workload is usually worthwhile” (A3), but once strategists are confronted with a project deadline, “...workload plays a huge role and here the simple tools usually take much less time...” (A2). However, when thinking about their efficiency or effectiveness “It is always a trade-off between the quality of information and your costs of searching” (A2), as tools “...will never come up with a perfect informatory basis to an identified problem, but this also highly depends on your expectation level as well as your available resources” (A2). For that reason, strategists should “...allocate adequate time... (A4)” to get the required information. All elements considered, the academics agreed that tools “...are central for the efficiency of the strategy process” (A5), and “...when you manage to use tools efficiently, you will be able to identify and react to...” (A1) changed circumstances earlier.

The *consultant* perspective made a similar number of references to the ‘efficiency-effectiveness’ of strategy tools, albeit predominantly by one interviewee. Consultants mostly agreed that “...tools definitely have the ability to enhance the efficiency of an organization’s strategy process” (C3). However, there are certain limitations, as it “...highly depends on the tool you are working with” (C2) and “...the topic you are working on...” (C1). They further explained that “...having tools and the experience ready will definitely enhance the efficiency...” (C2) of a strategist, but “...how much they can really help depends on [an organization’s ability to] have a good discussion around them” (C3). Another interviewee emphasized that tools are efficient “...when they are easy to apply and to adapt to a specific situation” (C4). In practice, strategists therefore “...need a proper level of maturity while using them, because you need to know how to use the tools and for which situation a certain tool is the right one” (C2). Overall, the consultants largely agreed that it is worth spending time on filling in a template, although one emphasized, “...we try to limit the time of using a tool, because

we rather want to focus on the true problems and afterwards you can still use one or the other to present your results” (C3).

Executives referred marginally less to ‘efficiency-effectiveness’. Generally, they validated strategy tools as efficient, though some emphasized how they enhance the efficiency of the entire strategy process, e.g. “...some tools raise efficiency, but the main aspect of efficiency is of course [a strategist’s] ability to manage the entire process in the best possible way” (E4). At first, “...you have to invest time and resources to develop a tool-supported strategy process” (E2), but “When you have done it once, you probably come to a more review-based approach, which allows you to make adjustments at each and every stage...” (E2). However, when strategists apply tools “...the outcome of a tool should by all means be in relation to the time invested, otherwise [...] it would not be sufficient at all” (E4). Accordingly, another interviewee formulated a rule of thumb, “The easier the tool, the more efficient it is” (E5). Overall, the perspective concluded that “Tools are effective, and this can either be implicitly or explicitly” (E3), but “...from one situation to the other it can highly fluctuate” (E4).

Summary of Results

The *academics* stated that most strategy tools are efficient, but that depends on the tool, the project, or problem an organization is facing. Generally, they assessed their workload as reasonable. Especially, simple tools tend to be efficient when applied in practice, but their informative value is typically limited. Overall, tools are central to the efficiency of a strategy process, because when properly applied by an organization they can accelerate their decision-making. The *consultants* stated that tools have the ability to improve the efficiency of a strategy process, although it depends on the particular tools employed. As such, strategy tools can be highly efficient if directly integrated in the daily business. However, without utilization experience it is difficult to apply them, which is why organizations are also reliant on the quality of their strategists. The *executives* focused on the entire process, but also agreed that the application of tools has the power to enhance efficiency. However, strategists need to ensure that they do not overload their organizations with an entirely tool-based process. As with the academics, the executives claimed that the simple tools are more efficient than the complex frameworks, since they structure the process in an easy and transparent way. Although they stressed that their efficiency and effectiveness can fluctuate from one situation to another.

Derived Hypotheses

The analyses emphasized that tools have the power to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of strategy work, but there are also many influence factors that could adversely affect both. However, to further investigate the efficiency and effectiveness of strategy tool utilization the following hypotheses have been formulated:

H4c: The efficiency ratings of strategy tools-in-use differ between the different practitioner perspectives.

H5c: The effectiveness ratings of strategy tools-in-use differ between the different practitioner perspectives.

4.1.5.5 Future Development of Strategy Tools

Considering the extensive discussion of the role of strategy tools, it should be obvious that, for strategists, the advancement of existing strategy tools is central. Thus, the future development of strategy tools-in-use should be in response to current problems in today's business environment and the criticism raised by practitioners that regularly apply them.

Analysis

For this purpose, participants were asked to share suggestions on how tools should change to enable more sufficient strategy work and whether these artifacts might become redundant. All related references were coded under the child node 'future development' of the parent node 'strategy tools'. Yet again, the attribute values 'academics', 'consultants', and 'executives' were cross-tabulated with the respective child node 'future development' (see Appendix P for full set of coded references). As illustrated in Figure 29, consultants and executives, referred to the 'future development' of strategy tools the most, as both experience their boundaries and limitations during day-to-day strategizing. As rather implicit users, academics also made some suggestions, but indeed less than the other two perspectives. In the subsequent synopses, the suggestions and necessities of the different perspectives are provided to guide the application of strategy tools in the future.

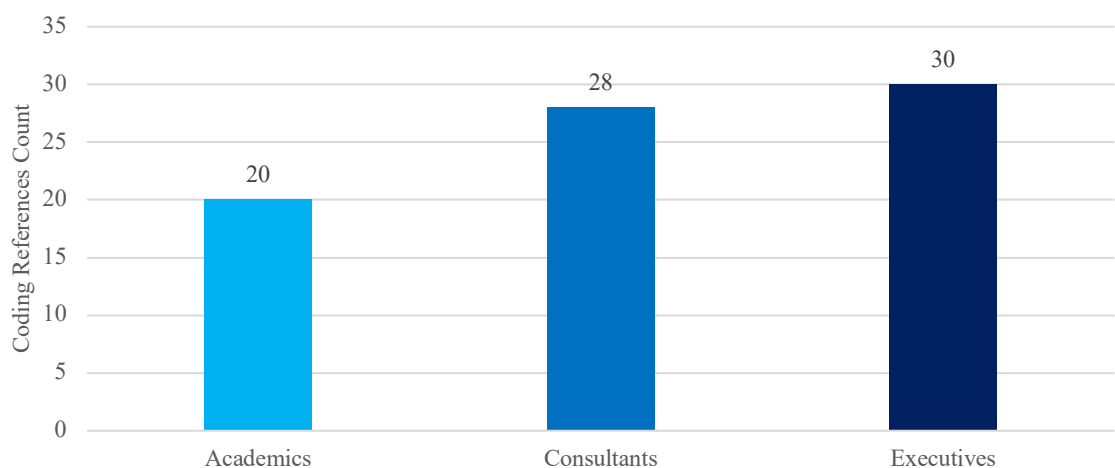


Figure 29: References coded for Perspectives vs. Future Development

Academics referred the least to the 'future development' of strategy tools, but largely agreed that even though the nature of competition is changing, "...they will absolutely have a value in the future" (A3). Another interviewee confirmed, "Most of them will be around, but maybe they are going to be

adapted” (A4) to certain situations. In fact, the proposed amendments appeared to be quite similar, as most interviewees suggested that tools “...should be more open for wider interpretation like the newest approaches, e.g. Lean Start-Up, Business Model Canvas, etc.” (A2). Hence, tools should incorporate “...more dynamic components in order to respond to increasingly complex and dynamic industry environments” (A5). Another problem is the openness of such artifacts, because “...the content that you can currently implement into these tools is very limited” (A2). The employment of modern tools could solve this issue, as examples from younger companies already show, but unfortunately “Not all the emergent strategy approaches are used by older players...” (A1).

Consultants referred to the ‘future development’ the second most and mainly agreed that the existing tools “...will still be around in the future” (C3). Indeed, traditional “...frameworks like the Five Forces, the Ansoff matrix, or the SWOT are pretty old-fashioned [...], but the sense of them or the way they approach problems is and will always be the same” (C4). In some cases, “...they will have other names, or they are upgraded, but [...] the core ideas will last (C4).” Consequently, not “...the theory around these tools should change significantly, but rather the application of them has to change” (C3). Similar to the academics, few interviewees targeted the role of content, as “Content will play a huge role and the tools we will use in the future will have to answer questions about how our digital way of living will change in a complex network, which is already a complex system of dependencies” (C2). That is why strategists will always “...need tools that reduce the complexity of such networks and tools that tell you the main milestone to make your decision” (C2). In today’s world, “A tool should be flexible enough that I can apply it to my circumstances or environment, and flexible enough to come to different types of insights, and it should not be too difficult to create the settings for it” (C5). Accordingly, another consultant claimed, “...tools should be more dynamic, agile or lean so to say, because we are currently facing a lot of rapid changes in all markets, and one of them is digitalization, which has rather a disruptive impact on the major part of industries” (C4). Overall, strategists will probably apply and “...see more lean or agile approaches in the next years, but the traditional tools will always have a meaning when the users are able to adapt them to the specific situation” (C4).

The *executives* most frequently referred to the ‘future development’ of strategy tools, which is in keeping with the fact that they criticized strategy tools-in-use the most. Nonetheless, all interviewees broadly concurred that “...tools will be around for decades to come...” (E3) and “As long as we do not know the answers to all our questions we will need something to create the world around us” (E1). However, a few executives were pessimistic, claiming that tools would “...become more and more obsolete and replaced through agile decision-making, which is still measured against some strategic analysis, but it is not a result of the actual tools anymore” (E5). Thus, they argued that tools “...will be changed or adapted, but the theory will last” (E1), which is similar to the perception of the other perspectives. On that account, it will be crucial for strategists to “...invest time in the

existing tools and take all the data they have and put it into the appropriate tools, [...] which could be done in an even more structured and efficient way” (E2). Overall, tools need to “...be more flexible and allow their users to further develop them...” (E2). Apart from that, one executive pointed out that tools should be able to create “...connections between all stages of the strategy process” (E1). This claim was unique for that perspective, which again emphasizes that executives are much more concerned about the process as a whole.

Summary of Results

The *academics* concurred that tools will have value in the future, but claimed that most need to be adapted or adjusted to meet the needs of today’s more complex and dynamic industry environments. Further, they stated that tools should be open to the rich content available today. They also drew attention to the fact that many organizations still neglect emergent strategy approaches, which have not yet been established as common practice. The *consultants* explained that tools, even traditional ones, will persist in the future, as they will continue to create the theoretical basis for strategy work. They also stated that content will play a much more fundamental role, since including more specific data will help strategists to accelerate their decision making. Additionally, they expressed that tools have to be more flexible to adapt to the rapidly changing markets, particularly due to the advancing digitalization. *Executives* argued similarly that tools will have value for decades to come, because organizations always need a structure to make sense of their environments. Due to the availability of more profound data, strategists will be able to realize more adaptation. Nonetheless, a few interviewees were skeptical, as tools might be replaced through agile decision-making. Thus, future tools need to be more dynamic, especially when considering the disruptive changes in the corporate landscapes.

Derived Hypothesis

Even though critics argue that strategy tools are progressively more limited, the interviewed participants mostly concurred that the opposite is true. Almost every participant shared requests of how to enhance and sustain their role in the long-run. For that reason, the following hypothesis has been generated to further examine the future development of strategy tools:

***H6c:** The future development requests of tools differ between the different practitioner perspectives.*

4.1.6 Overview of Derived Hypotheses

As a result of the comparative interview analysis it has been possible to develop hypotheses that are based on the findings of the critical literature review and the theory grounded in the collected data. The list of the developed hypotheses is illustrated below.

Practice Lens on Strategy Tools

H1a: The more tools strategists know, the more are applied during strategy work.

H2a: Perceived advantages of tools-in-use differ between the different practitioner perspectives.

H3a: Perceived disadvantages of tools-in-use differ between the different practitioner perspectives.

Temporal Integration of Strategy Tool Usage

H1b: Situations that initiate tool use differ between the different practitioner perspectives.

H2b: The number of tools used before the strategic decision, exceeds the number of tools used after the strategic decision.

Role of Strategy Tools-in-Use

H1c: The dependencies for effective tool application differ between the different practitioner perspectives.

H2c: The reasons for tool adaptation differ between the different practitioner perspectives.

H3c: Strategy tools-in-use have a significant influence on strategy work.

H4c: The efficiency ratings of strategy tools-in-use differ between the different practitioner perspectives.

H5c: The effectiveness ratings of strategy tools-in-use differ between the different practitioner perspectives.

H6c: The requests for the future development of tools differ between the different practitioner perspectives.

As outlined in the beginning of section 4.1, the interview results inform the subsequent questionnaire stage. This means, that the content of the following research stage is based on the derived hypotheses to triangulate the results of the preceding interview stage.

4.2 Questionnaire

This section outlines the research results from the questionnaire analysis (see Appendix T for Excel Workbook). These quantitative findings have been used to methodologically triangulate the previously gathered and analyzed qualitative findings. The structure of this section is in line with the themes, categories and hypotheses developed during the interview analysis. All findings have been compared with the qualitative research results to identify concluding patterns and similarities in the data, informing more elaborate answers to the research sub-questions. During the data collection process, all hypotheses were revisited to determine the structure and questions of the concluding focus group session.

4.2.1 Thematic Structure of Results

The thematic structure of the questionnaire results presented is closely connected to the categories that evolved during the interview analysis. The section first details the practice lens on strategy tools to clarify which tools are most known and used by the different strategist types. As part of that, the perceived advantages and disadvantages of strategy tools are reassessed to determine why practitioners should consider their usage, as well as clarify why it can be problematic to rely on them. The initiation and integration of strategy tool use is then further examined. During the interview analysis, it became apparent that tool application is usually initiated through certain elements. These elements are further explored to understand what most likely causes their utilization. In such cases tools have been found to be applied as part of a dedicated strategy process, thus it was investigated whether the tools are applied before (i.e. analysis and formulation) or after (i.e. implementation and evaluation & control) an organization's strategic decision has been made. The rationalization discussion is closely connected to this matter, since tools are not always used to reach but rather proof a decision. The role and importance of strategy tools is then reexamined, starting with determinants for their effective application in practice. Relating thereto, the reasons for tool adaptation are also discussed. After that, their influence on strategy work is reassessed. Additionally, the efficiency as well as the effectiveness of tools-in-use is evaluated in more detail. Lastly, the future development of strategy tools is once more appraised based on the analyzed questionnaire findings. The practitioner perspectives are directly compared to identify any noticeable differences or commonalities.

4.2.2 Practice Lens Reassessed

In this section, the previously initiated practice lens is reassessed to gain more insights into the actual use of strategy tools. Again, the analysis initially focuses on the tools best known and most commonly used to conduct strategy work. The different practitioner perspectives are compared in order to give a more precise answer to research sub-question 2.1: "Which strategy tools do strategists use for their strategy work?" In the subsequent subsection, the practice lens focuses on the perceived advantages and disadvantages of tool-in-use to explain the motives for their utilization and to provide a more elaborate answer to research sub-question 2.2: "Why do strategists use strategy tools to conduct their strategy work?"

4.2.2.1 The Strategy Toolkit – Stage 2

Compared to the interview analysis, the sample size of the questionnaire was significantly larger (n=50). As discovered during the interviews, consultants and executives represent the true users of strategy tools in practice, wherefore the questionnaire was only distributed to participants of these two perspectives. The same set of tools (i.e. list of 16) was used in both research stages to be able to

compare their results. Similar to the interview stage, the personally preferred tools mentioned during the questionnaire were highly diverse. The different lengths of the lists were probably the result of the larger questionnaire sample size. Interestingly, only a few tools (i.e. Balanced Scorecard, Business Model Canvas, and Delta Model) were mentioned in both stages. As with research stage 1, the personally preferred tools mentioned are not all strategic, most likely due to the different experience levels and functional areas of the participants. Table 11 below summarizes the personally preferred tool lists from both research stages.

Strategy Tools (List of 16)	Strategy Tools (preferred tools/techniques - List of 20)	
	Stage 1 (Interviews)	Stage 2 (Questionnaire)
Ansoff's Product/Market Matrix	Balanced Scorecard	Ability to Execute Analysis
Blue Ocean Four Action Framework	Business Model Canvas	Axes of Change
Bowman's Strategy Clock	Cause and Effect Chain	Balanced Scorecard
Core Competences Analysis (Tree)	Critical Success Factor Ranking	Benchmarking
Corporate Parenting Matrices (Ashridge)	Delta Model	Brain Storming
Industry Life Cycle	Dynamic Simulation	Business Case Tool
Key Success Factors	Eisenhower Matrix	Business Model Canvas
PESTLE Analysis	Experimenting	Capability Model
Porter's Five Forces	Fever Curve	Complexity Impact Matrix
Porter's Generic Strategy Model	Game Theory	Component Modelling
Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey)	Hypotheses	Cynefin Framework
Resourced-Based Analysis (VRIO)	IP Analysis/Strategy	Delta Model
Scenario Planning	Kotler's Marketing Model	Experience Curve
Strategic Group Analysis	M&A Matrix	Horizon 1, 2, 3
SWOT/TOWS	MVP Analysis	Kraljic Matrix
Value Chain	SDG Methodology	Lean Six Sigma
	Transformation Map	Morphological Analysis
	Value Proposition	Organizational
	Why? How? What?	Development Framework
		Product Life Cycle
		RASCI Matrix
		Strategy Maps
		Target Operating Model
		Uniqueness Portfolio
		Vision and Mission
		Statement

Table 11: List of Strategy Tools incorporated during Research Stage 1 and 2

The questionnaire results can be used to triangulate the previously presented interview results. Due to the larger sample size of the questionnaire (n=50), the results are considered more valid and robust. However, it was still too small to make generalizations for the entire population. During the second research stage, the questionnaire was only distributed to consultants and executives, since they are able to take a true practice lens on strategy tools-in-use, whereas the academics have a more theoretical perspective. Figure 30 illustrates those tools known and used by the participants, regardless of their perspective.

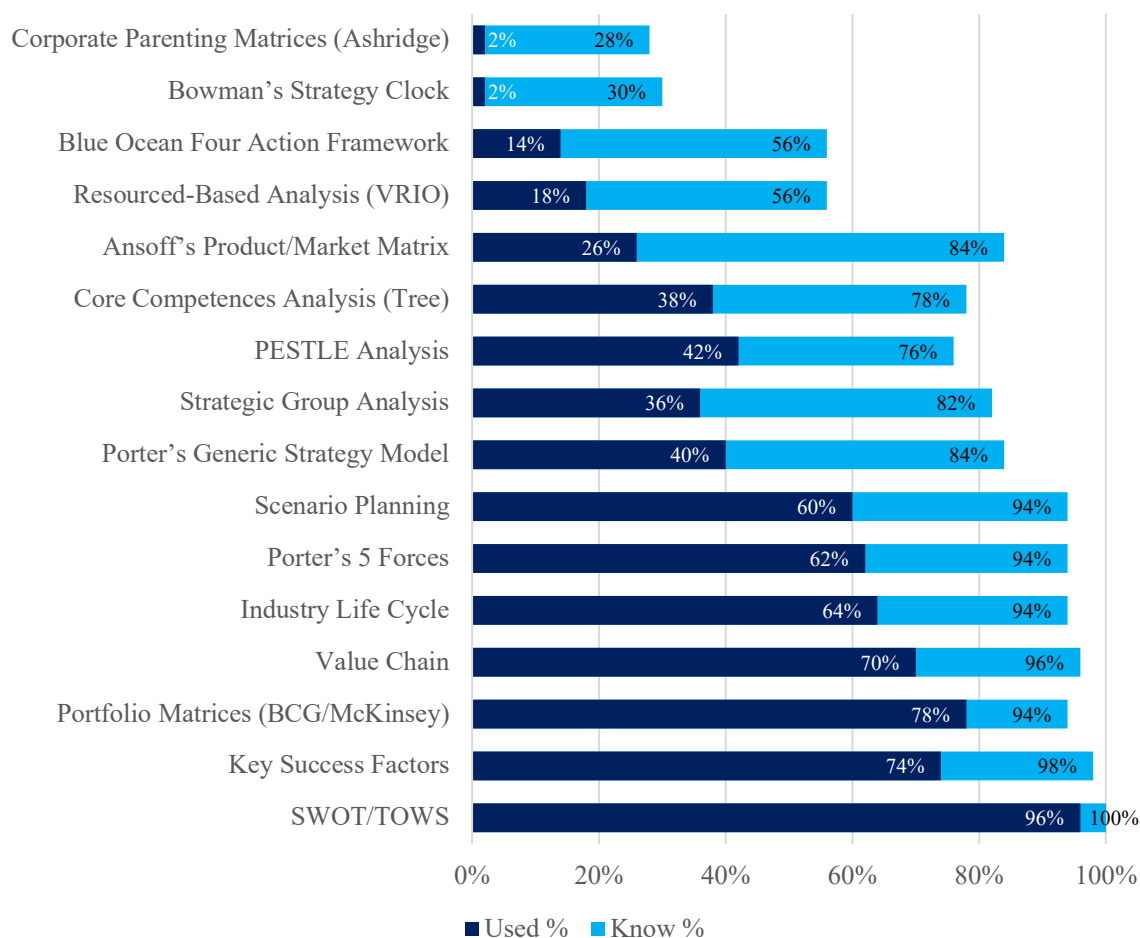


Figure 30: Strategy Toolkit – Know/Use (Questionnaire Stage)

Yet again, it is obvious that practitioners know substantially more tools than they actually apply during strategy work. Of the 16 most popular strategy tools the participants knew 78% and used 45% on average. Out of the possible list of 20 tools they knew 66% and used 40%, which again shows that not all participants were able or wanted to add tools to the initially presented list. Interestingly, these results confirm the previously analyzed interview findings with regard to the average of tools known. Nonetheless, the average of tools used was 16-17% smaller when compared to the interview results. This can partially be explained by the absence of the academics, who were responsible for the high average of tools used during the interview analysis (i.e. average of tools used excluding academics – 54% and 51%). After the analysis of the questionnaire, the top three tools known and used are the SWOT/TOWS, Key Success Factor Analysis, and Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey). This result differs from that of the interview analysis, which included Scenario Planning in the top three. Consequently, the surveyed participants used the tool significantly less in comparison to the small interview sample. The results from the consultants and executives can be directly compared to ascertain possible differences and similarities between them. Similar to the preceding interview analysis, the lists of known and used tools have been separated into two figures. Figure 31 below

shows the averages of tools known by consultants and executives, and Figure 32 illustrates which tools consultants and executives mostly use during strategy work.

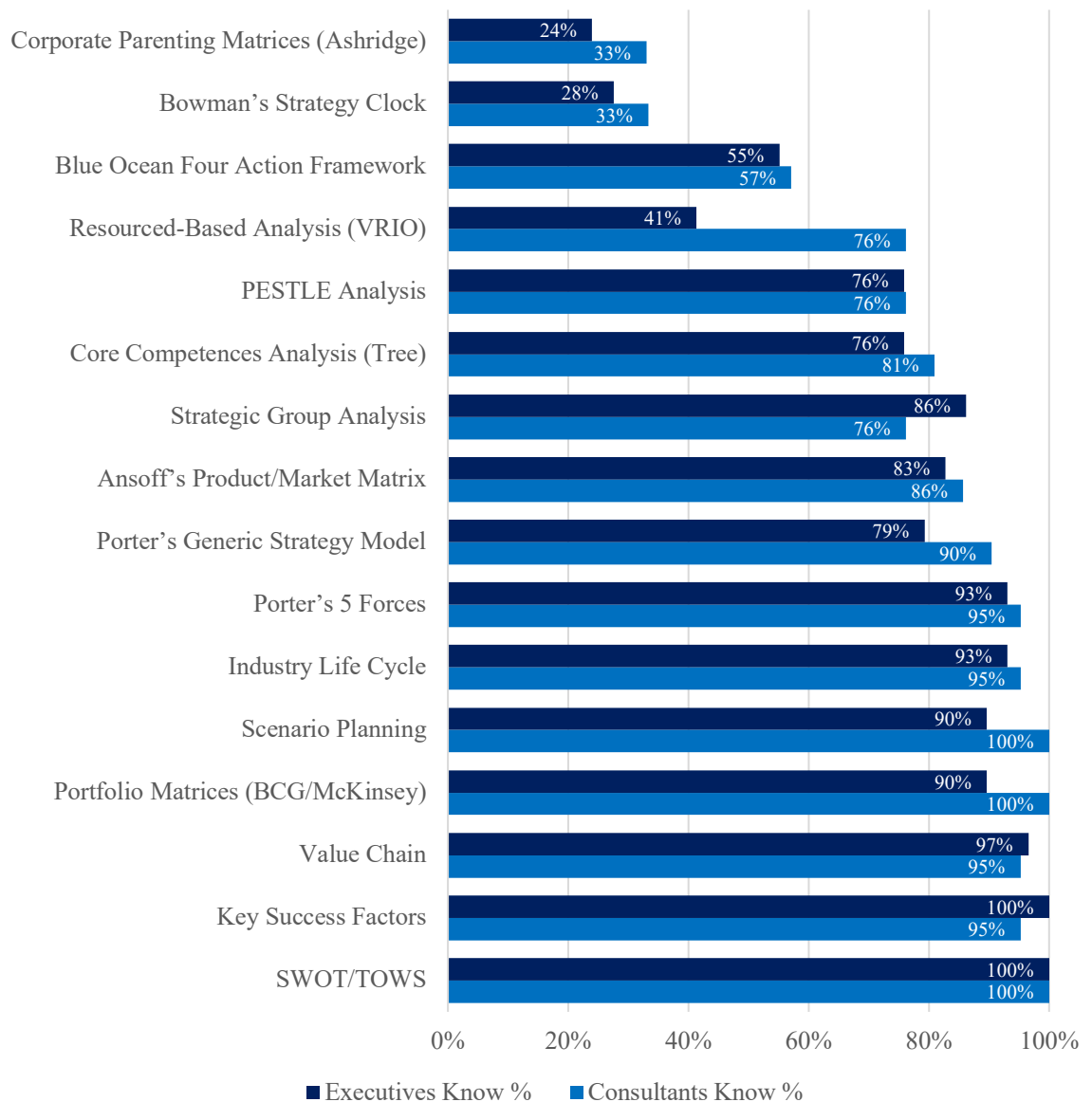


Figure 31: Strategy Toolkit – Perspectives/Know (Questionnaire Stage)

According to the questionnaire results, consultants knew more tools than the executives; on average consultants knew 81% of the 16 tools and executives 76%. That result had been expected, since consultants are commonly known for their methodological expertise. Interestingly, the interview analysis showed the opposite, which may be explained by the smaller sample size and the associated sampling of the researcher. According to the questionnaire participants, the most prominent tools are SWOT/TOWS, Key Success Factor Analysis, Value Chain Analysis, Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey), Scenario Planning, Industry Life Cycle, and Porter's Five Forces. Apart from the Industry Life Cycle, the result was virtually congruent to the previously conducted interview

analysis. In comparison, Figure 32 illustrates which tools consultants and executives mostly use during strategy work.

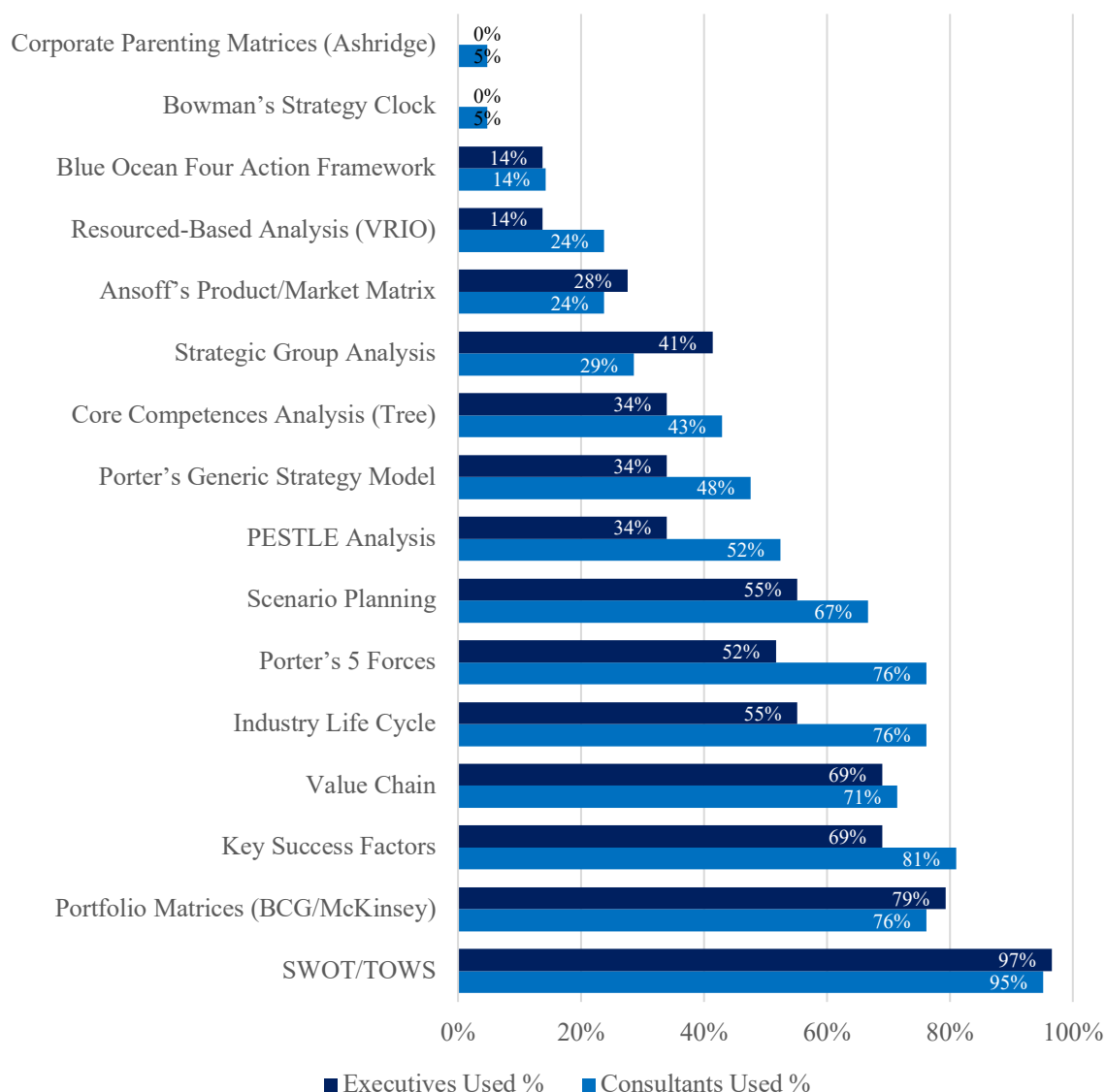


Figure 32: Strategy Toolkit – Perspectives/Used (Questionnaire Stage)

With an average of 49% the consultants also used more tools than the executives, who only used 42% in average. In contrast to the interview results, the averages were smaller, most likely a result of the larger sample size. When looking at Figure 32, the tools most used are SWOT/TOWS, Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey), Key Success Factor Analysis, Value Chain Analysis, Industry Life Cycle, Porter's Five Forces, and Scenario Planning. However, consultants use the last three between 12-24% more than executives (e.g. Porter's Five Forces). Interestingly, the first two are more frequently used by executives. In comparison, the interview results show that the Industry Life Cycle was not mentioned under the most commonly used tools while Scenario Planning received much more attention.

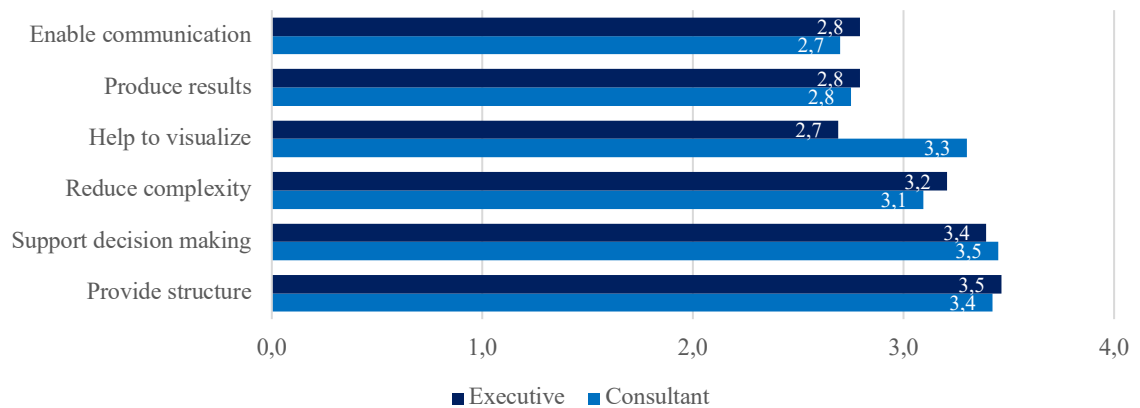
The differences and similarities become more distinct as a result of the questionnaire. However, due to the exclusion of the academics the averages of known as well as used tools decreased significantly. The questionnaire results confirmed the initial assumption that consultants know and use more tools than executives, which was the clearest difference to the interview results. Table 12 supports and further clarifies this by presenting the average number of tools known and used by consultants and executives. On average, the questionnaire participants knew 12 and used 7 tools. Yet again, the averages increased by approximately one tool with the option to name additional personally preferred tools/techniques.

	Consultants		Executives		Total	
	<i>AMT</i>	%	<i>AMT</i>	%	<i>AMT</i>	%
Know (16 Tools)	12,9	81%	12,1	76%	12,4	78%
Used (16 Tools)	7,9	49%	6,8	42%	7,2	45%
Know (20 Tools)	13,9	69%	12,7	63%	13,2	66%
Used (20 Tools)	8,8	44%	7,3	37%	8,0	40%

Table 12: Strategy Toolkit – Perspectives Know/Used – (Questionnaire Stage)

4.2.2.2 Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages

At this point, the practice lens focusses on the perceived advantages and disadvantages of strategy tools to clarify why strategists should consider applying them, but also why it could be difficult to rely on them. The interview results gave a first impression of the different advantages and disadvantages practitioners experience (see Appendix G and H). Results from the questionnaire show the most significant advantage is ‘structure’, closely followed by ‘decision making’. ‘Misleading – dysfunctional’ and ‘oversimplification’ were the most noticeable disadvantages for the interview participants. Over the course of the questionnaire all advantages and disadvantages mentioned were revisited to find out how important or problematic they truly are. At first, the advantages are further examined. In the questionnaire, the consultants and executives were asked to rate the advantages by their importance, which is illustrated in the following Figure 33.



Scale: 0 = Not Important; 1 = Slightly Important; 2 = Moderately Important; 3 = Important; 4 = Very Important

Figure 33: Advantages of Strategy Tools-in-Use

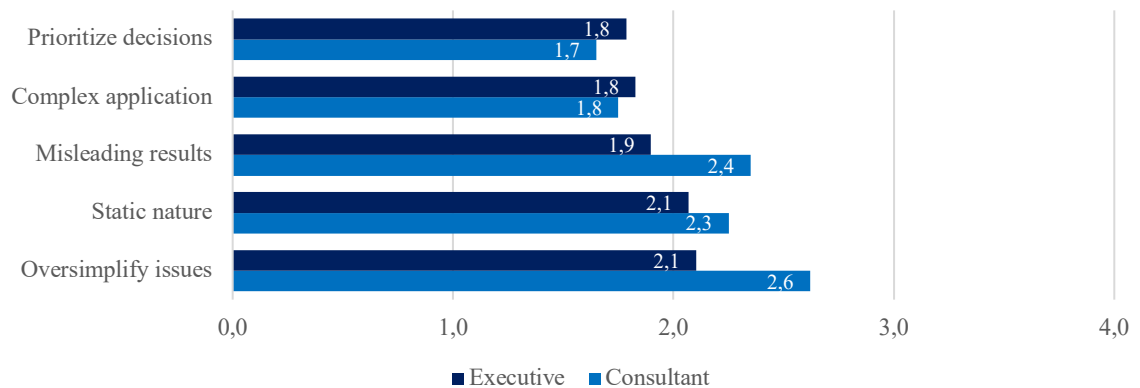
The data indicates that all advantages are important for the surveyed strategists, since all mean values tend towards three (i.e. 3 = Important). However, the greatest advantages of strategy tools-in-use appear to be that they ‘provide structure’, ‘support decision making’, and ‘reduce complexity’. The differences between both perspectives are marginal. The only notable difference can be identified for the ‘help to visualize’ advantage. Many consultants rated this advantage as very important, which could perhaps be connected to their external role in strategic projects. Interestingly, they referred to this advantage the least during interviews, even though they claimed it is important as tools allow them to visualize their solutions and findings in a transparent way. The executives, in comparison, rated this advantage as less important. This slightly contradicts the findings of the interview results, as the executives referred to visualization the most. All in all, it can be stated that the questionnaire results confirm the previously analyzed interview results, with ‘visualization’ receiving more attention in the second research stage (see Table 13).

Advantages	Consultant		Executive		Total	
	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n
Provide structure	3,4	19	3,5	28	3,5	47
Support decision making	3,5	20	3,4	28	3,4	48
Reduce complexity	3,1	21	3,2	29	3,2	50
Help to visualize	3,3	20	2,7	29	2,9	49
Produce results	2,8	20	2,8	29	2,8	49
Enable communication	2,7	20	2,8	29	2,8	49
Other	3,5	4			3,5	4

Scale: 0 = Not Important; 1 = Slightly Important; 2 = Moderately Important; 3 = Important; 4 = Very Important

Table 13: Advantages of Strategy Tools-in-Use

In the next step, the disadvantages are reassessed on the basis of the questionnaire results. Figure 34 shows the different mean values to identify which disadvantages were rated as most problematic.



Scale: 0 = Not Problematic; 1 = Slightly Problematic; 2 = Moderately Problematic; 3 = Problematic; 4 = Very Problematic

Figure 34: Disadvantages of Strategy Tools-in-Use

On average, the mean values indicate that the given disadvantages of strategy tools-in-use are all moderately problematic. This implies that they are existent, but it seems possible to deal with or even circumvent them. The disadvantage that tools ‘oversimplify issues’ received the highest rating, but like all others it can be assessed as moderately problematic. Interestingly, this disadvantage was rated very different by the consultants and executives. Various consultants rated oversimplification as truly problematic. The reason for that could be the standardization and the limitations of the underlying theoretical concepts. Meaning, in some situations they reduce the complexity of a problem too much to provide satisfactory answers. In contrast, the disadvantage most referred to during the interviews, ‘misleading-dysfunctional’, received less attention during the questionnaire. Overall it should be noted that the consultants rated some disadvantages as more problematic than the executives (see Table 14). This could be connected to the preceding results, as consultants tend to use more tools and therefore have more experience with their practical application. Again, these results slightly differ from the first research stage, where executives generally tended to report more disadvantages.

Disadvantages	Consultant		Executive		Total	
	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n
Oversimplify issues	2,6	21	2,1	29	2,3	50
Static nature	2,3	20	2,1	29	2,1	49
Misleading results	2,4	20	1,9	29	2,1	49
Complex application	1,8	20	1,8	29	1,8	49
Prioritize decisions	1,7	20	1,8	28	1,7	48
Other	4,0	1			4,0	1

Scale: 0 = Not Problematic; 1 = Slightly Problematic; 2 = Moderately Problematic; 3 = Problematic; 4 = Very Problematic

Table 14: Disadvantages of Strategy Tools-in-Use

4.2.2.3 Evaluation of Hypotheses

Considering the results from both research stages, it becomes obvious that strategists know more tools than they actually use to conduct strategy work. Besides, the averages of the different practitioner perspectives indicate that the underlying assumption of the derived hypothesis – *H1a* – can be supported with the analyzed data from both stages. The higher the averages for the tools known, the higher the averages for tools used (see Table 10 and Table 12). Meaning, the more tools strategists know, the more they apply them to conduct strategy work.

H1a: The more tools strategists know, the more are applied during strategy work.

With regard to the perceived advantages and disadvantages of tools-in-use, it was possible to identify similarities rather than differences between the different practitioner perspectives. Based on the analysis of both research stages, ‘structure’ appears to be the most important advantage and ‘oversimplification’ the most problematic disadvantages when using tools in practice. Considering the derived hypotheses – *H2a* and *H3a* – it has not been possible to find definite evidence. On the basis of the available results, it is instead the null hypothesis that needs to be underpinned, as the similarities between the perspectives outweigh the differences (see Table 13 and Table 14). Thus, it could be argued that there are no significant differences between the practitioner perspectives regarding the perceived advantages and disadvantages of tools-in-use.

H2a: Perceived advantages of tools-in-use differ between the different practitioner perspectives.

H3a: Perceived disadvantages of tools-in-use differ between the different practitioner perspectives.

4.2.3 Initiation and Integration of Strategy Tools

During the first research stage the initiation and integration of strategy tools was examined to better understand the causes for tool utilization. The analysis resulted in a list of reasons for their incorporation, but also in a list of typical strategic problems and objectives that trigger their usage. Both lists were included in the second research stage to further elaborate these reasons and to identify the problems or objectives that lead to their application. Subsequently, it is outlined whether or not strategists use strategy tools during a dedicated process (i.e. analysis, formulation, implementation, and evaluation & control). With the assumption there is an underlying process, the phase practitioners apply tools the most is delineated. Thus, it is clarified whether tools are used before or after the strategic decision has been made. Relating thereto, the post-rationalization issue is further discussed to illustrate whether tools are used to reach or proof such a decision. During all subsections the

different practitioner perspectives are compared to provide a more substantial answer to research sub-question 2.3: “When do strategists use strategy tools?”

4.2.3.1 Causes for Application

First, the focus lies on the causes for the application of strategy tools. As part of the questionnaire, participants were asked why they apply strategy tools to conduct strategy work. To answer this question, they were offered different reasons that were identified during the interviews. At that point of the questionnaire, it was possible to make multiple responses, as some reasons were assumed to be interrelated. Figure 35 below lists the results.

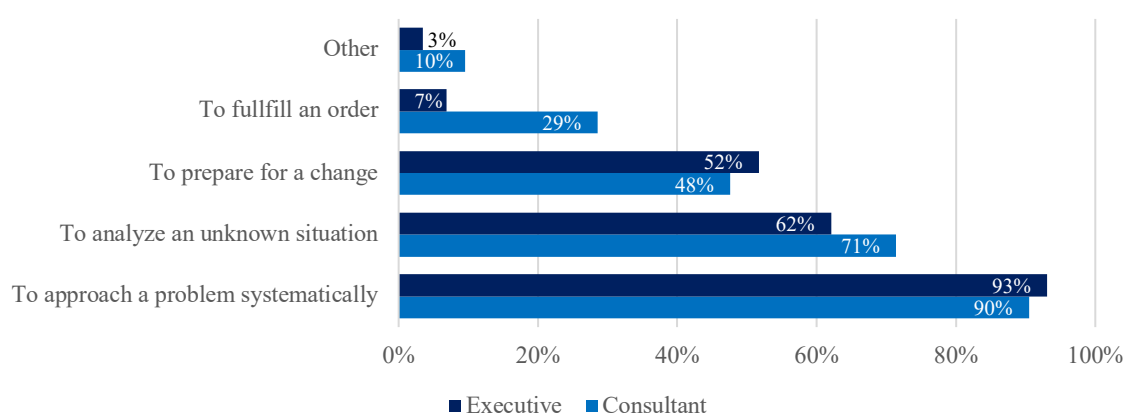
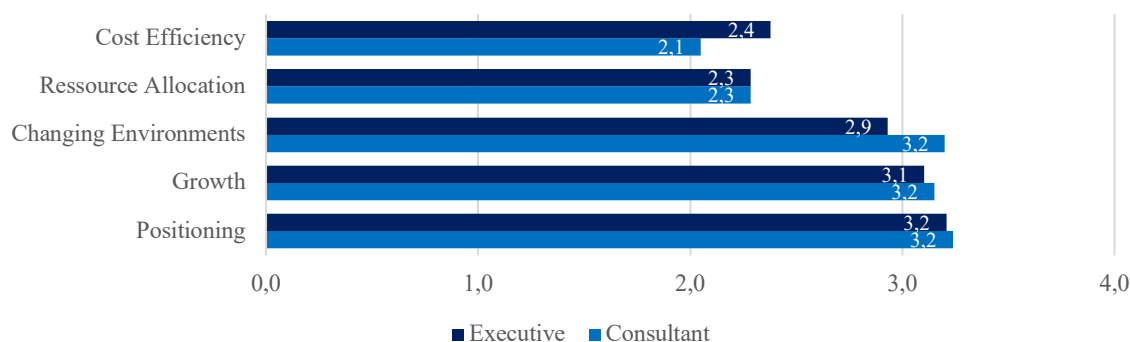


Figure 35: Reasons for the Application of Strategy Tools for each Perspective

With an average of 92%, the main reason for applying tools is ‘to approach a problem systematically’. Similar to the interview results, this emphasizes that strategists need tools or concepts to undertake systematic work when confronted with a complex problem. With an average 66%, the second most common reason to apply tools is ‘to analyze an unknown situation’, which could be considered as interrelated to the main reason, as many strategic problems are frequently a result of an unknown situation. The biggest percentage difference was found for the reason ‘to fulfill an order’. About 30% of the consultants named it as a reason for the application of tools. For consultants, this most likely happens when a client asks them to apply a particular approach or tool. In comparison, only two executives (~7%) named order fulfillment as a reason to apply strategy tools. The percentage distribution however shows that the different perspectives shared fundamentally the same reasons to apply strategy tools in practice.

In the next step, the participants were asked whether certain strategic problems or objectives initiate the use of strategy tools. About 82% of the surveyed strategists agreed and only 18% disagreed with that assumption. To get an idea of which problems and objectives most likely trigger their utilization, the participants were asked to rate the items from those most frequently referred to in the interviews (see Appendix I). Figure 36 shows the findings.



Scale: 0 = Not at all Likely; 1 = Slightly Likely; 2 = Moderately Likely; 3 = Very Likely; 4 = Extremely Likely

Figure 36: Strategic Problems and Objectives initiating Strategy Tool Use

Based on the questionnaire responses, it can be determined that ‘positioning’, ‘changing environments’, and ‘growth’ very likely initiate tool usage (i.e. average mean = 3,1). The items ‘resource allocation’ and ‘cost efficiency’, rarely lead to the application (i.e. average mean = 2,3), which slightly contradicts the interview results. As for the differences between the perspectives, it can be stated that they do not show much difference in their ratings. ‘Positioning’ received the highest rating from both perspectives, since the discussion about positioning harks back to the decade when most strategy tools were developed (e.g. Porter, 1979). To conclude, it can be stated that all incorporated problems and objectives are likely to trigger the application of tools (see Table 15).

Problems and Objectives	Consultant		Executive		Total	
	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n
Positioning	3,2	21	3,2	29	3,2	50
Growth	3,2	20	3,1	29	3,1	49
Changing Environments	3,2	20	2,9	29	3,0	49
Resource Allocation	2,3	21	2,3	28	2,3	49
Cost Efficiency	2,1	20	2,4	29	2,2	49
Other	3,0	5	0,0	2	2,1	7

Scale: 0 = Not at all Likely; 1 = Slightly Likely; 2 = Moderately Likely; 3 = Very Likely; 4 = Extremely Likely

Table 15: Strategic Problems and Objectives initiating Strategy Tool Use

4.2.3.2 Integration during Strategy Process

During the first research stage, not all interview participants were certain that tools are employed as part of a dedicated process (i.e. analysis, formulation, implementation, and evaluation & control). This fact was revisited in the questionnaire to identify whether consultants and executives generally confirm this assumption. Accordingly, Figure 37 illustrates both perspectives and their attitude towards the process integration of tools.

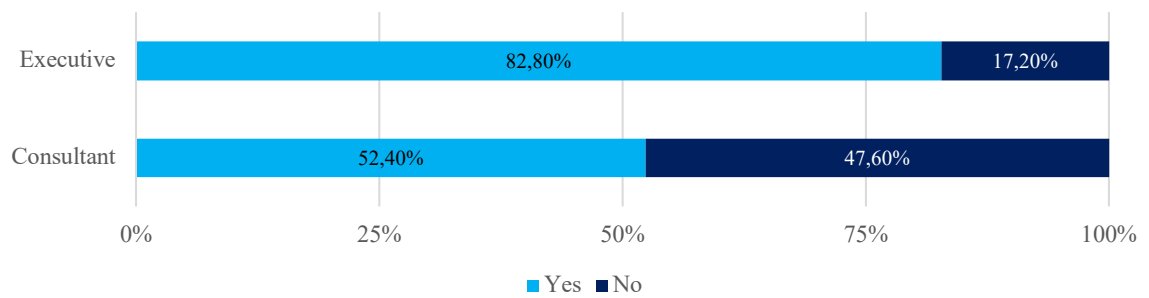


Figure 37: Tools used during a dedicated Strategy Process

Interestingly, a clear difference can be identified between the two perspectives. The consultants were undecided, as nearly half of them (~48%) claimed they do not apply strategy tools during a dedicated process. A reason for that could be their partial or situational involvement during strategy work, since they are mostly present during the strategic planning phase of the organization they work for. In contrast, the majority of executives (~83%) stated that they apply tools next to their strategy process. Nonetheless, considering that two-thirds of all respondents (~68%) confirmed that they are using tools as part of a dedicated process, it is assumed that most strategists probably rely on a tool-supported process.

Based on this assumption, the questionnaire participants were asked during which phase(s) of the strategic management process they typically employ the tools presented in the survey. The analysis was implemented to find out whether tools are used before or after the strategic decision has been made. For this purpose, Figure 38 shows the averages of tools used during the different phases of the strategy process.

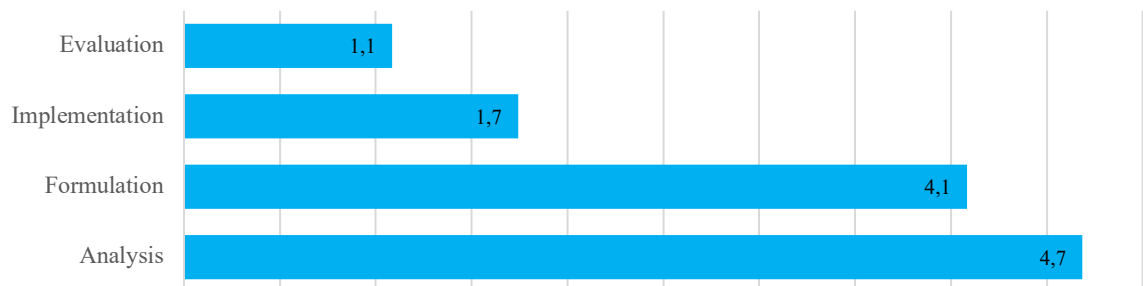


Figure 38: Averages of Tools used during different Phases of the Strategy Process

In those cases where strategists follow a process, tools are predominantly used during the analysis and formulation phase. On average, the surveyed participants use or have used 4-5 tools during these early stages of the strategy process. This result was consistent with the findings of the interview analysis, where analysis and formulation were also most referred to (see Appendix J). In both later stages, implementation as well evaluation and control, the participants only use 1-2 tools on average. The reason for that could be the limited availability of implementation and evaluation tools, but also

the significance of strategy tools after the strategic decision has been made. If you summarize these results (see Figure 39), it becomes apparent that almost half of the incorporated tools are applied before the strategic decision and only a few afterwards.

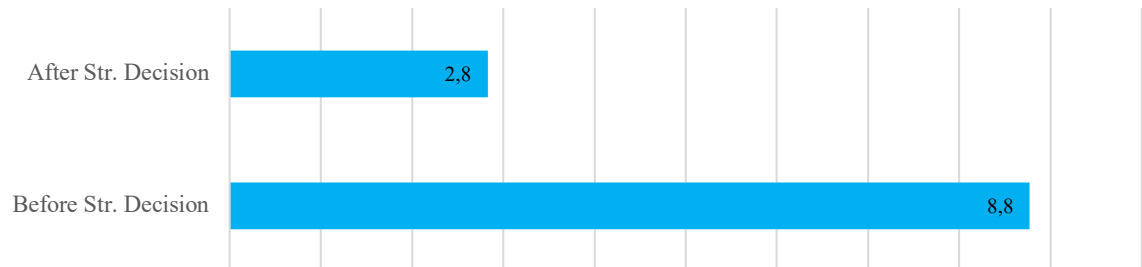


Figure 39: Average of Tools used before or after the Strategic Decision

The different perspectives were directly compared to identify possible differences. Figure 40 illustrates the averages of tools used during the different stages of the strategy process with regards to the surveyed consultants and executives. Again, it is noticeable that consultants generally use more tools than executives. However, it should be noted that they are not necessarily following a dedicated process.

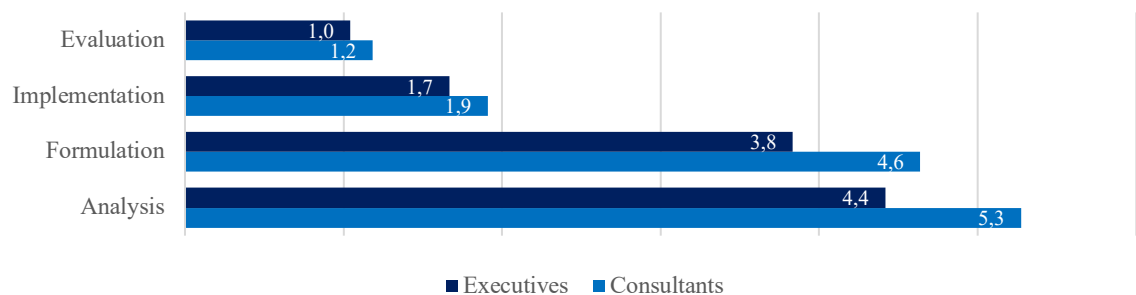


Figure 40: Tools used during different Phases of the Strategy Process - Perspectives

A similar result was found for the averages of tools used before or after the strategic decision has been made (see Figure 41 below). On average, consultants use up to 10 tools before the strategic decision and the executives up to 8 tools. With regards to the use of tools after the strategic decision, both perspectives showed a similar result of up to 3 tools.

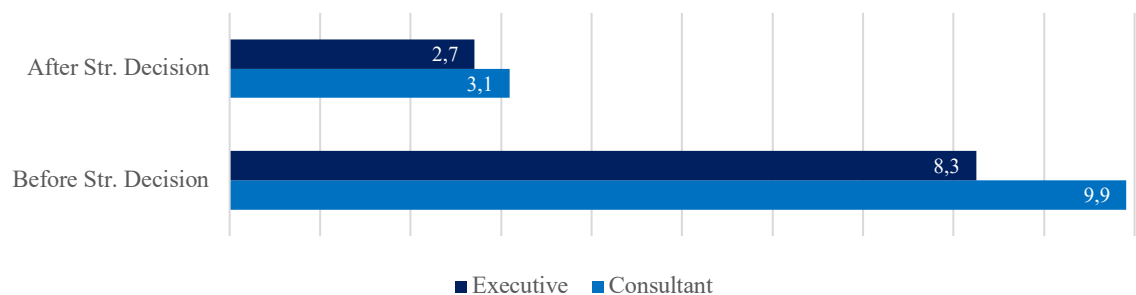


Figure 41: Tools used before or after the Strategic Decision - Perspectives

In sum, it can be postulated that if strategists apply tools as part of a dedicated strategy process they are primarily employed during the analysis and formulation stage, i.e. planning phase. Thus, strategy tools are applied before and significantly less after the strategic decision has been made. Tables 16 and 17 illustrate these results in more detail.

Strategy Process	Consultant		Executive		Total	
	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n
Analysis	5,3	11	4,4	24	4,7	35
Formulation	4,6	11	3,8	24	4,1	35
Implementation	1,9	11	1,7	24	1,7	35
Evaluation	1,2	11	1,0	24	1,1	35

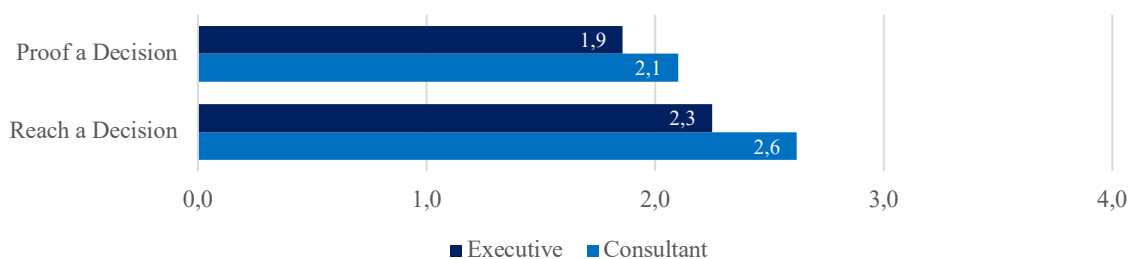
Table 16: Tools used during different Phases of the Strategy Process – Perspectives

Strategy Process	Consultant		Executive		Total	
	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n
Before	9,9	11	8,3	24	8,8	35
After	3,1	11	2,7	24	2,8	35

Table 17: Tools used before or after the Strategic Decision - Perspectives

4.2.3.3 Reaching vs. Proofing Strategic Decisions

Are tools used to reach rational decisions or are they used to post-rationalize decisions that have already been made? Even though post-rationalization is not an intrinsic feature of strategy tools, it still happens in many cases. If post-rationalization happens, it is assumed to occur when strategists seek to validate or justify their decisions. Thus, it could most likely be located in or right after the planning phase of the strategy process. During the interviews, the participants were undecided about this phenomenon, but agreed that it does exist (see Appendix K). Due to this notion, the issue was also included in the questionnaire to provide a more distinct answer. Figure 42 shows how frequent strategists use tools to either reach or proof a strategic decision.



Scale: 0 = Never; 1 = Rarely; 2 = Sometimes; 3 = Often; 4 = Always

Figure 42: Reaching or Proofing a Decision with Strategy Tools

When considering the results from the consultants, it can be stated that they often use tools to reach and sometimes to proof a strategic decision. In contrast, the executives ranked the use of both as sometimes on average. This might imply, that tools have less meaning to executives while making strategic decisions, which could also explain why they actually employ a smaller number of tools during strategy work. As with the previous interview results, however, both perspectives predominantly agreed that tools are rather used to reach decisions (average mean = 2,4). Nevertheless, the questionnaire results indicate that proof of decisions happens occasionally (average mean = 2,0), which is why the phenomenon should not be disregarded. Table 18 on the next page details these results.

Decision Making	Consultant		Executive		Total	
	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n
Reach a Decision	2,6	21	2,3	28	2,4	49
Proof a Decision	2,1	20	1,9	28	2,0	48

Scale: 0 = Never; 1 = Rarely; 2 = Sometimes; 3 = Often; 4 = Always

Table 18: Reaching or Proofing a Decision with Strategy Tools

4.2.3.4 Evaluation of Hypotheses

When looking at the results from both research stages, it can be subsumed that the situations that initiate tool use do not significantly differ between the different practitioner perspectives. Thus, the underlying assumption of the derived hypothesis – **H1b** – cannot be supported. Yet again, it is rather the null hypotheses that appears valid, since the majority of strategists chose similar situations that initiate the application of strategy tools (see Table 15).

H1b: *Situations that initiate tool use differ between the different practitioner perspectives.*

With regard to the process integration of tools, the results from the questionnaire stage generally confirmed the assumption of the earlier derived hypothesis – **H2b**. If strategists apply tools as part of a dedicated process, they rather apply them before the strategic decision. Indeed, the results show that the surveyed practitioners apply about half of the tools (average mean = 9) included in this research before and only a few (average mean = 3) after the strategic decision (see Table 16 and Table 17). These results show that the number of tools used before the strategic decision exceeds the number of tools used after the strategic decision.

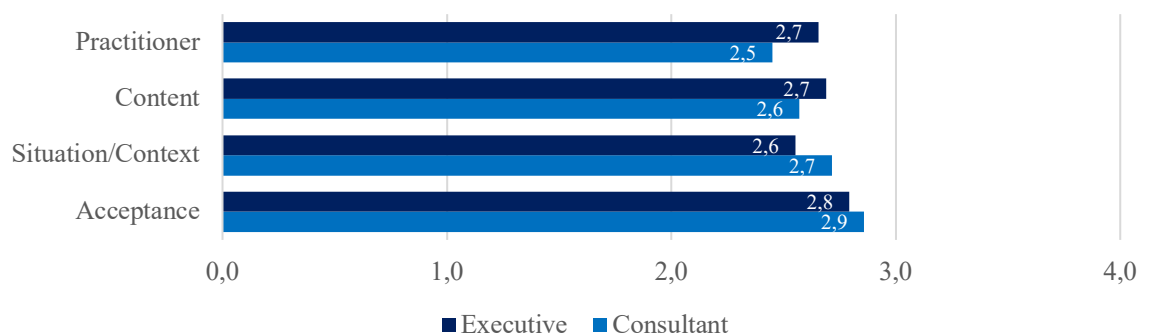
H2b: *The number of tools used before the strategic decision, exceeds the number of tools used after the strategic decision.*

4.2.4 Role and Importance of Strategy Tools

Apparently, the main reason to apply strategy tools is to approach problems systematically. Meaning, strategists need these methods, approaches or tools to sufficiently undertake strategy work. But which role do strategy tools play and how important are they while strategizing? The answer to this question could potentially explain why tools are applied in the first place. In the first research stage, the different practitioner perspectives had mixed feelings about the role and importance of strategy tools-in-use, since their effective application is usually dependent on various different aspects. These aspects were therefore included in the questionnaire again to find out how they influence the successful application of tools. One of these determinants is the adaptation of such tools, wherefore the questionnaire participants were asked to rate the reasons that most likely lead to it. Further, the term ‘role’ was disassembled to gain a more decided glance at the influence of tools on strategy work. Besides, the participants were asked to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of strategy tools to perceive which have the power to create real value. To conclude the topic, the future of strategy tools is discussed. Again, the practitioner perspectives are directly compared to provide a more meaningful answer to research sub-question 2.4: “How do strategists evaluate the role of strategy tools?”

4.2.4.1 Determinants of Effective Application

As discussed, the effective application of strategy tools has various determinants that need to be taken into account. With regard to the interview results, their effective application is dependent on the respective practitioner, tool acceptance, the organizational context or strategic situation, but also on the available content (see Appendix L). Consequently, all four items were included in the questionnaire to ascertain which of these determinants most influences the effective application of tools. Figure 43 compares the results from both perspectives to recognize possible differences.



Scale: 0 = Not Influential; 1 = Slightly Influential; 2 = Moderately Influential; 3 = Influential; 4 = Very Influential

Figure 43: Determinants of Effective Application

It was difficult to detect substantial differences between consultants and executives, since most ratings ranged between ‘moderately influential’ and ‘influential’. When looking at the results, the acceptance of tools seems to have the greatest influence on their successful application. This rating

confirms the interview results, as all perspectives claimed that everyone involved needs to accept the tools-in-use. Without acceptance, their effectiveness is rather limited. In contrast, the practitioner was rated as least influential according to the aggregated mean values of both perspectives, mainly caused by the low rating of the consultants. Interestingly, this slightly contradicts the interview results, because in those the majority of participants referred to the influence of the practitioner the most, since he or she is responsible for the proper application of an incorporated strategy tool. The experience of the practitioner is essential, as the failure rates increase when the necessary capability and knowledge is missing. Nonetheless, the effective application of strategy tools is also dependent on the situation or context and the availability of the necessary content. In summary, it can be postulated that both perspectives generally confirm the earlier interview result as all identified determinants were considered influential. Table 19 shows this in more detail, as it also includes the total mean values.

Determinants	Consultant		Executive		Total	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>n</i>
Acceptance	2,8	21	2,8	29	2,8	50
Content	2,6	21	2,7	29	2,6	50
Situation/Context	2,7	21	2,6	29	2,6	50
Practitioner	2,5	20	2,7	29	2,6	49
Other	3,0	1	4,0	1	3,5	2

Scale: 0 = Not Influential; 1 = Slightly Influential; 2 = Moderately Influential; 3 = Influential; 4 = Very Influential

Table 19: Determinants of Effective Application

4.2.4.2 Reason for Tool Adaptation

Another important determinant for the effective and successful application of strategy tools seems to be their adaptation, which is usually a rule rather than an exception in corporate strategy work. In this research, adaptation stands for the alteration, adjustment or customization of strategy tools. During the first research stage, all perspectives agreed that tools are typically adapted when applied in practice (see Appendix M). Hence, the adaptation topic was reintroduced in the questionnaire to better understand the reasons for tool alteration. Participants were therefore asked whether they generally adapt the tools-in-use to conduct strategy work. Figure 44 displays the outcomes of this question by comparing results from the different practitioner perspectives.

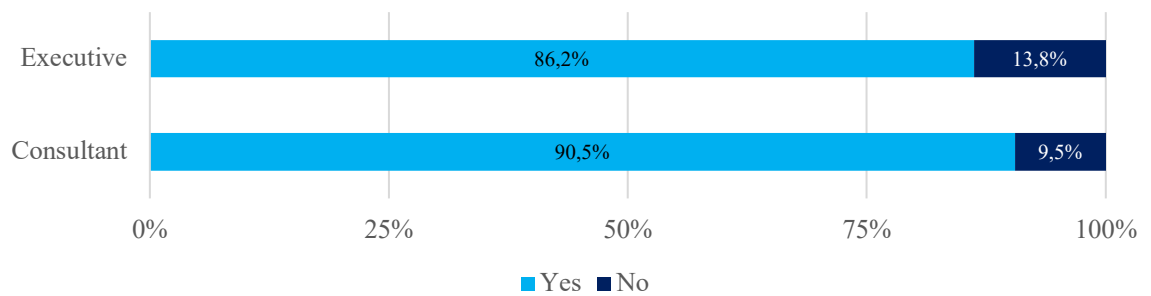
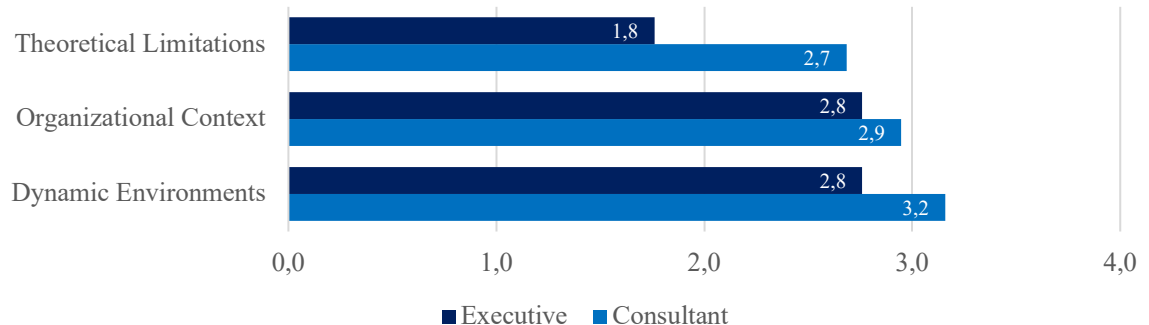


Figure 44: Adaptation of Strategy Tools

The collected data mostly confirmed the interview results. On average 88% of the surveyed strategists agreed that tools are adapted to successfully conduct strategy work, and only 12% disagreed. The differences between the perspectives were marginal and possibly induced by the sample composition. As discussed, consultants typically utilize more tools than executives, which could explain why adaptation is more common for them. In the interviews, the different perspectives stated different reasons for the alteration of tools, namely dynamic environments, organizational context, and theoretical limitations. These items were therefore included in the questionnaire to find out what most likely leads to the adaptation. Consequently, Figure 45 compares the assessments of the different practitioner perspectives.



Scale: 0 = Not at All Likely; 1 = Slightly Likely; 2 = Moderately Likely; 3 = Very Likely; 4 = Extremely Likely

Figure 45: Reasons for Adaptation

The ratings range from ‘moderately likely’ to ‘very likely’. The main reason for the adaptation of tools appeared to be dynamic environments. The consultants in particular assessed this as the main driver of tool adjustment. Most tools were developed in less dynamic times, which is why they are often too static for today’s environments. The specific context is another likely factor for the adaptation, since organizations face different situations while applying strategy tools. However, the largest rating variance between consultants and executives can be identified for the theoretical limitations of tools. The executives rated this reason as ‘moderately likely’, which implies that they view their theoretical foundation as sufficient. In contrast, the consultants assessed the theoretical limitations of strategy tools as another likely cause for their adaptation. Again, this confirms the

interview results, as they indicated that most original tools have too many theoretical boundaries. As such, these boundaries limit their effectiveness because their full potential cannot be exploited. Overall, it can be stated that the consultants viewed all mentioned reasons as very likely causes for the adaptation of tools. The executives, however, only viewed the dynamic environments and the organizational context as likely reasons for it. Table 20 shows the results in detail.

Adaptation Reasons	Consultant		Executive		Total	
	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n
Dynamic Environments	3,2	19	2,8	25	3,0	44
Organizational Context	2,9	19	2,8	25	2,9	44
Theoretical Limitations	2,7	19	1,8	25	2,2	44
Other	3,6	5	1,0	2	2,3	7

Scale: 0 = Not at All Likely; 1 = Slightly Likely; 2 = Moderately Likely; 3 = Very Likely; 4 = Extremely Likely

Table 20: Reasons for Adaptation

4.2.4.3 Influence on Strategy Work

The influence of strategy tools on strategy work is further analyzed as well. Accordingly, the strategists were first asked whether strategy tools have an influence on their work. On average, 80% of the surveyed participants claimed that tools do have an influence and the other 20% of the sample argued that they have no real influence on strategy work (see Figure 46).

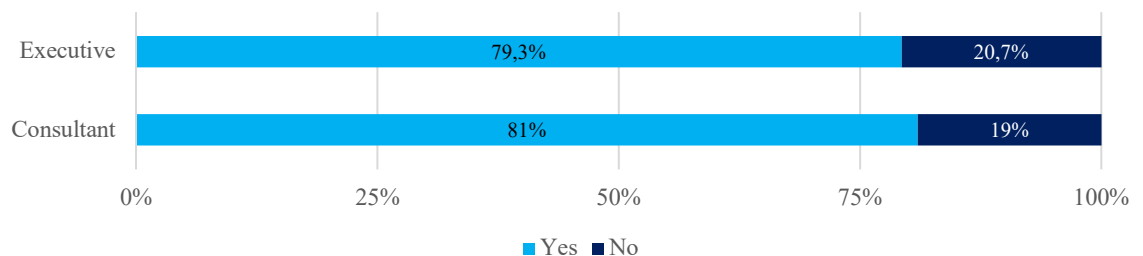
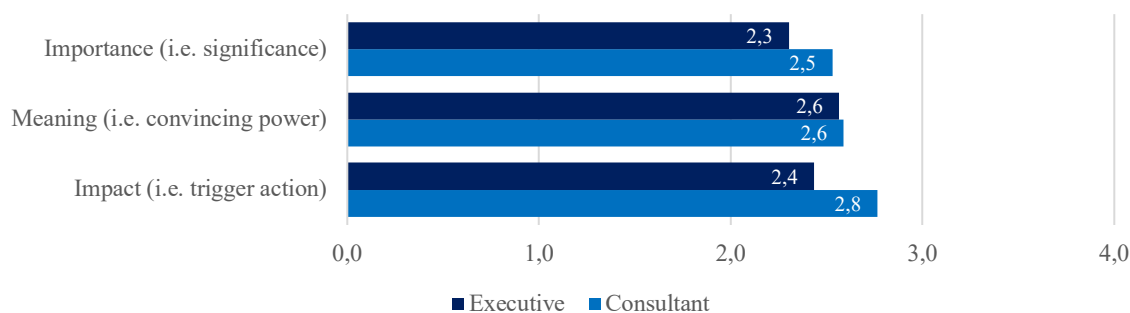


Figure 46: Tool Influence on Strategy Work

This result portrays that not every strategist believes in the strength of these tools. To further analyze this, the practitioners that confirmed their influence were subsequently asked to evaluate the ‘impact’, ‘meaning’, and ‘importance’ of such tools. These indicators were identified on the basis of the interview analysis (see Appendix N). Figure 47 below presents the mean values for both perspectives.



Scale: 0 = Very Low; 1 = Low; 2 = Moderate; 3 = High; 4 = Very High

Figure 47: Influence Indicators of Strategy Tools

The indicators, ‘impact’ and ‘meaning’, practically received the same rating. As such, tools have a moderate to high impact as well as meaning when applied during strategy work. In this research, impact stands for the ability of tools to trigger action and meaning for their convincing power. Interestingly, the consultants rated impact higher than the executives, since they employ their results to draw conclusion for their clients. The executives, in contrast, view tools as supportive elements that can at best enable critical discourse. The ‘importance’ of tools received a moderate rating, as there are other elements that need to be taken into considerations as well. However, the differences in all ratings were marginal, which is why it is questionable to generalize these results for the entire population (see Table 21). In summary, it can be stated that tools have an influence on strategy work when applied properly, but it clearly depends on practitioner experience, background, and expectation.

Influence	Consultant		Executive		Total	
	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n
Impact (i.e. trigger action)	2,8	17	2,4	23	2,6	40
Meaning (i.e. convincing power)	2,6	17	2,6	23	2,6	40
Importance (i.e. significance)	2,5	17	2,3	23	2,4	40

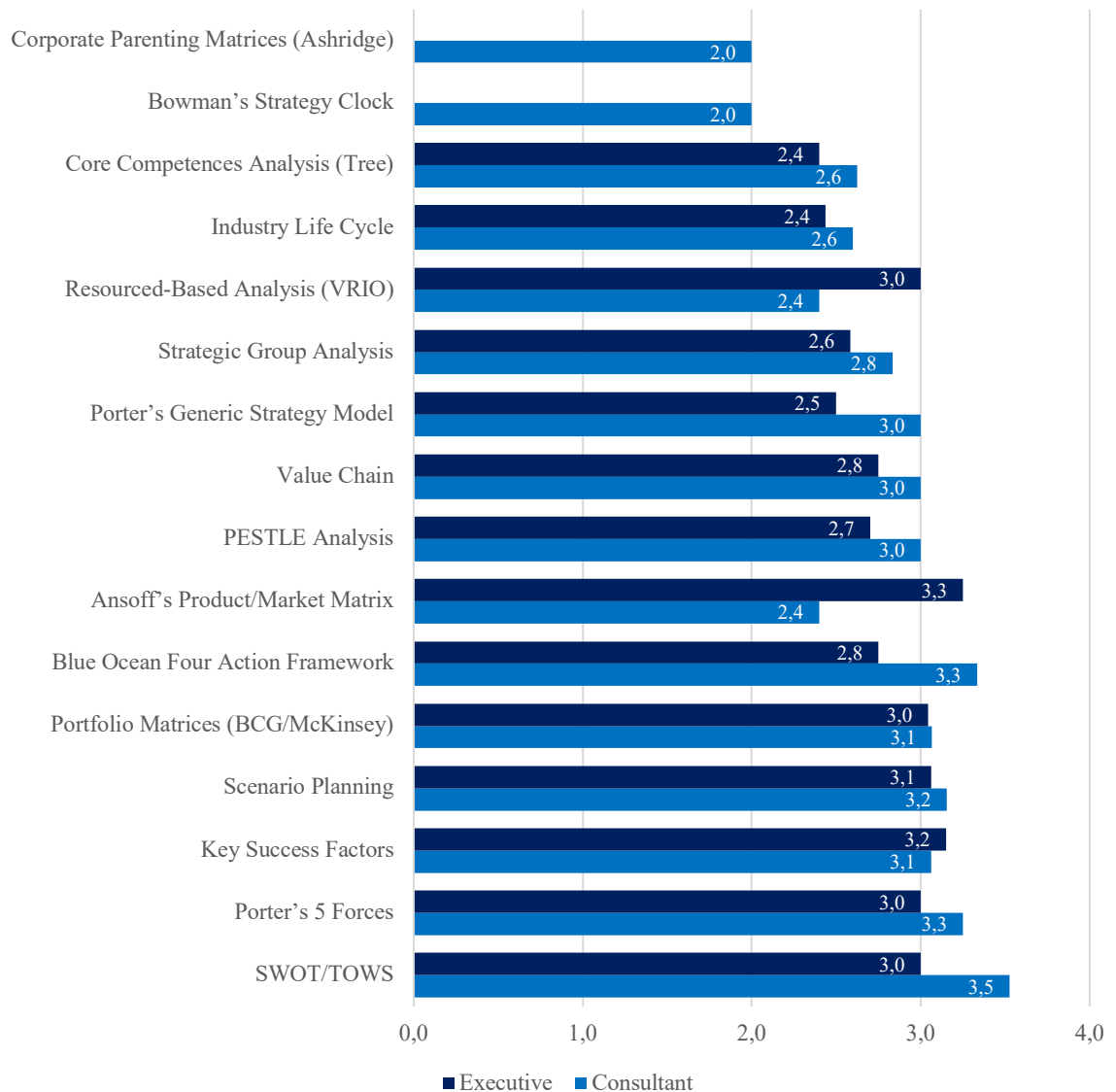
Scale: 0 = Very Low; 1 = Low; 2 = Moderate; 3 = High; 4 = Very High

Table 21: Influence Indicators of Strategy Tools

4.2.4.4 Efficiency and Effectiveness

When analyzing the utilization of strategy tools, it is also important to discuss their efficiency and effectiveness. During the interviews, the participants mostly agreed that tools-in-use are efficient and effective, but it clearly depends on the tool, the problem, and the experience of the people applying them (see Appendix O). According to them, simpler tools in particular are often more efficient and effective. To examine this, both elements were separated in the questionnaire to identify the efficiency and effectiveness ratings of the incorporated strategy tools. Below, based on the results

from the questionnaire, the efficiency of strategy tools is discussed. For this research, efficiency stands for the total workload (input) compared to the usefulness of results (output). Figure 48 compares the ratings of both surveyed practitioner perspectives to indicate differences as well as similarities in the collected data.



Scale: 0 = Inefficient; 1 = Needs Development; 2 = Somewhat Efficient; 3 = Efficient; 4 = Very Efficient

Figure 48: Efficiency Ratings of Strategy Tools

Due to the small rating differences, it was difficult to conclude which tools are more or less efficient when applied in practice. Nonetheless, as with the interview results, simpler frameworks, such as SWOT/TOWS, Porter's Five Forces, and Key Success Factors (KSF), appear to be the most efficient. Scenario Planning received the same rating even though it is considered substantially more complex. Meaning, the tool requires a lot of work, but its usefulness can be assessed equally high. The largest differences between the perspectives were found for the Blue Ocean Four Action Framework, Ansoff's Product/Market Matrix, Porter's Generic Strategy Model, and the Resourced Based

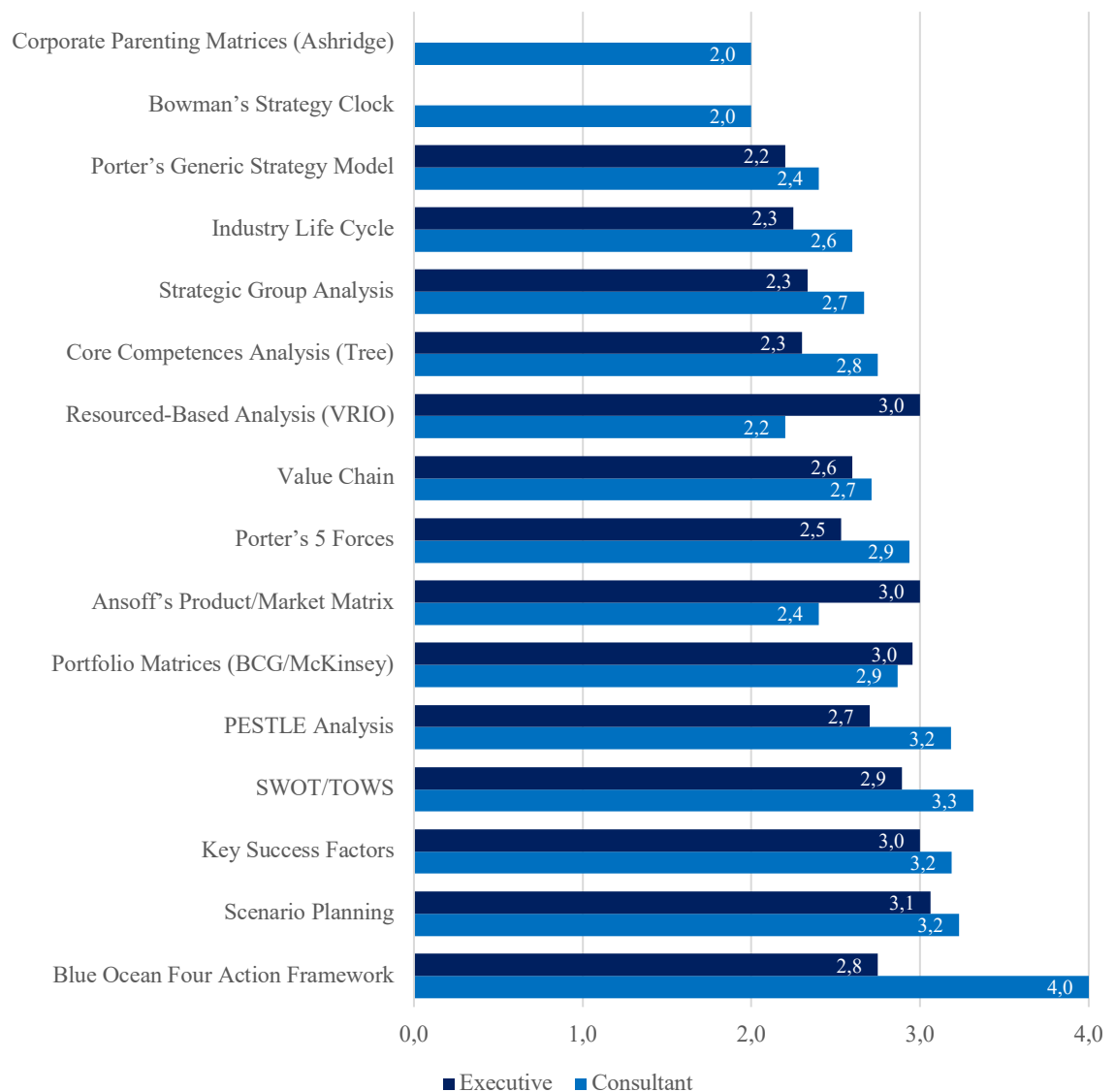
Analysis (VRIO). The consultants rated the Blue Ocean Four Action Framework and Porter's Generic Strategy Model higher than the executives, which could be attributed to their application during strategy formulation. The executives rated Ansoff's Product/Market Matrix and the Resourced Based Analysis (VRIO) as more efficient. Both tools concentrate on a rather functional level of an organization, which could be one reason for the higher ratings. All in all, the outcomes of the first research stage can be confirmed, as both perspectives rated most tools as efficient (total average mean = 2,8). However, it should be stated that the results need to be treated with caution, since not every participant has used each of the presented tools. Accordingly, Table 22 below summarizes the findings.

Tools/Efficiency	Consultant		Executive		Total	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>n</i>
SWOT/TOWS	3,5	19	3,0	28	3,2	47
Porter's Five Forces	3,3	16	3,0	15	3,1	31
Key Success Factors	3,1	16	3,2	20	3,1	36
Scenario Planning	3,2	13	3,1	16	3,1	29
Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey)	3,1	15	3,0	23	3,1	38
Blue Ocean Four Action Framework	3,3	3	2,8	4	3,0	7
Ansoff's Product/Market Matrix	2,4	5	3,3	8	2,9	13
PESTLE Analysis	3,0	11	2,7	10	2,9	21
Value Chain	3,0	14	2,8	20	2,9	34
Porter's Generic Strategy Model	3,0	10	2,5	10	2,8	20
Resourced-Based Analysis (VRIO)	2,4	5	3,0	4	2,7	9
Strategic Group Analysis	2,8	6	2,6	12	2,7	18
Industry Life Cycle	2,6	15	2,4	16	2,5	31
Core Competences Analysis (Tree)	2,6	8	2,4	10	2,5	18
Bowman's Strategy Clock	2,0	1		0	2,0	1
Corporate Parenting Matrices (Ashridge)	2,0	1		0	2,0	1
Personally preferred tool 1	3,5	11	2,6	8	3,1	19
Personally preferred tool 2	3,7	6	3,0	6	3,3	12
Personally preferred tool 3	4,0	1	3,7	3	3,8	4
Personally preferred tool 4	4,0	1		0	4,0	1

Scale: 0 = Inefficient; 1 = Needs Development; 2 = Somewhat Efficient; 3 = Efficient; 4 = Very Efficient

Table 22: Efficiency Ratings of Strategy Tools

In the following, the effectiveness of strategy tools is analyzed. Effectiveness stands for the degree to which objectives are achieved and the extent to which targeted problems are solved with the help of a tool. Figure 49 below illustrates the effectiveness ratings by comparing the responses of the consultants and executives.



Scale: 0 = Unsatisfactory; 1 = Needs Development; 2 = Somewhat Effective; 3 = Effective; 4 = Very Effective

Figure 49: Effectiveness Ratings of Strategy Tools

In general, there were more identifiable differences in the effectiveness ratings than in the efficiency ratings. For the questionnaire participants, the most effective tools were the Blue Ocean Four Action Framework, Scenario Planning, KSF, SWOT/TOWS, and the PESTLE Analysis. All received an average rating ≥ 3 . These results slightly contradict those from the interviews, as simpler tools are considered more effective. The Blue Ocean Four Action Framework as well as Scenario Planning are both rather complex in their application. Tools, such as the Strategic Group Analysis, Industry Life Cycle, Porter's Generic Strategy Model, Bowman's Strategy Clock, and the Corporate Parenting Matrices (Ashridge), were only rated as somewhat efficient. These lower ratings were mostly caused by the responses of the executives. With regard to the effectiveness, the largest differences were found for the Blue Ocean Four Action Framework, Ansoff's Product/Market Matrix, and the Resourced Based Analysis (VRIO). Yet again, the Blue Ocean Four Action Framework received

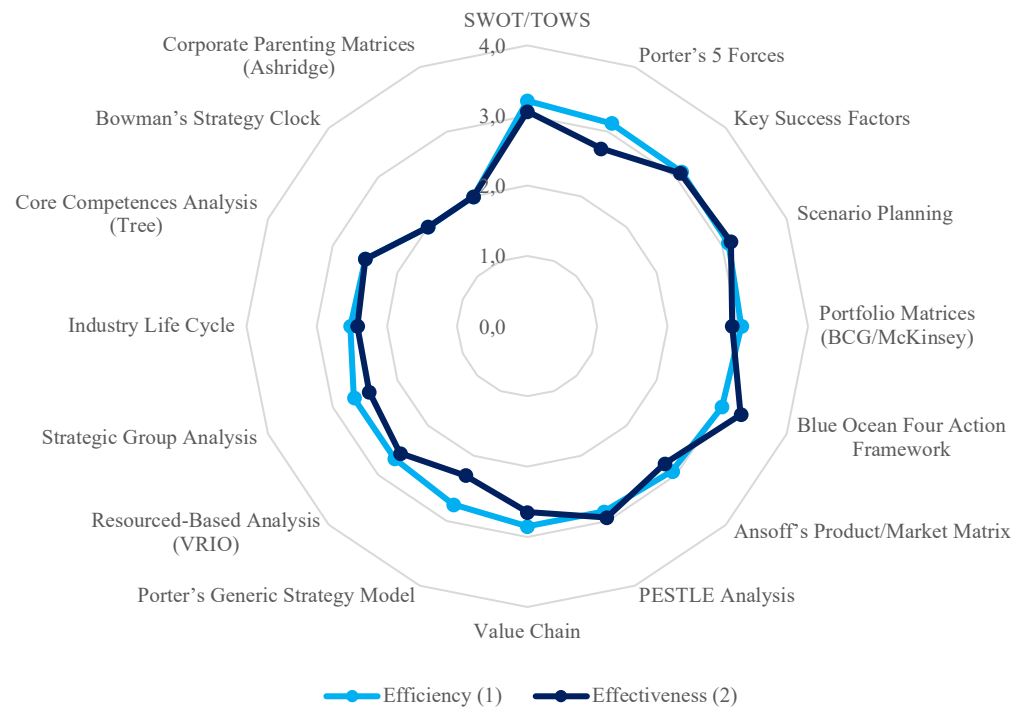
more attention from the consultants. They even rated it as very effective. As with the efficiency ratings, the latter two tools were rated as more effective by the executives. Overall, it can be postulated that the majority of consultants (total average mean = 2,8) view tools as slightly more effective than the executives (total average mean = 2,7). However, all tools in the presented strategy toolkit were at least considered to be somewhat efficient, which means that none of the tools is viewed as unsatisfactory. All findings are summarized in Table 23 below.

Tool/Effectiveness	Consultant		Executive		Total	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>n</i>
Blue Ocean Four Action Framework	4,0	3	2,8	4	3,3	7
Scenario Planning	3,2	13	3,1	16	3,1	29
Key Success Factors	3,2	16	3,0	20	3,1	36
SWOT/TOWS	3,3	19	2,9	28	3,1	47
PESTLE Analysis	3,2	11	2,7	10	3,0	21
Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey)	2,9	15	3,0	23	2,9	38
Ansoff's Product/Market Matrix	2,4	5	3,0	8	2,8	13
Porter's Five Forces	2,9	16	2,5	15	2,7	31
Value Chain	2,7	14	2,6	20	2,7	34
Resourced-Based Analysis (VRIO)	2,2	5	3,0	4	2,6	9
Core Competences Analysis (Tree)	2,8	8	2,3	10	2,5	18
Strategic Group Analysis	2,7	6	2,3	12	2,4	18
Industry Life Cycle	2,6	15	2,3	16	2,4	31
Porter's Generic Strategy Model	2,4	10	2,2	10	2,3	20
Bowman's Strategy Clock	2,0	1		0	2,0	1
Corporate Parenting Matrices (Ashridge)	2,0	1		0	2,0	1
Personally preferred tool 1	3,2	11	2,9	8	3,1	19
Personally preferred tool 2	2,8	6	2,8	6	2,8	12
Personally preferred tool 3	4,0	1	3,3	3	3,5	4
Personally preferred tool 4	4,0	1		0	4,0	1

Scale: 0 = Unsatisfactory; 1 = Needs Development; 2 = Somewhat Effective; 3 = Effective; 4 = Very Effective

Table 23: Effectiveness Ratings of Strategy Tools

When comparing both ratings (see Figure 50 below), it becomes apparent that they are very similar for most tools with only a few exceptions. Hence, it could be stated that the efficiency of tools has an impact on their effectiveness.



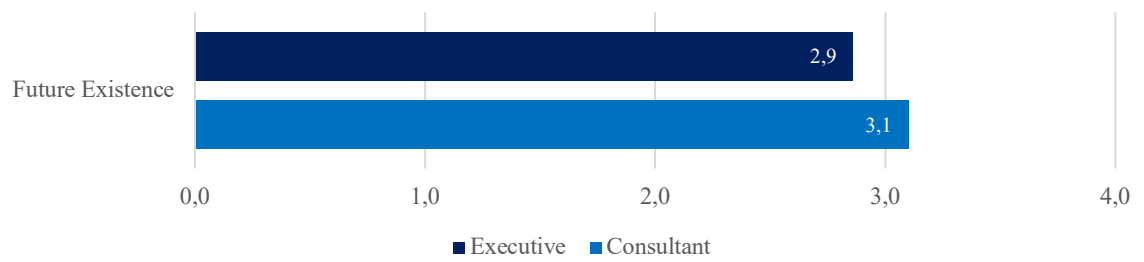
Scale (1): 0 = Inefficient; 1 = Needs Development; 2 = Somewhat Efficient; 3 = Efficient; 4 = Very Efficient

Scale (2): 0 = Unsatisfactory; 1 = Needs Development; 2 = Somewhat Effective; 3 = Effective; 4 = Very Effective

Figure 50: Comparison of Efficiency and Effectiveness

4.2.4.5 The Future of Strategy Tools

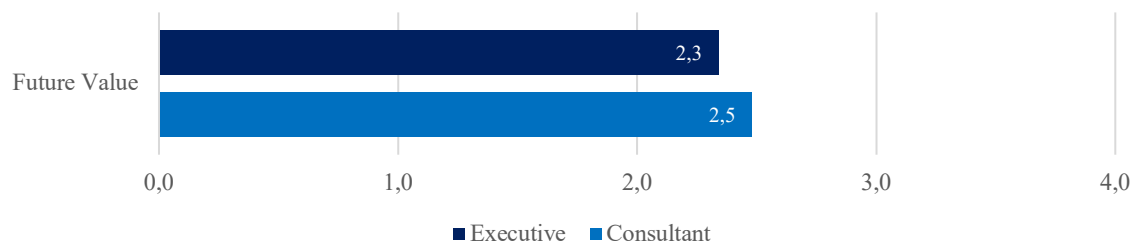
Finally, the future of strategy tools is discussed again to classify their prospective value and existence. As part of that, it is outlined which factors should be prioritized to prepare the tools for the future. Generally speaking, their future development should be a response to the novel problems of today's environments and common practitioner criticisms. During the interview stage, all perspectives agreed that tools have a future, but without developments and adjustments their role will be increasingly questioned (see Appendix P). For that reason, the questionnaire participants were asked to appraise whether tools will be used to conduct strategy work in the future, and how they assess their future value. Figure 51 shows whether the different perspectives agree or disagree that strategy tools have a future.



Scale: 0 = Strongly Disagree; 1 = Disagree; 2 = Undecided; 3 = Agree; 4 = Strongly Agree

Figure 51: Future Existence of Strategy Tools

Consultants and executives agreed that strategy tools will exist in the future. During the interviews, the executives explained that tools offer structure that helps them to make sense of their environment. The consultants agreed that traditional tools will still be used in the future, since they enable the theoretical basis of their strategy work. Consequently, Figure 52 outlines the ratings for the future value of strategy tools and compares the perspectives.

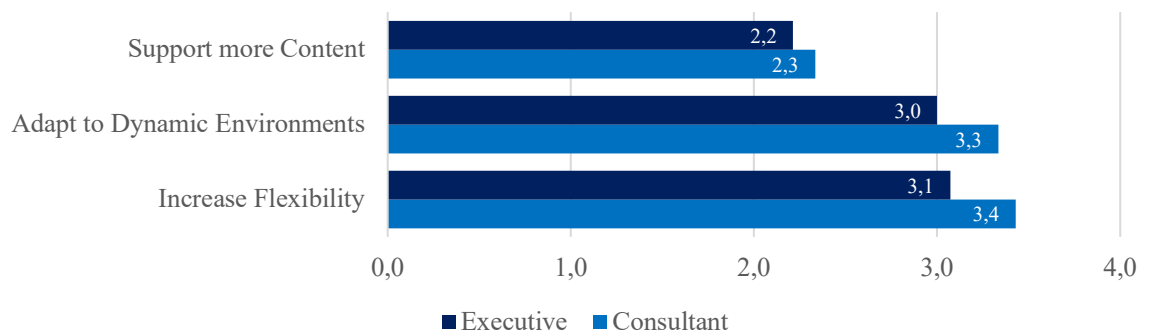


Scale: 0 = Non; 1 = Low; 2 = Moderate; 3 = High; 4 = Very High

Figure 52: Future Value of Strategy Tools

The questionnaire participants rated the future value of strategy tools as ‘moderate’, which indicates that tools do not solely influence successful strategy work. However, if you look at the difference between the perspectives it is obvious that the consultants rated the future value of tools slightly higher. Again, this may be due to the fact that consultants usually apply tools more than executives. The consultants use these structures to support and guide their clients, but without further development their value will most likely decrease.

During the interview stage, the participants were also asked to explain how strategy tools need to change to be functional in the future. Based on the qualitative analysis, it was possible to extract different factors that should be considered with regards to the future development of tools. Thus, tools should be adaptable to dynamic industry environments, able to support and incorporate more content, and more flexible. Figure 53 expresses which of these factors should be prioritized by comparing the ratings of the consultants and executives.



Scale: 0 = Not a Priority; 1 = Low Priority; 2 = Medium Priority; 3 = High Priority; 4 = Essential

Figure 53: Future Development of Strategy Tools

Two out of the three factors were a ‘high priority’ for the surveyed participants. Considering the total mean values, tools used in the future should mainly increase their flexibility. The consultants described during the interviews that tools have to be more flexible, agile or lean to be able to adapt to the rapidly changing markets. This means that their theoretical foundation may need to be revisited to allow strategists to integrate different dimensions or variables. For that reason, the factor with the second highest priority, ‘adapt to dynamic environments’, can be considered as interlinked to the flexibility issue. As explained in the previous subsection, it will be difficult to rely on these frameworks without adaptation in the future, since they were originally developed in less dynamic conditions. It is noteworthy that both factors with ‘high priority’ received a higher rating from the consultants, which again emphasizes that strategy tools are more important to them. The factor that tools should support more content was rated with a ‘medium priority’ by both perspectives. During the interviews, consultants as well as executives explained that content will be much more important in the future, since the wide accessibility of data has the power to accelerate modern strategy work and to realize more sophisticated tool adaptation.

Overall, it can be postulated that all three factors should not be neglected to develop strategy tools in the future. They are all interrelated, which means that they should not be dealt with in isolation. Table 24 illustrates the results in more detail.

Future Development	Consultant		Executive		Total	
	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n
Increase Flexibility	3,4	21	3,1	28	3,2	49
Adapt to Dynamic Environments	3,3	21	3,0	28	3,1	49
Support more Content	2,3	21	2,2	28	2,3	49
Other	4,0	1	4,0	1	4,0	2

Scale: 0 = Not a Priority; 1 = Low Priority; 2 = Medium Priority; 3 = High Priority; 4 = Essential

Table 24: Future Development of Strategy Tools

4.2.4.6 Evaluation of Hypotheses

With regard to the determinants of effective tool application, it can be noted that all four identified dependencies (acceptance, content, situation/context, and practitioner) have influence on the successful utilization of strategy tools. However, it was not possible to detect major differences between consultants and executives, which is why the derived hypothesis – **H1c** – cannot be supported. Hence, it is the null hypothesis that should be substantiated. Interestingly, the acceptance of tools was the most influential determinant, which represents a clear difference to the earlier interview results.

***H1c:** The dependencies for effective tool application differ between the different practitioner perspectives.*

Based on the findings regarding the adaptation of tools, it can be subsumed that strategy tools need some form of adjustment or alteration to successfully function in practice. Nonetheless, the underlying assumption of hypothesis – **H2c** – that the reasons for tool adaptation differ between the different practitioner perspectives cannot not be supported. Although the executives disagreed with the consultants on one point, it was not possible to statistically test the results due to the sample size (see Table 20). Hence, it is the null hypothesis that should be corroborated.

***H2c:** The reasons for tool adaptation differ between the different practitioner perspectives.*

In regard to the role and importance of strategy tools, it can be summarized that these tools have an influence on strategy work, but due to the sample size it was not possible to test for significance. Nonetheless, the underlying assumption of hypothesis – **H3c** – can be supported, since all participants agreed that tools have high impact, meaning and importance.

***H3c:** Strategy tools-in-use have a significant influence on strategy work.*

When looking at the efficiency and effectiveness ratings of both perspectives included in the questionnaire, it can be stated that the underlying assumptions of – **H4c** and **H5c** – cannot be supported. The differences in the ratings are marginal or not worth mentioning, which is why the null hypotheses should be corroborated.

***H4c:** The efficiency ratings of strategy tools-in-use differ between the different practitioner perspectives.*

***H5c:** The effectiveness ratings of strategy tools-in-use differ between the different practitioner perspectives.*

In relation to the future of strategy tools, the perspectives agreed that tools will exist and have value in the future. The perspectives also agreed on the future development requests of tools, since the priority ratings did not really differ between them. Once again, the assumption of the derived hypothesis – **H6c** – cannot be supported. Therefore, the null hypothesis should be bolstered.

***H6c:** The future development requests of tools differ between the different practitioner perspectives.*

4.2.5 Overview of Evaluated Hypotheses

Based on the results of the questionnaire, it was not possible to confirm the assumed differences between the different practice perspectives. The sample size was the biggest constraint in the second research stage, wherefore it was not possible to apply statistical testing. For that reason, it was only possible to descriptively evaluate and discern tendencies. With a sufficiently large random sample, hypothesis tests like Chi-Squared or Fisher's Exact would have been able to conclusively test the derived hypotheses. Nonetheless, the descriptive hypotheses evaluations are summarized in Table 25 below.

Hypothesis	Detail	Evaluation	Interpretation
H1a	Tools Know – Tools Used	Supported	Knowing more tools results in more frequent application
H2a	Perceived Advantages – Practitioner Perspectives	Not Supported	Practitioners identify the same advantages
H3a	Perceived Disadvantages – Practitioner Perspectives	Not Supported	Practitioners identify the same disadvantages
H1b	Situations – Practitioner Perspectives	Not Supported	Practitioners mention the same/similar situations
H2b	Before Decision – After Decision	Supported	More tools are used before than after the strategic decision
H1c	Dependencies – Practitioner Perspectives	Not Supported	Practitioners identify the same/similar dependencies
H2c	Adaptation Reasons – Practitioner Perspectives	Not Supported	Practitioners have the same/similar reasons
H3c	Significant Influence	Supported	Tools-in-use have an influence on strategy work
H4c	Efficiency Ratings – Practitioner Perspectives	Not Supported	Practitioners equally rate the efficiency of tools
H5c	Effectiveness Ratings – Practitioner Perspectives	Not Supported	Practitioners equally rate the effectiveness of tools
H6c	Future Development – Practitioner Perspectives	Not Supported	Practitioners have the same/similar future requests

Table 25: Overview of the Hypothesis Evaluation

Since it was not possible to statistically test the derived hypotheses, the results of both preceding research stages are critically validated in the next stage. Meaning, the findings of the focus group conclusively triangulate the previous interview and questionnaire results.

4.3 Focus Group

Section 4.3 incorporates the focus group results to critically discuss the previously analyzed findings (see Appendix R for the full transcript). As outlined in the research methodology, the focus group was used as critical participant validation. This theoretical triangulation was employed to reassess and validate the analyzed data. Within the focus group, participants from all three perspectives were confronted with a draft of the methodologically triangulated results from research stages 1 and 2. Based on the qualitative discussion, it was possible to gather conclusive insights to answer the theory and practice related research sub-questions. At first, the theory related issues are discussed again, as participants were asked to comment on a revised definition for the term ‘strategy tool’ and to make critical suggestions for the development of the strategy-as-practice research field.

In the following, most attention was paid to the practice related problems, which were approached with exploration questions. The critical appraisal outlines a conclusive discussion of the practice lens. In this context, the strategy toolkit as well as the most significant advantages and disadvantages of tools-in-use are reevaluated. The strategic problems and objectives initiating tool use are then further elaborated to understand why it is necessary to approach such issues with strategy tools. Subsequently, the process integration is discussed again to determine why most tools are used during the analysis and formulation phase of the strategy process. As before, the rationalization discussion is connected to this aspect. Thereafter, the role of tools is partially discussed again. As presented in the preceding subsections, tools have a significant influence on strategy work. Therefore, further discussion is given to the question: what most influences their effective application? Relating thereto, further exploration is made to why tool adaptation is necessary and what is considered to be an important determinant for their successful utilization. The future of strategy tools is discussed again to understand why tools should be more flexible, as the highest priority was given to that factor in the questionnaire.

4.3.1 Terminology Reviewed

Due to the earlier mentioned ambiguity of the term ‘strategy tool’, the focus group participants were asked to critically evaluate and discuss the validity of the revised definition.

According to the interview results, ‘A **strategy tool** is a standardized process, procedure or approach to analyze a company’s environments, to initiate or organize debate, and to solve complex strategic issues in a structured and meaningful way.’

In response, one of the consultants focused on the role of implementation. He asked, “What about the execution? [...] If you define a strategy tool like this, it does not surprise me that there is no one that is applying strategy tools in the execution, because they are obviously not build for execution and monitoring” (C1). One of the executives noted, “I would adapt ‘standardized process’ [...]; I would call that a ‘structured process’” (E2). More importantly he added that “...the definition should include that tools can be used throughout the entire strategy process” (E2), which possibly solves the ignored execution issue. Conversely, another consultant emphasized that “...tools cannot really be used for the controlling or monitoring process” (C2).

Summary of Results

Overall, the focus group participants evaluated the definition for the term as sufficient, since it covers most of the tools’ capabilities. The recommended changes were only marginal, but an important criticism was that strategy execution is underrepresented. One way to solve that issue is to outline that strategy tools, even though they are primarily used for analysis and formulation, can be applied throughout the entire strategy process. On the basis of these suggestions, the following definition has been derived:

‘A **strategy tool** is a structured process, procedure or approach to analyze a company’s environments, to initiate or organize debate, and to solve complex strategic issues in a systematized and meaningful way. Such tools are applied to support all different stages of the strategy process.’

4.3.2 Critical View on Strategizing Research

In addition, the practitioners were asked to critically evaluate strategizing theory and to provide suggestions for the development of the SasP research field. Accordingly, academics agreed that “...the field should somehow open up and not only look at strategic management tools” (A2), since there are “...other tools to understand situations [...] which do not necessarily come from the management environment” (A2). One of the consultants headed towards a similar direction and stated, “Apart from strategy, almost any other managerial task is nowadays supported by software, everything but these strategy tools” (C1). This means, that software understood as yet another tool should be included in the investigation of SasP research. He therefore recommended, “...to look at the process of how tools are used, which includes selection and application, and then draw conclusions and see how software could support it” (C1). On that basis, he formulated an interesting research question: “How can [strategists] bring these tools, even though they have been developed in less turbulent times, into today’s digital world?” (C1). The executives were less distinct about the development of the research field but argued that it should “...take a holistic approach” (E2). Meaning, the entire strategy process should be explored to clarify why tool-based strategy work is necessary and still essential.

Summary of Results

The focus group participants identified a few limitations of strategizing theory and therefore recommended some development options. They agreed that SasP research should not solely investigate strategy tools, as there are far more tools and approaches from other disciplines that are already employed by practitioners (e.g. design thinking, software tools). Build on this, they further recommended that the existing tools should be brought into the digital world, since nowadays there is much more data available that support their application. Lastly, they suggested that SasP research should become a more holistic approach that explores all parts of the strategy process.

4.3.3 Practice Lens Reviewed

Strategy Toolkit

Results from both previous research stages identified the strategy tools that strategists know and most commonly use to conduct strategy work. The analysis resulted in a revised version of the strategy toolkit (Jarzabkowski et al., 2009), for which the top three strategy tools-in-use are SWOT/TOWS, Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey), and Key Success Factors. To verify these results, the focus group participants were asked whether they had expected these tools to top the list or not. One of the academics stated, “The SWOT is not really surprising to me [...]. You have this simple two times two matrix, which is easy to capture, easy to visualize, and quite perfect to use as a basis for a broader discussion” (A2). Nonetheless, she also claimed that “...practitioners should not forget that these tools are mostly a simplification of the reality that can and should primarily be used to structure certain aspects” (A2). The participating consultants agreed and one of them added that “There are several factors that contribute to this. First and foremost, their age. For a long time, they have been taught in business schools, reinforced by executives using them, and used during trainings in companies” (C1). For him, this is the reason why “...the more recent tools like the Blue Ocean Four Action Framework are lesser known...” (C1). The same consultant, however, was a bit surprised that Porter’s Five Forces was not ranked in the top three, as this tool is very often “...adapted in a way that reflects what a specific consultancy specializes in” (C1). Further he stated, that he was “...a little surprised that the SWOT is used that extensively by consultants...” (C1), as this “...is not something that makes you stand out” (C1). Overall, the participants confirmed that the simple and traditional tools are the ones most commonly applied, as everyone searches for the obvious results.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Strategy Tools-in-Use

As part of the practice lens discussion, it was also necessary to conclusively assess the advantages and disadvantages of strategy tools-in-use. In the previous analyses, the main advantage of using strategy tools seems to be that they ‘provide structure’. For that reason, the strategists were asked why structure is so important for strategy work. Two of the participants stated accordingly, “...structure is always important to understand and communicate your results” (C1) and with “...a

structure you can guarantee that everybody is on the same path” (A1). In other words, “...a tool can help you to split up work, to create work packages, and at the end you are able to synthesize” (C1). Nonetheless, there were also differing opinions. One consultant dissented and claimed, “Sometimes it is our duty to use these tools to structure or sort things, but mostly we apply them to support the decision making” (C3), which was indeed the second most important advantage in the preceding analyses. For him, it was the number one advantage, “...as clients occasionally need someone to blame for a decision, especially if you have to make incremental changes in their organization” (C3). Two other focus group members argued from a rather holistic viewpoint and claimed, “...many of the advantages here can be reconnected to structure” (A2). More specifically, “...the other five advantages are results of the structure that tools provide” (E2). This means, that structure enables all the other advantages, as it “...reduces complexity, eases up visualization, and makes it easier to move towards a certain direction” (A2).

In contrast, results from the questionnaire analysis showed that the most problematic disadvantage is that tools-in-use ‘oversimplify issues’. The focus group participants were asked to evaluate and comment on that issue. The first response came from a consultant, who stated that “The simplification issue is inherent in all of the tools, which is why they cannot do justice to all different situations companies are facing” (C2). Hence, they might not be applicable for any type of company. One of the executives however explained that you sometimes need oversimplification “...that everyone in the room can read, understand and interpret the presented outcomes” (E1). But, she also clarified, “...oversimplification can be a curse but also a blessing” (E1), because if people recklessly “...believe in their results without thinking any further, [they] might get lost in a decision that is simply not functioning” (E1). Another consultant added, “I am not so sure that it is okay to blame the tools here, but rather to blame the people using these tools. The oversimplification happens a lot during the application, because the tool users are not aware of the underlying theoretical concepts” (C1). Yet, another consultant agreed and exemplified, “We mentioned the SWOT - same here, it seems so easy that people just think everyone can use it without really making sure they understand how to apply it and how to also synthesize the result” (C3). One academic explained a similar observation as with the advantages and claimed, “Yet again, the different aspects are somehow interrelated. If something is oversimplifying, then that might lead to misleading results; if something is very complex in application, then it needs to be static because you cannot run it all the time” (A1). Thus, the tools’ “...rigidity is not necessarily a bad thing, but it can be” (A1). Nonetheless, to circumvent most of these disadvantages strategists need to pay attention to “...how strategy tools should be used” (C1) to be functional in practice, which starts by going to their theoretical foundations.

Summary of Results

The participants were unsurprised with the results of the strategy tool kit. Simple tools like the SWOT are typically used as a discussion basis, since they are easy to understand and apply. Further, it was clarified that the most frequently used tools have been around and incorporated for decades, which explains why the more modern approaches like the Blue Ocean Four Action Framework are not so well known or used. Regarding the advantages of strategy tools-in-use, most participants agreed that tools first and foremost provide structure, since they enable their users to split up work and to communicate effectively. But they also support decision-making, which is crucial when working on an important topic with many different stakeholders. Nonetheless, the participants were adamant that structure should be seen as the enabler for all the other identified advantages. With regard to the disadvantages, it can be noted that oversimplification was considered the biggest problem with strategy tools-in-use. Tools are used to simplify complex issues, but they are not automatically applicable to all situations or problems. However, in some cases simplification is needed even though it raises the chances for mistakes and failure. Thus, it is crucial to understand the underlying theory in order to apply tools properly.

4.3.4 Tools used during Strategy Work

Strategic Problems and Objectives

Referring to the preceding research results, ‘positioning’ appeared to be the central strategic issue that initiates the use of strategy tools. During the focus group, participants were thus asked to explain why it is essential to approach this issue with tools. One of the executives stated, “When it comes to positioning, tools help you to have an objective view on where you are right now; what are the external factors to consider; and maybe on how the external environment changes” (E1). This means, “...you use tools for positioning to make sure that you go through everything” (E2). One of the consultants replied that “This might still be a holdover from Porter’s days, because he was all about positioning” (C2). However, positioning should still not be generalized, since “...it is very much dependent on the project” (E2) or “...the question that is on the table” (E2). This executive took a rather general perspective on the presented problems and objectives and stated, “What all these issues have in common is that they are so complex that you use a tool to structure, to ensure that you are not forgetting things, to visualize, and to help you drive the process” (E2). Once strategists have gone “...through all of that, [they] realize what the real question is” (E2). Nonetheless, based on all findings it is still difficult to express which problem or objective might truly be the main driver of strategy tool application.

Strategy Process

Based on the previous analyses, it seems evident that strategy tools are applied alongside a dedicated strategy process. The results illustrated that the majority of strategy tools are used during the analysis and formulation phase, i.e. before the strategic decision. To apprehend this outcome, the focus group members were asked to explain the reasons for that. One consultant explained why tools are mainly used before than after the strategic decision, and indicated, “If you look at executives, [...] there is a tendency in a lot of companies to look at what is going to happen in the future and what are the decisions to make, but they do not pay as much attention to the execution” (C1), which is usually “...delegated down to the line managers, since they are responsible for it” (C1). One academic agreed, “By their nature strategy tools are rather used during strategic planning, as you are trying to invent something new. In terms of the execution it is different. Here you would find other tools, that are not typically strategic” (A2). Interestingly, one of the executives added a differing viewpoint, as she claimed “...we spend an enormous amount of time with tools and efforts on the following up on the implementation of a strategy – meaning in the monitoring stage” (E2). As such, the evaluation was mostly neglected during the preceding analyses, since the number of existing strategy tools appears to be limited. But that executive also understood the stance of the consultants, “...because when [consultants] come in they are obviously hired to develop the strategy from scratch and not on the basis of a process” (E2). In the executive world, however, “...it is depending on where you sit, meaning if your work is rather tactical or strategic” (E2). Another consultant partially disagreed and claimed, “It probably depends on the business level you are looking at, but corporate executives really like big ideas” (C3), which is why he substantiated, “...tool-based strategy work is predominantly happening before the strategic decision” (C3). In contrast to this statement, one of the academics added, “During current developments, like digitalization, companies have to focus much more on the execution, but here they have to use tools that rather focus on projects and their effective implementation” (A2). However, it is true that reaching and “...making strategic decisions is the core of the executive job, and that is why the strategy tools are probably applied before there is a decision” (C1).

Post-Rationalization

Throughout the first stages of research, the majority of practitioners claimed that tools are used to reach rather than proof a decision, but it remained unsolved why post-rationalization is still happening. This question was included in the focus group to find out why some decisions often need to be proofed with the help of strategy tools. Accordingly, an academic referred to one of his past clients, “...the decision was already in his mind, but he somehow wanted justification for that” (A2). As a result, “...we tried to understand his world in the way that his decision is coming out, which was certainly a bad thing” (A2). One executive argued similarly, “We often use tools in the beginning of the process, which is indeed the point where the consultants are brought into the company to have

an external voice on a decision that was already made” (E1). At this point, the proof of decisions happens quite frequently, “...since you try to semi-objectivize your idea while relying on someone outside the company” (E1). The other executive added, “There is not a bad thing about post-rationalization because we are all human beings, but it is bad when it happens for a bad reason, which I think is the case when you bring in consultants to proof something. Normally, you should rather bring in consultants when you either do not have the capacity or the capability” (E2). The consultants confirmed that post-rationalization happens and also argued that it can be dangerous. One of them claimed, “Without a doubt, you are always trying to make your employer happy, which is why you are searching for his solution, even though this means that you have to post-rationalize” (C1). Another consultant described a situation in his career, “When it got difficult to move on, we put the words unpopular or controversial in front of the decision” (C2). Indeed, “...the decision was already made, but now we were there and got proof for it, since we applied highly sophisticated strategy tools” (C2). Relating thereto, one of the academics argued, “Yes, it happens but I think it can be problematic when you are using tools, as they rather aim to give you a path or at least guidance” (A2), in other words to reach rational decisions. Overall, post-rationalization should be treated with suspicion, as “...it could even lead you in an absolute wrong direction” (A2). One consultant therefore added, “...you have to deliver more than [a post-rationalization], because otherwise your proof turns out to be absolutely wrong” (C1).

Summary of Results

According to the focus group participants, it is indeed ‘positioning’ that often triggers the application of strategy tools, as these frameworks enable strategists to have an objective view on the current situation and to go through all necessary elements to develop a successful strategy. Yet, this cannot be generalized, since the application of tools is initially dependent on the project itself and the underlying question, wherefore it is difficult to resolve what truly initiates their usage. Regarding the strategy process, the perspectives had conflicting views, but generally agreed that most strategy tools are used during strategic planning and not for the execution. It can therefore be deduced that tools are mainly applied before the strategic decision and not afterwards. However, when asked whether tools are applied to reach rather than proof a decision the strategists remained undecided. The focus group participants confirmed that post-rationalization happens quite frequently. The major motivation for strategists is to get proof for controversial decisions, and here the results of tools can sometimes be the solution. Nonetheless, the participants also claimed that post-rationalization can be dangerous and leads to bad decisions. After all, strategy tools were primarily designed to reach rational decisions and not vice versa.

4.3.5 Effective Application of Strategy Tools

Determinants

As discussed, the effective application of strategy tools is dependent on or determined by various different aspects. Referring to the surveyed strategists, the ‘acceptance’ of tools influences their effective and successful utilization the most. For this reason, the focus group participants were asked why acceptance plays such a big role. One of the consultants described, “Acceptance is probably a prerequisite for applying tools, and if someone says the chosen tool is not really the right one, then you cannot just discuss the results that come out of it” (C1). Meaning, “If someone thinks that the tool does not make any sense because it is not asking the right questions or it does not have the right structure, then it will not be accepted” (C1). But how can acceptance be established? One of the consultants answered this question as follows: “You are creating acceptance by applying proven tools. Such tools are typically used for years and many different cases” (C3), which is how they have shown their credibility. According to the academics, it has much to do with practitioner familiarity, because “If everybody is familiar with a tool, [...] I do not have to spend much time to explain how the method works” (A2). However, this also means that if a tool takes a long time to become familiar with, it will be difficult for it to gain acceptance. All in all, “...acceptance is obviously important” (C1), but the other determinants should not be ignored. Regarding this, one of the executives emphasized, “...for me, the effective application is dependent on the communication” (E2). With improved communication “...it will be much easier to get acceptance” (E2) for tools. Alternatively, one consultant claimed that he “...would not underestimate the role of the practitioner, because they are mostly responsible for the effective application of tools” (C1). In fact, the practitioner was the factor most referred to during the interviews. Nonetheless, it can be subsumed that the acceptance of tools determines whether they will be adopted or not when applied during strategy work.

Adaptation

Another influence factor on the effective application of tools is their adaptation. During the preceding research stages, the majority of practitioners claimed to adapt tools-in-use to conduct strategy work. Therefore, the focus group members were asked why their adaptation seems to be indispensable, especially in today’s dynamic environments. In view of that, one consultant clarified, “The world is just too complex and not every client, environment or industry works in the same way - so you have to adapt!” (C3). One of the academics stated accordingly, “If you do strategic projects, then you try to think outside the box, since you do not want to do what all the others are doing. Hence, it becomes necessary to adapt tools” (A1). Another consultant was rather reluctant and claimed, “...adaptation changes the meaning of these theoretical frameworks” (C1), which “...could be a problem for the outcome of the tools, but it is certainly also a problem if you do not adapt them” (C1). However, without adaptation, “...you might get totally misleading results because you are looking at frameworks that have been developed during much less dynamic times” (C1). Again, this emphasizes

that the dynamic environment seems to be a reason for adjustments. The executives had a conflicting view on adaptation. One of them argued, “I would rather apply an old-fashioned tool that forces me to look upon entry barriers etc. instead of missing things” (E2). This happens “...when I have adjusted a tool to an extent that it suits all new things and trends” (E2). For that reason, the executive was not convinced that tools need to be adapted to achieve the best possible outcome. A solution to this problem was provided by a consultant: “When we apply tools, we need to look at their applicability to different types of economic or political situations, but also the type of the organization plays a role” (C2). After that, strategists need to realize that “...one tool by itself will not be effective, because strategy is way too complex to be captured by just one tool” (C2). He therefore recommended, that strategists should “...use them in combination, as Porter, for example, did overlook a lot of important things” (C2). Overall, it can be stated that adaptation is quite common during strategy work, as many tools have theoretical boundaries that limit their applicability in today’s business landscapes.

Future Development

As identified in the questionnaire analysis, most strategists were certain that strategy tools will have value in the future. However, to develop and adjust them, practitioners should focus on increasing their flexibility. The focus group participants were thus asked why tools should be more flexible. They responded that, above all, tools need to be more flexible because “...we are all confronted with very fast moving environments and they will probably even change faster in the future” (C3). The more important question was also asked: how can tools be more flexible? Relating thereto, one consultant expounded, “The way to advance their flexibility is pretty clear to me, as you are just replacing old concepts in these tools with new concepts” (C2). Thus, “...tools constantly need to be modified and adjusted to the situation, which will result in more flexibility” (C2). One of the academics targeted a different aspect and claimed that strategists and organizations “...need to find tools where it is possible to incorporate as much of the available data as possible. Once you include more or different data than before, then you could say that you have probably developed a different or let us say an updated tool” (A2). Consequently, it appears that it will not be possible to increase their flexibility without some form of alteration. But an even more important question is, “Who is allowed to modify a tool and to what extend?” (C1). The practitioners themselves can influence their flexibility the most, which is why “...the question is whether the tool needs to be more flexible or the people working on the result of it (E1).” The other executive agreed on this notion and claimed, “...it is the user that has to be flexible, because if I go into very new things and I want to measure something that did not exist 10 years ago, I may need a new tool or I may need to adapt one” (E2). However, “Simply adapting without doing all the legwork that is necessary to prove it can be very misleading” (C1). For that reason, “It is not only about making a tool flexible, but making sure that everyone involved understands what the limitations and boundaries of these approaches are” (C1).

Overall, it can be noted that strategists themselves need to find ways to become more flexible while applying these frameworks. In the end, "...flexibility comes in with the desires of the applicant and his/her willingness to adjust the chosen tool in a reasonable way" (A2).

Summary of Results

The focus group participants generally confirmed that 'acceptance' influences the effective application of tools the most. During strategy work, acceptance should be viewed as the prerequisite for their usage, which can most easily be established with tools that have already shown their practical credibility. However, the effective application of tools is also dependent on clear 'communication', which in turn means that the 'practitioner' plays a central role. 'Adaptation' was yet another important influence factor in effective application. As part of the focus group, most participants agreed that today's environment is just too complex for most of the existing strategy tools, which is why they need to be adapted. However, strategists also need to be aware that every adaptation might change the theoretical foundation of such tools. The focus group participants agreed that tools need to be more flexible to function in the future. Further, when revisiting the discussion on adaptation and the need to modify and adjust tools to the respective situation in the future, focus group participants shared that one way to accomplish that is to incorporate more of the available data. However, it is first and foremost the practitioner that needs to be more flexible to fully exploit the possibilities of such tools.

4.4 Concluding Assessment of Research Results

The first research stage, which followed the principals of the ground theory method, supported the theory evolvement. Meaning, by constantly comparing the collected data from the semi-structured interviews it was possible to develop core categories and themes, which were crucial to answer the formulated research questions and to derive hypotheses for the subsequent questionnaire. For example, under the core category 'usage' the theme 'dependence' emerged, which described the determinants (i.e. practitioner, acceptance, context-situation, and content) that influence the effective application of strategy tools.

The second research stage was structured on the basis of the themes, categories and hypotheses that emerged as part of the interview analysis. Based on the quantitative results, it was possible to identify patterns and similarities in the collected data, and to evaluate the formulated hypotheses. For example, the questionnaire confirmed that strategy tools are used as part of dedicated process, which remained questionable after the interview analysis. In this regard, it was also corroborated that tools are most frequently applied during the analysis and formulation stage, which indicated that they are typically used before the strategic decision rather than afterwards.

The third and last research stage represented the participant validation of the previous research results. As such, the participants of the focus group were confronted with a first draft of the research

results to provide conclusive insights to answer the research questions and derive theoretical and practical implications. For example, the temporal integration of strategy tools was discussed again to assess the occurrence of post-rationalization. Interestingly, not only was it confirmed that post-rationalization happens, but also why it happens in practice.

Overall, the sequential order of the research stages has increased the validity of the research results. The associated triangulation should be regarded as decisive factor, since it enabled to generalize parts of the gathered findings. Especially the last stage has specified most of the earlier findings. Based on all gathered results, the research discussion is conducted in chapter 5 to critically discuss and compare the research results with those of the existing literature.

5 Research Discussion

This chapter discusses the research results in relation to the reviewed literature and conclusively answers the research questions as well as sub-questions. The section structure is based on the categories and themes that emerged as part of the analysis. Section 5.1 reiterates the terminologies and discusses them with the extant literature as well as the qualitative research results. Its aim is to answer the theory-related research question and sub-questions. All subsequent sections deal with the practice-related research question and its sub-questions to finally evaluate the utilization of strategy tools. Therefore, section 5.2 first discusses the practice lens by looking at the strategy toolkit as well as the advantages and disadvantages of tools-in-use. After that, the temporal integration of strategy tools is discussed again in section 5.3. Section 5.4 conclusively discusses the role of strategy tools to determine what their effectiveness is dependent on, why adaptation is common and necessary, and what role they play in the future.

5.1 Terminologies and Theoretical Limitations

This section provides conclusive answers to research sub-question 1.1: ‘What is meant by the terms strategizing and strategy-as-practice, and what is a strategy tool?’ and sub-question 1.2, ‘What are the limitations of current strategy-as-practice research?’ At first, it compares the meanings of the three terms identified in the literature with those suggested by the surveyed practitioners. Based on all theory-related findings, the section concludes with a critical discussion of strategy-as-practice research to clarify its limitations.

Strategizing

According to the literature, strategizing means to devise a strategy or different strategies (Johnson et al., 2003). The term refers to practical strategy work and comprises all practices and ongoing processes through which strategies are designed, realized, transformed and executed (Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Melin et al., 1999). The interviewed strategists from all perspectives confirmed this notion, since they view strategizing as the practical foundation of their work. For them, it reflects the daily routines, activities, and practices that need to be incorporated while solving strategic tasks and issues. The SasP literature refers to these routines as well and describes them as micro-level activities that enable the utilization of informal and formal means (Maitlis and Lawrence, 2003; Whittington, 1996).

The surveyed practitioners noted that strategy tools are part of these routines, which is why they are viewed as the hands-on approaches of strategy making. Thus, strategizing is the process that brings strategy into action. It stands for the real doing of strategy, which stimulates strategic thinking in the everyday practices of everyone involved. Overall, the research findings (see Table 6: Strategizing

References of Practitioners) were in line with the SasP literature, although it was possible to identify additional practical insights that have not been mentioned in literature so far.

Strategy-as-Practice

The literature views strategy-as-practice as a distinctive research approach to investigate strategy work and more particularly strategic praxis, practices and practitioners that characterize organizational strategy and strategizing (Golsorkhi et al., 2015, Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2003; Whittington, 1996). It helps to examine how strategists interact with the social and physical features of strategy in their daily practice (Paroutis et al., 2016).

The surveyed practitioners had a similar notion and stated that SasP delivers an alternative to mainstream strategy research, because it facilitates research on how strategy work is actually done and organized (see Table 7: Strategy-as-Practice References of Practitioners). To achieve this, they consider it necessary to go back to the initial idea of strategy work in companies, which involves looking at both theory and practice. Ultimately, it supports strategists to make sense of their everyday practices allowing them to understand what they do and why they do it. Nonetheless, the surveyed practitioners were certain that this requires more than a practical understanding, hence theoretical knowledge and practical experience should always go hand in hand. This is in line with the stance of Golsorkhi et al. (2015), who clarify that practice is central to the SasP approach, precisely because it attempts to examine the everyday issues of the strategists directly involved. For that reason, the SasP approach aims to advance the theoretical understanding of all different types of strategists, which eventually qualifies them to conduct strategy work with more practical relevance (Golsorkhi et al., 2015).

Strategy Tools

Strategy tools are defined as new or alternative forms of practice to solve managerial problems (Moisander and Stenfors, 2009). In more general terms, they can be problem solvers, information generators, interaction initiators or strategizing engineers (Chesley and Wenger, 1999; Wright et al., 2013; Vuorinen et al., 2018). The term tool can stand for frameworks, concepts, models, or methods (Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014), which expresses its ambiguity. On that basis, Paroutis et al. (2015) defined strategy tools as the concepts, models and methods used by strategist to conduct strategy work.

The surveyed practitioners in this research defined strategy tools as structured processes, procedures or approaches to reach more complex questions that need to be raised to solve strategic issues in a systematic way (see Table 8: Strategy Tool References of Practitioners). Tools provide a structure and therefore enable practitioners to reach valuable and unforeseen insights. However, they cannot solve problems, but rather support strategists to deal with complex tasks at all different stages of the strategy process. Indeed, the notion of the practitioners was quite similar to the stance in the literature,

but they also emphasized that tools usually take part during the entire strategy process, which is frequently ignored as most strategists solely employ tools for planning purposes.

As to the capabilities of tools, SasP researchers are more distinct. The main purpose of strategy tools is to guide strategy work and thus enable strategists to undertake better and more informed decisions (Wright et al., 2013). With tools strategists can focus on key issues and priorities, stimulate discussion, structure analyses, and guide strategizing activities (Jarrat and Stiles, 2010; Gunn and Williams, 2007; Mintzberg et al., 1998). The practitioners confirmed this, as tools are a means to visualize, communicate and structure strategic decision-making.

Limitations of Strategy-as-Practice Research

Based on the theory-related findings, it has been possible to identify deficits and limitations of SasP research. When looking at the recent literature, the biggest weakness is still the practice perspective, as most research projects fail to incorporate true practitioners or neglect important groups while researching in the field (e.g. Rigby and Bilodeau, 2017; Tassabehji and Isherwood, 2014; Wright et al., 2013). Another shortcoming is the failure to incorporate typical strategy processes, such as reviews, strategy meetings or the execution, since most researchers rather focus on general strategizing activities (e.g. Stenfors and Tanner, 2007). Yet another problem is the transferability of the findings into practice. Many studies do provide recommendations for business academics and practitioners but fail to create real inferences that could enhance or improve the work of strategizing (e.g. Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014; Vuorinen et al., 2018).

Related to these limitations, the focus group practitioners requested that SasP research becomes a more holistic approach that examines the entire strategy process with all its facets (see Appendix R: Focus Group Transcript). Thus, all related research should be more concerned with the basic level of strategy work (e.g. reviews, meetings, execution etc.) instead of focusing on the influence of top-management decisions. A few researchers have started to react to this issue by concentrating on specific attributes of strategy tools in particular situations (e.g. Cheng and Havenvid, 2017; Paroutis et al., 2015). Further, the practitioners suggested that the field opens up to tools and approaches from other areas, since they are increasingly integrated in modern strategy work. Vuorinen et al. (2018) have considered that issue in recent research and draw attention to the fact that ever more disciplines regard themselves as strategic, which is why it will be interesting to see how strategy tools can be distinguished from other tools, e.g. software applications, marketing frameworks, or operative management tools, in the future.

5.2 Practice Lens

The previous chapter presented analysis regarding which strategy tools strategists know and most commonly use during strategy work (see Figure 8: Strategy Toolkit – Know/Use (Interview Stage) and Figure 30: Strategy Toolkit – Know/Use (Questionnaire Stage)). The analysis resulted in a

revised version of the strategy toolkit, which was initially developed by the AIM research group associated with Jarzabkowski in 2009. This section compares the AIM project with the results of this research to provide a more explicit answer to research sub-question 2.1: ‘Which strategy tools do strategists use for their strategy work?’ Subsequently, the advantages and disadvantages of strategy tools-in-use are conclusively discussed to outline why strategists should consider using or avoiding them in practice. The research findings are therefore juxtaposed with the extant literature to provide a final answer to research sub-questions 2.2: ‘Why do strategists use strategy tools to conduct their strategy work?’

Strategy Toolkit

This research, like other SasP research projects (Clark, 1997; Jarzabkowski et al., 2009, 2010; Rigby and Bilodeau, 2017; Stenfors, 2007; Tassabehji and Isherwood, 2014; Wright et al., 2013), aimed to identify which strategy tools are most commonly used by strategists. Figure 54 outlines the analysis results and compares it to results from the study of the AIM research group (2009).

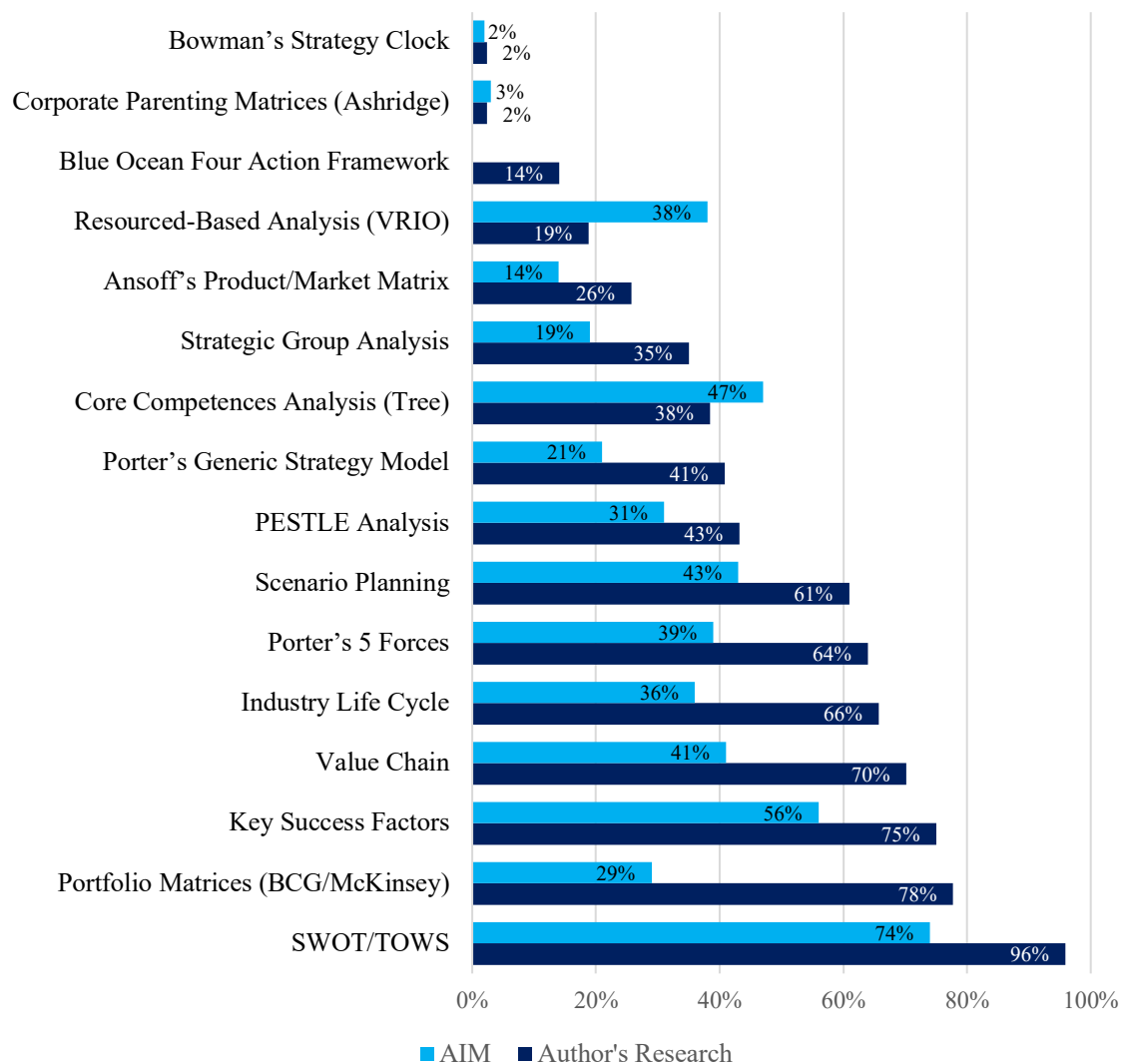


Figure 54: Strategy Toolkit – Tools Used – Author's Research/AIM (Jarzabkowski et al., 2009)

There are slight differences between the two sets of results. The top three strategy tools-in-use differ, since the Core Competence Analysis was used much less by the participants in this research than those surveyed as part of AIM, and in contrast the Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey) were used significantly more. Nonetheless, SWOT/TOWS as well as the Key Success Factors were listed under the top three of both studies. Interestingly, it should be noted that the Resourced-Based Analysis (VRIO) received much more attention in the AIM study. The Resourced-Based Analysis (VRIO) as well as the Core Competence Analysis are internal analysis tools often employed by executives. Since the sample of participants for the AIM study comprised only executives (i.e. business school alumni from 12 UK business schools), some explanation can be given as to why the level of use was higher for AIM participants compared to those in this research who were drawn from a broader range of strategists. In addition, it was found that strategists apply up to eight strategy tools on average (see Table 12: Strategy Toolkit – Perspectives Know/Used – (Questionnaire Stage)). This result is indeed comparable to the findings of the AIM research group, since they found that “...managers use between one and nine tools” (Jarzabkowski et al., 2009, p. 10). Overall, it can be stated that there are considerable differences in the levels of use when the studies are directly compared: for example, for this research the average level of use was 45% and for the AIM study 33%.

Following the approach of Jarzabkowski et al. (2009), a revised core toolkit can be formed to show which tools strategists most commonly rely on while conducting strategy work. Table 26 compares both studies to illustrate the differences.

Author's Research (2019)	AIM (2009)
SWOT/TOWS	SWOT/TOWS
Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey)	Key Success Factors
Key Success Factors	Core Competences Analysis (Tree)
Value Chain	Scenario Planning
Industry Life Cycle	Value Chain
Porter's Five Forces	Porter's Five Forces
Scenario Planning	Resourced-Based Analysis (VRIO)
PESTLE Analysis	Industry Life Cycle
Porter's Generic Strategy Model	PESTLE Analysis
Core Competences Analysis (Tree)	Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey)

Table 26: Core Toolkit – Author's Research vs. AIM (Jarzabkowski et al., 2009)

It should be noted, however, that it is not imperative to apply these core tools, neither should strategists limit their toolkit to them. In other words, these results only express that these strategy tools are most commonly applied by practitioners when conducting strategic tasks (Jarzabkowski et al., 2009).

Advantages and Disadvantages of Strategy Tools-in-Use

Strategy tools-in-use bring various advantages to organizations and the practitioners that apply them. Generally, they are able to support individual- and collective organizational learning, enhance the strategy process and improve the ability to understand complex problems from various perspectives (Moisander and Stenfors, 2009). As such, these tools can focus on key issues and priorities, provide significant dimensions for interrogation, offer clear structures for analysis, build guidelines for strategizing activities, support and direct decision-making, and encourage dialogues and idea exchange (Aram and Salipante, 2003; Chesley and Wenger, 1999; Grant, 2013; Gunn and Williams, 2007; Hodgkinson and Wright, 2002; Jarrat and Stiles, 2010; Spee and Jarzabkowski, 2009; Wright et al., 2013). Paroutis et al. (2016) summarize that tools help to deal with uncertainty, guide managerial decision-making, and provide a convincing medium to communicate strategic change. However, literature does not provide enough guidance to practitioners, as it remains unclear which advantages are central while applying tools in practice. Thus, this research tried to identify the most impelling advantages and express what strategists can expect from using strategy tools.

During this research, the surveyed practitioners referred to six typical advantages of strategy tools-in-use (see Appendix G: Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Advantages of Tool Usage, and Table 27), which were quite similar to the ones that previous research has found. The most prominent advantage appeared to be that strategy tools provide structure, because they help to split up work, create work packages, and enable synthesis. Another major advantage for the practitioners has been decision-making, as tools facilitate supposedly complex decisions. Interestingly, the focus group participants claimed that all identified advantages can be reconnected to structure, as structure reduces complexity, helps to visualize, and enables the production of the necessary results (see Appendix R: Focus Group Transcript). SasP literature has recognized the structuring capability of strategy tools but has not yet paid further attention to it. Meaning, previous research rather concentrated on their visualizing and communicative powers, instead of focusing on the centrality of structure.

However, relying on strategy tools also comes with certain disadvantages that need to be discussed in more detail. For example, tools are used to analyze the competitive situation of an organization, but mostly rely on easily definable and stable measures from the past (Webb, 2014). The future is mostly ignored, as tools presume constant industry boundaries (Jacobides, 2010). But precisely these boundaries no longer exist in some industries today, which can be seen in the mobility (e.g. Uber, Lime, or Liliun) and hospitality industry (e.g. Airbnb or Foodora), for example. The focus is on satisfying customer needs for e.g. transportation, although it is less important to the customer how this need is met (Atluri et al., 2017). In this context, McGrath (2013) no longer speaks of industries but of market arenas. Moreover, little consideration is given to today's extremely complex environment, since tools draw on static pictures and analyze environments based on narrow

dimensions (Jacobides, 2010; Jarrat and Stiles, 2010). Hence, applying tools can be misleading (Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2006; Mintzberg, 1990; Mintzberg et al., 1998), as they are no longer able to portray reality. Further, they occasionally create thinking bias, which causes prioritized decisions and a higher failure rate (Calori, 1998). Due to this great number of disadvantages, many critics claim that the importance of strategy tools-in-use is today progressively more limited (Burt et al., 2006; Levy, 2000; Pickton and Wright, 1998; Jacobides, 2010).

The surveyed practitioners of this research referred to five disadvantages they viewed as problematic for practice (see Appendix H: Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Disadvantages of Tool Usage, and Table 27 below). The most problematic disadvantage appeared to be the inherent oversimplification of strategy tools, as they reduce complex problems to a very basic level. One of the focus group participants explained that it is the user that causes oversimplification, because many users are not aware of the underlying theoretical concepts (see Appendix R: Focus Group Transcript). Another core issue for the practitioners is their static nature, since tools like Porter’s Five Forces still assume constant industry boundaries, no longer relevant to contemporary situations. Once again, the practitioners found that oversimplification plays a decisive role, since the other disadvantages are usually a direct consequence of it. Meaning, oversimplification leads to static dimensions, misleading results, and prioritized decisions. All in all, the disadvantages were congruent with those mentioned in the literature, but similar to the advantages, previous research has failed to guide strategists in order to circumvent these disadvantages.

Advantages of Tools-in-Use	Disadvantages of Tools-in-Use
Provide structure	Oversimplify issues
Support decision-making	Static nature
Reduce complexity	Misleading results
Help to visualize	Complex application
Produce results	Prioritize Decisions
Enable communication	

Table 27: Advantages and Disadvantages of Tools-in-Use (based on Table 13 and 14)

5.3 Temporal Integration

This section discusses the temporal integration of strategy tools-in-use on the basis of the research results and the reviewed literature to conclusively answer research sub-question 2.3: ‘When do strategists use strategy tools?’ At first, the cause for tool usage is discussed in relation to the established opinion in the literature. Subsequently, if and when tools are integrated as part of a dedicated strategy process is explored. This discussion helps to understand whether tools are applied before or after the strategic decision has been made. Relating thereto, the post-rationalization problem is further discussed to clarify its existence and to explain when it typically occurs in the

strategy process. Yet again, the related research results are discussed in conjunction with evidence from the existing literature to conclusively assess this phenomenon.

Application Causes

According to the literature, strategy tool use is caused by certain strategic problems, objectives or uncertainties (Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014; Kaplan and Jarzabkowski, 2006; Knott, 2006, 2008; Paroutis et al., 2016). For that reason, practitioners apply tools because they are known to be useful while analyzing unknown situations and to communicate coherent strategic decisions (Cummings and Angwin, 2004; Hodari, 2009). All tool developers had certain strategic problems and objectives as prerequisites in mind, but in practice tool application is commonly not based on those preformulated foundations (Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014). Nevertheless, the literature demonstrates that researchers still struggle to define the actual causes for the application of strategy tools, hence the inclusion of that topic in this research.

Based on the semi-structured interview results it was possible to identify several reasons as well as problems and objectives triggering the application of strategy tools (see Appendix I: Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Strategic Problems – Objectives). First and foremost, the surveyed practitioners agreed that the main reason to apply tools is to approach strategic problems and objectives systematically. In this context, it can be deduced that the problems and objectives that mostly initiate their usage are positioning, growth, and changing environments. The research undertaken shows that positioning is one of the most typical initiators for the application of strategy tools, since tools are able to create an objective view of an organization's current position while considering all external and internal environmental factors (see Table 15: Strategic Problems and Objectives initiating Strategy Tool Use). In other words, tools are used for strategic positioning, as they ensure that strategists analyze all influencing factors (see Appendix R: Focus Group Transcript). However, positioning is not the sole cause for the application of strategy tools because in practice their integration is very much dependent on the project or question with which an organization is confronted. One particular practitioner therefore expounded that tools are applied once problems and objectives are too complex to be solved without a structured process. Thus, it is in no way trivial to determine which strategic problems and objectives actually cause the application of strategy tools.

Integration during the Strategy Process

The strategy process usually consists of two building blocks, namely planning and execution. Strategic planning involves an analysis of the external and internal environment as well as a formulation stage to specify an organization's statements, objectives and targets (Kaplan and Norton, 2008). The execution, in contrast, involves implementation as well as evaluation and control. Implementation translates the strategy into operational actions and thus defines objectives, measures and initiatives (Kaplan and Norton, 2008). The evaluation and control stage acts as a review of the entire strategy, while including cost and profitability reports, process analyses, and the monitoring

of external market factors (Banker et al., 1996; O'Higgins and Weigel, 1999; Treacy and Sims, 2004; Vuorinen, 2018). With regard to strategy tools, Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) noted that they are extensively used as part of organizational strategy processes. In fact, they have the power to influence the content as well as the process of strategy work (Vuorinen et al., 2018). This is hardly surprising, as most strategy tools were developed for specific process stages. However, in practice they are used for different and broader purposes than for which they were originally designed (Spee and Jarzabkowski, 2009; Vuorinen et al., 2018). For that reason, this research examined whether strategy tools are applied during a dedicated process and, if so, when.

Two thirds (approximately 70%) of the surveyed practitioners confirmed that tools are applied as part of a dedicated process (see Figure 37: Tools used during a dedicated Strategy Process). Within this process, tools are mainly used during strategic planning; as part of the analysis or formulation stage (see Appendix J: Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Stages of Strategy Process, and Table 16: Tools used during different Phases of the Strategy Process – Perspectives). On average, the questionnaire participants used up to nine strategy tools before the strategic decision and only up to three thereafter (see Table 17: Tools used before or after the Strategic Decision - Perspectives). It can therefore be postulated that tools are typically used before rather than after the strategic decision has been made. Based on these results, the focus group participants were asked to offer explanation for that (see Appendix R: Focus Group Transcript). Most practitioners confirmed that tools by their nature are used during strategic planning, as organizations are trying to develop a new or unique strategy. It is not surprising that the execution is repeatedly neglected or even delegated to lower management, since they are often held responsible for the operative success of a newly developed strategy. However, participants also argued that this approach should be reconsidered, because in times of digitization execution has become much more important and requires tools that are not necessarily strategic. The most recent SasP article by Vuorinen et al. (2018) confirms these results, although the power of strategic planning has increasingly been questioned in the literature. The authors note that even newly developed strategy tools focus on analysis and formulation and continue to neglect execution. Thus, they recommend that tool developers find ways to emphasize execution, and in ways that exploit the opportunities of the digital transformation.

Post-Rationalization

In the literature, strategy tools are regarded as 'technologies of rationality' (March, 2006), which implies that practitioners consider them as a rational process of strategic decision-making (Cabantous and Gond, 2011; Jarratt and Stiles, 2010; Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014). Tools provide a 'procedural rationality' (Simon, 1978) and enable practitioners to undertake rational choices regardless of their limited cognitive powers (Cabantous and Gond, 2011). Nevertheless, March (2006) and others (e.g. Mintzberg, 1994, 2004) question the reliability of such 'technologies of rationality' as inadequate justification and interpretation for wide-ranging strategic choices.

Especially in times of great uncertainty, such as rapidly advancing digitization, strategy tools are less reliable because situations are too complex, preferences unclear, or inner politics paralyze the process (March, 2006). Due to their proclaimed rationality, practitioners sometimes even use them as rhetorical elements to justify their standpoint and to move forward with a questionable decision. In other words, tools are used to proof a decision or as deliberate distortion, what typically leads to poor strategic results (Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014). As such, this phenomenon is described as post-rationalization, and has been substantially discussed in this research. This research therefore responds to the calls in research to explore whether tools are applied to reach rational instead of post-rational answers to issues already known (Jacobides, 2010; March, 2006; Paroutis et al., 2016).

Throughout the research stages, the surveyed practitioners were undecided on the specifics of post-rationalization, but agreed that it exists (see Appendix K: Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Rationalization). The questionnaire results confirmed this, as practitioners use tools to reach rather than proof a decision (see Table 18: Reaching or Proofing a Decision with Strategy Tools). However, the fact that the research demonstrated that post-rationalization exists meant that further clarification was necessary, which is why the phenomenon was critically discussed during the focus group session (see Appendix R: Focus Group Transcript). All practitioners in that group agreed that post-rationalization typically happens in strategic projects to give more objectivity to a decision. Interestingly, not all practitioners regarded post-rationalization as necessarily bad, but most argued that it can be dangerous when instrumentalized for the justification of controversial decisions. This means, post-rationalization should be handled with prudence, as it can easily lead to catastrophic or at least biased decisions.

5.4 Role and Importance

In this last section, the practical role of strategy tools is conclusively discussed to answer research sub-question 2.4: ‘How do strategists evaluate the role of strategy tools?’ For this purpose, the results of all analysis stages are aggregated and compared to the existing positions in the literature. First, the determinants for the successful application of strategy tools are discussed. Part of these determinants is their adaptation, considered by researchers as one of the critical success factors. Thus, why tool adaptation is necessary in the majority of cases is also discussed. Afterwards, the general influence of strategy tools is discussed and then evaluated on the basis of the research results. In addition, the effectiveness of strategy tools-in-use is conclusively deliberated. Lastly, the future development of strategy tools is discussed to clarify whether they will remain relevant in the future and how they should change to maintain their functionality.

Determinants

All practitioners noted that the effective application of tools is mostly dependent on the surrounding determinants. In this regard, the literature mainly focuses on the strategic problem or context

organizations are confronted with (e.g. Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014; Knott, 2006). Another determinant is the strategist him- or herself and their interpretations, since they tend to apply the tools they rely on in creative, unpredictable, and sometimes even inappropriate ways (Faraj and Azad, 2012; Jarzabkowski and Pinch, 2014; Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014).

In comparison to the literature, the practitioners referred to various other determinants that influence the effectiveness of tools (see Appendix L: Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Dependence). The ‘practitioner’ was indeed central for all participants, whilst the ‘acceptance’ of tools was regarded as another major factor (see Table 19: Determinants of Effective Application). Generally, strategists have to understand the theory behind and the practice of applying strategy tools, but without organization-wide acceptance it will be difficult to establish a tool-based strategy process. Acceptance should therefore be viewed as the prerequisite for tools-in-use. That can be established with clear communication and proven tools that have already shown their credibility (see Appendix R: Focus Group Transcript). But this means that organizations need to start with simple tools to create that necessary acceptance. The ‘context-situation’ is still important, but not decisive until the right tools have to be selected. The required ‘content’ to effectively apply tools was also rated as influential but was only of subordinate importance during the course of the other research phases.

Adaptation

Adaptation has been identified as yet another important determinant for the effective application of strategy tools. In this regard, Jarzabkowski and Wilson (2006, p. 360) argue that the complexity of tool utilization goes beyond “...direct application, suggesting that while these artifacts might have a theoretical purpose or intent for which they were developed, they may be appropriated and adapted by actors for particular and theoretically unanticipated purposes and outcomes”. Similarly, Lozeau et al. (2002) explain that practitioners increasingly reinterpret the tools-in-use as reaction to the complex scenarios they are confronted with. Meaning, strategy tools are altered and adapted to be suitable for particular problems, situations, or objectives, which literature defines as bricolage (de Certeau, 1984; Levi-Strauss, 1996; Paroutis et al., 2016). The phenomenon describes the practical use of theoretical frameworks in creative, altered, and adapted ways that break with their theoretical origins (Baker et al., 2003; de Certeau, 1984; Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2006). Nonetheless, strategists should always bear in mind that adaptations might violate the intended purpose of a tool, which could possibly lead to far-reaching mistakes that affect an entire organization (Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014). Hence, strategists should rather develop their own frameworks and methodologies for specific tasks, instead of lending or bastardizing techniques from other disciplines (Lozeau et al., 2002).

The surveyed practitioners widely confirmed the adaptation of tools during strategy work (88% of the questionnaire participants), but also argued that it is not expedient in every case (see Appendix M: Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Adaptation, and Figure 44: Adaptation of Strategy

Tools). Some indicated that they have to be adapted to specific contexts, because each industry and each organization is different, wherefore their dimensions or parameters should be altered. However, they agreed that strategists should be aware of their initial purpose before adapting them, as changing them might lead to a continuous chain of errors. They further claimed that the adaptation of traditional tools should be targeted first, since they have various commonly known theoretical limitations. This notion is congruent with the literature, since adapting traditional tools (e.g. SWOT, Porter's Five Forces, PESTLE, etc.) is considered to be much easier than developing a new tool that requires significant learning before it can function in practice (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007, Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2006). Yet, the most likely reason for the adaptation of tools is the current dynamic environment in which organizations operate (see Table 20: Reasons for Adaptation). In this regard, the focus group participants referred to the complexity of today's markets, e.g. ecosystems shift classic market boundaries, which is why strategists have to adapt strategy tools to avoid totally misleading results (see Appendix R: Focus Group Transcript). Nonetheless, adaptation changes the theoretical foundation of such tools and possibly their entire meaning and expected outcome. Relating thereto, McCabe and Narayanan (1991) had already discovered in the peak phase of strategy tools that even if they are adapted beyond recognition, strategists continue to employ them. However, practitioners need to be aware of these risks and thus look at the general applicability of tools first. Once evaluated, it might be more constructive to combine certain elements of tools, instead of changing dimensions, variables or important indicators.

Influence

Critics claim that the influence of strategy tools is diminishing (Burt et al., 2006; Levy, 2000; Pickton and Wright, 1998; Jacobides, 2010). Others, in turn, defend their role during strategizing because they consider that strategists still need systematic approaches and capabilities to conduct strategy work (Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2006; Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2004; Paroutis et al., 2016). Vuorinen et al. (2018) in particular, stated that although strategy tools are largely considered as important their practical role and influence is not sufficiently researched with true practice examples, i.e. user experiences. This research addresses this issue and sought the opinions of practicing strategists.

Approximately 80% claimed that tools do have an influence on strategy work (see Figure 46: Tool Influence on Strategy Work). Nonetheless, most of them critically evaluated their role, as their influence is always dependent on a number of determinants. Tools themselves have no real impact, since they are not able to solve strategic problems when used in isolation. However, when applied in the right situation, by the right person, in a proper way, the impact can be very high. It is noteworthy that the 'impact' and 'meaning' of strategy tools received the highest ratings in the questionnaire, as tools are known to trigger actions and typically have a convincing power when properly applied (see Table 21: Influence Indicators of Strategy Tools). After reviewing all research results it can be noted

that tools have the power to positively influence strategy work, but they are strongly dependent on the experience, knowledge, and expectations of their respective users.

Efficiency and Effectiveness

Strategists repeatedly resort to strategy tools to deal with uncertainty in their particular environment. With the help of these tools practitioners aim to undertake more profound and elaborate decisions, which ultimately leads to more effective strategy work (Davenport et al., 2010; Fleisher and Bensoussan, 2007; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Wright et al., 2013). However, it should be noted that strategy tools are critical and cognitively demanding elements for practitioners (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Whittington, 1996, 2007), hence they require proper application to unfold their strength as convincing elements of systematic strategy work (Chesley and Wenger, 1999; Langley, 1989; Wright et al., 2013). Similar to other research in the field, this research aimed to understand how efficient and effective tools are and ascertain what promotes or impedes their performance (Antonacopoulou, 2010; Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011; Wright et al., 2013).

Generally, the surveyed practitioners agreed that tools can be efficient as well as effective when appropriately applied in practice (see Appendix O: Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Efficiency – Effectiveness). This means, however, that it is difficult to achieve the desired results without utilization experience. Limited experience is probably also the reason why practitioners frequently apply simple rather than complex tools. Notably, most of these simple tools, i.e. SWOT/TOWS, Porter's Five Forces, KSF, Scenario Planning (exception), Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey), and Blue Ocean Four Action Framework, were rated in the questionnaire as most efficient (see Table 22: Efficiency Ratings of Strategy Tools). In comparison, the most effective tools were Blue Ocean Four Action Framework, Scenario Planning, KSF, SWOT/TOWS, and PESTLE Analysis (see Table 23: Effectiveness Ratings of Strategy Tools). These results imply that the efficiency of tools seems to have an effect on their effectiveness (see Figure 50: Comparison of Efficiency and Effectiveness).

Future Development

For years, researchers and practitioners have been questioning the role of strategy tools in practice and claim that their usability is declining. In the future, it is disputable whether they will continue to deliver added value (Burt et al., 2006; Jacobides, 2010; Levy, 2000; Pickton and Wright, 1998). However, there are also a number of advocates in the theoretical and practical world who argue that strategy tools will persist, as practitioners need methods, tools, and techniques they can rely on when dealing with complex strategic problems (Nichols and Paroutis, 2008; Paroutis et al., 2016). Strategic management research thus remains indecisive about the future of strategy tools but recommends that prospective tool developers should better specify the underlying assumptions of their models (Durand et al., 2017; Vuorinen et al., 2018). Considering the fast pace of change and digitization in

the competitive landscapes, it is crucial to understand what role strategy tools will play in the years to come.

All surveyed participants agreed that strategy tools will persist and have value in the future (see Appendix P: Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Future Development, and Figures 51: Future Existence of Strategy Tools, and 52: Future Value of Strategy Tools). They partially confirmed the literature assumptions mentioned above, but mostly concentrated on how tools should develop or change to keep their functionality. The questionnaire participants rated two factors with a high priority, namely flexibility and adaptation (see Table 24: Future Development of Strategy Tools). Firstly, tools should be more flexible so that they can be adopted for different situations and problems. In other words, they need to become more dynamic, agile or lean to remain applicable in the modern world. However, it was questioned during the focus group whether the tools or the practitioners applying them should become more flexible (see Appendix R: Focus Group Transcript). Secondly, existing strategy tools commonly known to practitioners should be adapted to the dynamic environment organizations currently face. As a result, they might be labelled another name, or simply become upgraded, but the underlying theory should remain. Once practitioners learn to effectively modify and adjust them without losing their initial purpose, they will automatically become more flexible. A third factor, content, was also considered a priority by the participants and received a medium priority in the questionnaire. Specifically, tools should support and thus open up to more content. The static structures upon which tools are built currently limits the content that can be implemented. In the future, content, or different types of data, will play a more decisive role, which should ultimately enable strategists to enhance their decision-making. Increased data availability has the power to support and speed up this process. Relating thereto, Bradley and Dawson (2013) stated in an interview on the ‘The Art of Strategy’ that large amounts of data can be used to analytically substantiate strategic contexts and thus question traditional ways of thinking, which changes the way strategy tools can be applied in practice (Bradley et al., 2018). On this basis, it will be interesting to see whether the traditional strategy tools can adapt to the digital world and continue to add value.

The research discussion was a substantial step to conclusively answer the research questions posed. By comparing the extant literature with the research findings, it was possible to identify similarities but also differences and advancements. Based on the research discussion, the following chapter summarizes all research results and provides final answers for the research questions and sub-questions provided.

6 Conclusions and Recommendations

This final chapter draws conclusions from the research findings and relates them to the defined aims and objectives. As a first step, section 6.1 provides a brief summary of the entire research. Afterwards, section 6.2 outlines the original contribution to knowledge by focusing on the key findings and their implications. Section 6.3 specifies the final answers to all research questions as well as sub-questions and explains how the research aims were met on the basis of the empirical findings. The research limitations are outlined in Section 6.4, with a focus on the methodological complexity of the mixed method research design. Section 6.5 concludes the chapter by providing recommendations for all investigated practitioner perspectives and future research in the field.

6.1 Summary of Research

This research has investigated the application of strategy tools in practice by focusing on the practitioners most commonly associated with their use. The topic of strategy tools- or techniques-in-use directly falls into the research agenda of the strategy-as-practice field (Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014; Orlikowski, 2000; Whittington, 2010). Today, almost every multinational organization applies strategy tools to support and guide the development of competitive strategies. Prior to this research, the most significant strategy tools in literature were the SWOT Analysis, Porter's Five Forces, Strategic Group Map, BCG/McKinsey Portfolio Matrices, Ashridge Parenting Matrix, Scenario Planning, and the Value Chain (Jarzabkowski et al., 2009, 2013; Knott, 2006; Moisander and Stenfors, 2009; Wright et al., 2013; Grant, 2016; Paul and Wollny, 2014). At best, such tools are able to evaluate, explain and predict different experiences and consequences of strategic change in organizations. Therefore, a considerable proportion of SasP research has focused on the question of how and in what ways strategy tools are useful in practice (Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2014; Knott, 2008; Stenfors et al., 2004; Stenfors and Tanner, 2007; Tassabehji and Isherwood, 2014; Wright et al., 2013). Although much research was undertaken in this regard, the application, meaning and usage of strategy tools have yet to be sufficiently explored.

For that reason, this research contributed to the emerging field of strategizing to uncover the actual reasons and purposes for applying strategy tools. Practitioners play an important part when investigating strategic practices, i.e. strategy tools-in-use, which is why Whittington (2006) recommended that researchers should not only examine tools and practitioners in isolation, but rather their interactions while doing strategy work.

To accomplish that, the research relied on the grounded theory methodology to analyze, interpret and explain the investigated social phenomenon and to explicate the everyday experiences of social actors in specific situations (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Suddaby, 2006; Saunders et al., 2016). Today, grounded theory is increasingly used with mixed method approaches, which is why it

was suitable for the exploratory sequential multi-phase design of this research (Figure 2 – Research Design). In fact, this research design enabled the inclusion of induction (qualitative – semi-structured interviews), deduction (quantitative – questionnaires), and verification or validation (qualitative – focus group), which were all substantial for the grounded theory analysis (Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Strauss, 1990, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016).

Each of the preceding data collection stages subsequently informed and directed the proceeding one (Saunders et al., 2016; Yin, 2016). The sequence of stages was needed to triangulate the initial results and ultimately create more validity. Based on the analysis of the semi-structured interviews the underlying theory could emerge. This meant it was possible to identify core categories and themes, which were used to derive hypotheses and to structure the following research stages. These hypotheses were then evaluated and eventually refined through the quantitative questionnaire results. Finally, the focus group analysis was undertaken to critically evaluate all findings and derive conclusive answers to the formulated research questions and sub-questions.

The theory-related findings were considered sufficient, since it was possible to explicate and revise the term definitions, and to identify limitations in current strategy-as-practice research. For example, the definition for the term strategy tool was revised in response to practitioner claims that it needs to emphasize that tools are able to support the entire strategy process. Similarly, research has revealed that SasP research needs to provide a closer look into basic strategizing activities, hence it will be necessary to take a more holistic approach while investigating strategy tools-in-use. Most importantly SasP research should take a true practice perspective by including everyone involved in strategy work (e.g. Paroutis et al., 2016).

Regarding the practice-related findings, the results provided a more consistent picture of strategy tools-in-use, though it was not possible to identify significant differences between the three investigated practitioner perspectives. The most commonly applied strategy tools are SWOT/TOWS, BCG/McKinsey Portfolio Matrices, and Key Success Factors, which was a modest update in comparison to the study of Jarzabkowski et al. (2009). Further, research has revealed that the main reason practitioners apply strategy tools is to provide a clear structure, especially when confronted with complex or unknown situations. In contrast, the greatest disadvantage of strategy tools is their tendency to oversimplify issues, as they reduce strategic problems to a very basic level. With regard to their temporal integration, research shows that tools are typically applied as part of a dedicated strategy process and mostly during strategic planning (i.e. analysis and formulation). Thus, strategy tools are typically applied before the strategic decision. Further discussion was given to whether tools are applied to reach or proof strategic decisions, which was termed post-rationalization. Most practitioners claimed that they apply tools to reach rational decisions, but nevertheless confirmed that post-rationalization exists to justify decisions and actions. Lastly, the role and effectiveness of strategy tools-in-use was explored. It was found that their effectiveness is dependent on various

determinants, such as the level of their acceptance, the practitioners applying them, the context or situation organizations are confronted with, the available content, but also their adaptation. In the future, strategy tools need to evolve to maintain their importance and value, otherwise they could be replaced through other approaches and frameworks. Thus, they need to open up to more of the available data and become more flexible to respond to today's dynamic environments.

6.2 Original Contribution to Knowledge

The most important contribution of this research has been the identification of the *determinants for the effective application of strategy tools*, namely their organization-wide acceptance, the practitioners applying them, the respective context or situation they are adopted for, and the available content they are filled with. Especially, the acceptance of strategy tools and the practitioner using the tools should be regarded as central. Meaning, without experienced strategists that understand the theory as well as practice of applying tools and the lack of organizational acceptance it is difficult to establish a tool-supported strategy process. Another decisive determinant was the *adaptation of strategy tools*, which was already examined in previous research. In this research, however, the reasons for adaptation were determined, such as the dynamic environments organizations are confronted with, the organizational context the tools are applied in, but also their theoretical limitations. Moreover, a different approach to investigate the *strategy toolkit* was undertaken to examine which tools strategists know and most commonly use. Based on the findings, it was possible to generalize that the number of tools known typically determines the number of tools used. According to the results, the tools most known and used are the SWOT/TOWS, Key Success Factor Analysis, and Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey). Another contribution was related to the discussion around the *temporal integration* of strategy tools. It was found that tools are mostly used as part of a dedicated process, and if so, mainly during the analysis and formulation, i.e. before the strategic decision. In this context, the existence of *post-rationalization* was confirmed and clarified that it is used to give objectivity to a decision or to gain trust on the basis of methodological expertise. Nevertheless, this attribute should be regarded critically, since it might be misused for the inadequate justification and interpretation of wide-ranging strategic choices. Overall, these contributions to knowledge should help organizations and their strategists to conduct more efficient, but also more effective strategy work in the future.

6.3 Overview of Results

Strategists usually have a theoretical understanding of strategy tools, which is often based on former studies or non-guided practical experiences made on the job. Unfortunately, most practitioners seem unable to fully recognize nor exploit tool potential because they neglect how they should be used, under what circumstances, and what their true outcome should be. For that reason, this research contributes to existing strategizing theory on one side and provides strategists with a better understanding of strategy tool use in practice on the other. Both the understanding of theory and practice therefore had to be increased to provide practitioners with a path towards more effective strategy work. That was also the reason why theoretical as well as practical research questions and sub-questions were formulated. In the following, the final answers for these questions are provided based on the results presented in chapter 4 and the discussion from chapter 5.

1. How can theory on strategizing be advanced through a better understanding of strategy tool use?

To close the existing gaps in strategic management theory, from the outset it was considered necessary to have a closer look at the underlying and extant theory on strategizing and strategy tools-in-use. Considerable information has been found in SasP literature and its related disciplines, but the practical importance of the theory is still not sufficiently investigated. For that reason, the definitions of the relevant terminology were reviewed and revised on the basis of the research findings. Thereafter, the limitations of current SasP research were elaborated to clarify what scholars should focus on in the future.

1.1 What is meant by the terms strategizing and strategy-as-practice, and what is a strategy tool?

In the following, the reworked definitions are subsumed to conclusively answer the research sub-question on the terminologies. All definitions are based on the findings from the existing literature and the research results.

Strategizing

Strategizing is the practical foundation of strategy work which is needed to devise a strategy or different strategies. The term covers all routines, activities, practices and ongoing processes through which strategies are designed, realized, transformed and executed. As such, strategy tools should be seen as the enablers of strategizing. Further, it describes the real doing of strategy, as it stimulates strategic thinking of all actors involved.

Strategy-as-Practice

Strategy-as-Practice is a distinctive research approach to investigate practical strategy work by looking at praxis, practices and practitioners. The approach facilitates research on how strategy work is actually done in practice and enables researchers to examine how strategists interact with the social

and physical features of strategizing. Based on the findings of the SasP field, organizations and strategists are able to make sense of strategic practices. Most importantly, however, it advances both the theoretical as well as the practical understanding of strategists and thus qualifies them to conduct more sufficient and expedient strategy work.

Strategy Tools

Strategy tools are structured processes, procedures or approaches to analyze a company's environments, to initiate or organize debate, and to solve complex strategic issues in a systematized and meaningful way. They cannot solve problems, but support strategists to deal with complex tasks at all different stages of the strategy process, which means during analysis, formulation, implementation, as well as evaluation and control of strategies. Strategists, however, have to be aware of the term's ambiguity as strategy tools can be frameworks, concepts, models or methods, which widens their scope of application.

1.2 What are the limitations of current strategy-as-practice research?

The greatest limitation of SasP research is the barely explored practice view. Most studies do not incorporate actual strategists or important practitioner perspectives while investigating the strategizing activities of organizations. Moreover, researchers mostly ignore typical strategy processes, hence SasP research should develop into a more holistic approach that examines all elements of strategy work. On these grounds, the field should open up towards other directions and disciplines to meet the demands of modern strategy work and the more dynamic environment. Nonetheless, without the acceptance in the business world nor an agenda to transfer the field's findings into practice, it remains difficult to draw the right inferences and thus improve organizational strategizing in the long-term.

2. How do strategists use strategy tools in practice?

For years, this question has been a pressing issue of SasP research, as scholars attempt to clarify what role strategy tools play and how strategists use them in practice. In this regard, this research mainly focused on the direct interaction between practitioners and strategy tools. Like earlier studies, this research aimed to identify the strategy tools most commonly applied by strategists. Subsequently, exploration was made as to why and for what reasons strategists apply or rather avoid tools to conduct strategy work. Discussion also focused on the temporal integration of strategy tools to clarify the causes of their application and whether they are used as part of a dedicated strategy process; in particular, whether tools are applied before or after the strategic decision, and whether they are used to reach rational instead post-rational answers. The last topic dealt with the future development of strategy tools to express whether and how they need to evolve in order to persist and maintain their value in the future.

2.1 Which strategy tools do strategists use for their strategy work?

In the first research stage, all practitioner perspectives were included to express not only which tools are most commonly used, but also which are best known. It was found that the surveyed participants knew more tools than they use. On average they knew 78% and used 62% of the 16 most popular strategy tools (Figure 8: Strategy Toolkit – Know/Use (Interview Stage)). When considering all participants that were interviewed in data collection stage 1, the top three tools known and used included Scenario Planning, SWOT/TOWS, and the Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey) – see Figure 55 below.

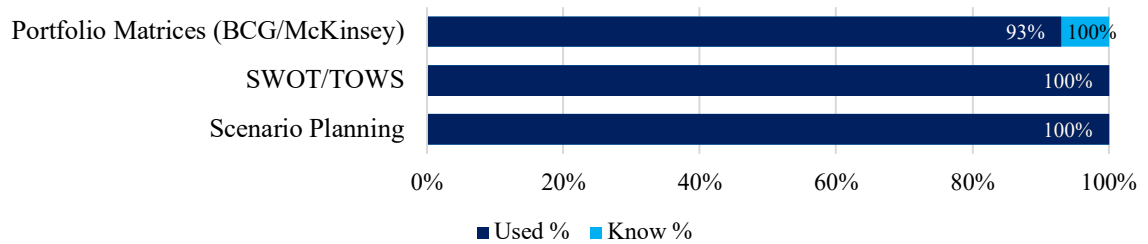


Figure 55: Top Three Strategy Tools – Know/Use (Interview Stage, based on Figure 8)

The second research stage showed a similar picture, but the respective results were much closer to the results of previous studies (e.g. Jarzabkowski et al., 2009). The questionnaire participants knew substantially more tools than they actually applied during strategy work. Of the 16 most popular strategy tools, the questionnaire participants knew 78% and used 45% on average (Figure 30: Strategy Toolkit – Know/Use (Questionnaire Stage)). These results generally confirmed the interview findings with regard to the average of tools known, but the average of tools used was about 17% lower. This lower average was probably due to the absence of the academics, since they were responsible for the high average of tools used during the first research stage. Based on the questionnaire results, the top three tools known and used are the SWOT/TOWS, Key Success Factor Analysis, and Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey). This result slightly differed from the interview analysis, as Scenario Planning fell out of the top three – see Figure 56 below.

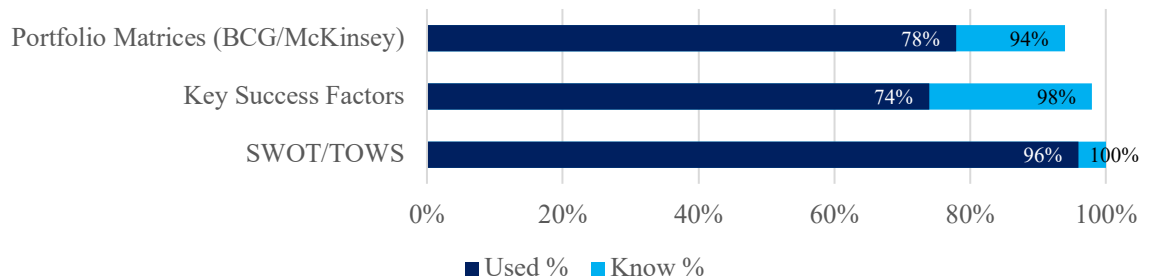


Figure 56: Top Three Strategy Tools – Know/Use (Questionnaire Stage, based on Figure 30)

According to the focus group participants (Appendix R: Focus Group Transcript), these findings and the resulting strategy toolkit can be considered as viable, although they noted that the enduring presence of the traditional tools, such as SWOT/TOWS, Key Success Factors and the Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey), has led to these results. These tools are taught in business schools, reinforced by executives and used during management trainings in several companies including consultancies, which is probably the reason why they are still used and relied on. In contrast, the younger tools, like the Blue Ocean Four Action Framework, are simply less well-known and popular. Overall, it can be concluded that the simple and traditional tools are those most commonly applied, as strategists usually search for obvious results.

2.2 Why do strategists use strategy tools to conduct their strategy work?

Based on the shared experiences of the interviewed strategists, six clear advantages of strategy tools-in-use could be identified (Appendix G: Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Advantages of Tool Usage). Strategists apply tools in practice because they provide structure, support decision-making, reduce complexity, help to visualize, produce results, and enable communication. According to the questionnaire results (Table 13: Advantages of Strategy Tools-in-Use), tools most importantly provide structure, as they help to break down work tasks, build work packages, and synthesize gathered findings. Interestingly, all other identified advantages relate to structure, as structure reduces complexity, helps to visualize, and enables the production of necessary results.

In contrast, strategy tools also have several disadvantages. The interviewees mentioned five disadvantages that lead to tool avoidance (Appendix H: Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Disadvantages of Tool Usage). In particular, tools oversimplify issues, have a static nature, occasionally lead to misleading results, are complex in application, and often prioritize decisions. When re-examining the questionnaire results (Table 14: Disadvantages of Strategy Tools-in-Use), the most problematic disadvantage is the inherent oversimplification issue of strategy tools, as they reduce complex problems to a very basic level. Once again, the other disadvantages highlighted by the participants can be considered as direct consequences of oversimplification since it leads to static dimensions, misleading results, and prioritized decisions. An interesting point to consider, however, is whether oversimplification is a fault of the tool or the user, since many strategists lack a thorough understanding of each tool's theoretical foundation.

2.3 When do strategists use strategy tools?

Based on the research findings (Figure 35: Reasons for the Application of Strategy Tools for each Perspective), the main reason to apply strategy tools is to approach strategic problems and objectives systematically (on average 92%). These strategic problems and objectives are very likely related to positioning, growth, and changing environments. Further, results show that positioning mostly initiates the application of strategy tools (Table 15: Strategic Problems and Objectives initiating

Strategy Tool Use). Of course, organizations do not always have to reposition themselves, which is why tools are rather applied once problems and objectives are generally too complex to be solved without a structured process. Thus, it cannot be generalized when the application of tools is typically initiated.

About 70% of the surveyed practitioners affirmed that they apply strategy tools as part of a dedicated process (Figure 37: Tools used during a dedicated process). Relating thereto, it was found that strategists use up to nine strategy tools before the strategic decision and only up to three after (Table 17: Tools used before or after the Strategic Decision - Perspectives). This means, that strategy tools are mainly used during strategic planning, i.e. analysis and formulation, and much less during execution, i.e. implementation and evaluation and control (Appendix J: Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Stages of Strategy Process). In other words, tools are typically applied before and not after the strategic decision has been made. The reason for the widespread use of planning tools is probably that organizations view strategy work as something that should result in something new or unique. In comparison, the number of available execution tools is still limited, which explains why the existing tools are often neglected during strategy work.

Based on these findings, the post-rationalization discussion was initiated to find out whether strategists apply tools to justify decisions that have already been made. It should be noted that it usually happens during strategic planning, as it would be meaningless afterwards. During all research stages, it was confirmed that post-rationalization exists (Appendix K: Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Rationalization), but the surveyed practitioners remained undecided about its role, claiming that they apply tools to reach rational decisions. Indeed, the questionnaire results confirmed that tools are used to reach rather than to proof a decision (Table 18: Reaching or Proofing a Decision with Strategy Tools). The focus group ratified this result (Appendix R: Focus Group Transcript), but also gave explanation as to why post-rationalization happens. They claimed that strategists post-rationalize with tools to provide objectivity for a decision. Thus, it is not necessarily bad when transparently employed, but it should not be instrumentalized to justify controversial decisions, which could lead to catastrophic or at least biased outcomes.

2.4 How do strategists evaluate the role of strategy tools?

Research has revealed which factors determine the effective application of strategy tools the most. As part of the interview analysis (Appendix L: Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Dependence, and M: Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Adaptation), these factors were reduced to five, namely acceptance, practitioner, context-situation, content, and adaptation. The organization-wide acceptance of a tool was considered to be the core factor for its successful application (Table 19: Determinants of Effective Application), hence every strategic practitioner should first understand the theory as well as the practice of strategy tools. That appreciation is established through clear

communication, as well as by simple and reliable tools that have already demonstrated their viability (i.e. success stories). Since the context or situation is also decisive for the effective application of tools, their correct selection is required first. The availability of the right content, like best practices, figures, and documented experiences, was also regarded as influential but received only marginal attention in the latter research phases.

When considering the statements of the surveyed practitioners, adaptation should be viewed as another core determinant for the effective application of strategy tools (Appendix M: Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Adaptation). 88% of the questionnaire participants affirmed that adaptation is essential when applying tools in practice (Figure 44: Adaptation of Strategy Tools), as tools need to be adapted to specific contexts due to the existing differences in each industry and each organization. Adaptation starts with renaming the tool, changing variables and dimensions, altering crucial parameters, and ends with their complete remodeling. But their adaptation is not expedient in every case, which is why strategists first need to be aware of their initial purpose, as changing them might lead to far-reaching mistakes that affect the desired outcomes. Today, the main reason for the adaptation of tools are the dynamic environments with which organizations are confronted (Table 20: Reasons for Adaptation). However, strategists should be cautious and consider alteration options to avoid misleading results and strategies. Adaptation after all strays from a tool's theoretical foundation, which is why practitioners should create an awareness of the risks behind such changes and look at their situational applicability. After thorough evaluation, it might be more constructive to combine elements of tools rather than changing dimensions, variables or important indicators.

Regarding the explicit role of strategy tools in practice, more than three quarters (80%) of the surveyed practitioners affirmed that strategy tools have an influence on strategy work (Figure 46: Tool Influence on Strategy Work). When reviewing all research findings, it can be subsumed that tools can positively influence strategy work, but they are strongly dependent on the experience, knowledge, and expectations of their respective users. In this context, the tools' efficiency and effectiveness were analyzed to outline which tools are generally perceived as most useful. All interviewed participants agreed that to successfully use tools they need to be applied in the correct way (Appendix O: Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Efficiency – Effectiveness). Meaning, strategists need to have utilization experience to efficiently and effectively apply tools. However, it was frequently stated that these skills and knowledge should be core aspects of strategy work, which is perhaps why the majority of strategists apply simple rather than complex strategy tools. This is probably the reason why the SWOT/TOWS, Porter's Five Forces, Key Success Factors, Scenario Planning, Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey), and the Blue Ocean Four Action Framework received the highest efficiency ratings (Table 22: Efficiency Ratings of Strategy Tools). The most effective tools in comparison have been Blue Ocean Four Action Framework, Scenario Planning, KSF, SWOT/TOWS, and the PESTLE Analysis (Table 23: Effectiveness Ratings of Strategy Tools).

In both ratings, Scenario Planning should be regarded as the exception, as it is considered a complex tool. Nonetheless, results show that a tool's efficiency is a prerequisite for its effectiveness (Figure 50: Comparison of Efficiency and Effectiveness).

During the entire research process, the surveyed strategists never questioned that strategy tools would persist and still provide value in the future (Appendix P: Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Future Development, Figure 51: Future Existence of Strategy Tools, and 52: Future Value of Strategy Tools, Appendix R: Focus Group Transcript). However, they rated their value as moderate (Figure 52: Future Value of Strategy Tools), since strategy tools do not solely influence strategy work. For that reason, the strategists made several suggestions on how tools should develop to sustain their decisive role in strategy work (Appendix P: Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Future Development). Both, an increase in their flexibility as well as their ability to adapt to dynamic environments received a high priority in the questionnaire (Table 24: Future Development of Strategy Tools). At first, tools need to be more dynamic, agile or lean to keep their applicability in the modern world, but it should be questioned whether it is the tools or the users that need to become more flexible. Further, organizations and their respective strategists need to learn how tools can be adapted to dynamic environments, even if this requires skills other than textbook knowledge. However, tools should never lose their original theoretical foundation, as this might lead to catastrophic decisions. Additionally, participants requested that tools should support more content, which was rated with moderate priority in the questionnaire. The tools most commonly used were developed decades ago under very different circumstances, and to remain practically relevant today and in the future they need to open up to the changed environmental conditions and the rich data available. With appropriate updates, strategy tools might be able to enhance and speed up strategy work or even the entire strategy process.

6.4 Research Limitations

Undertaking a practice-related research project comes with certain limitations. Similar to previous SasP studies, the greatest limitation was access to a representative sample. Strategists are very difficult to reach and convince to participate in such an extensive research project. The main sources for suitable candidates were the personal network of both the researcher and his supervisors. Nonetheless, access to a suitable pool of participants worked satisfactorily, but further limitations during the data collection and analyses stages had to be considered.

Limitations on Data Collection

Based on the grounded theory method, *semi-structured interviews* were the obvious choice as initial data collection approach, although there were various issues related to their reliability, bias, generalizability, and validity (Saunders et al., 2016; Gray, 2017). Due to the lack of standardization in semi-structured interviews their reliability is often questioned, as it remains uncertain whether

other researchers would be able to achieve similar results. In terms of bias, there are different forms to consider, namely interviewer, response and participation bias. The interviewer bias, which arises through comments, tone or non-verbal behavior, is probably the most problematic. Response bias is a similar issue, as respondents could hold back information or interpret questions in a completely different way to that expected by the interviewer. Participation or sampling bias was a significant issue during all data collection stages of this research and is discussed in greater detail below. The generalizability of the interview results was yet another problem to be considered, since qualitative research is usually based on small samples. Even though data saturation was reached, it remains unclear whether a broader sample would have led to similar results. Lastly, the validity of the interview results should be questioned. Based on the scope and the participants surveyed it is assumed that access was gained to appropriate knowledge and experiences. However, there is still a chance that important subjects have been ignored or were underrepresented.

The most crucial limitation for the *questionnaire* was attaining a meaningful sample size (Marshall et al., 2013). Due to the required expertise and experience in using strategy tools, the research relied on non-probability sampling. Unfortunately, such sampling techniques cannot be considered as statistically representative, which is why the application of any inferential statistical method was not possible. As a standalone method, a questionnaire would have been inadequate for this research because investigating a social phenomenon, such as the application of strategy tools, needs more than the highlighting of trends and rated attitudes towards certain variables (Saunders et al., 2016). However, as a triangulation element within a mixed method research design it was sufficient to evaluate and improve the previously analyzed results. Nonetheless, all quantitative results should be treated with caution, due the lack of their generalizability.

For the *focus group* the greatest limitation was the time constraints of the participants involved. In fact, it was very difficult to convince consultants and executives to devote two hours of their extremely limited time. Focus was therefore given to the fundamental aspects of the preceding research results, hence a few topics and facets had to be discarded. Other limitations were the interaction speed, as well as other coordinative problems that slowed down the production of ideas (Acocella, 2012). Due to the interaction speed, not all participants were able to comment on every topic in detail, which is why it cannot be guaranteed that the focus group discussion provided an exhaustive analysis. The context itself might have also limited the depth of contributions, as focus groups usually inhibit the individuals involved to express their objective judgment and answers (Bickman, 1974; Acocella, 2012). Thus, the results of the focus group session have to be treated with prudence, since they do not always provide sufficiently detailed information (Acocella, 2012). Nonetheless, based on the analysis and the findings, it can be noted that the focus group provided valuable information to critically evaluate the preceding research results and to find more definite answers for most of the underlying research questions. However, with more experience in applying

this method, the interaction with the participants and the quality of the findings could be circumstantially improved.

Limitations on Methodology

Several previous studies in the field have relied on similar methodologies, however it cannot be generalized which methodological approach might be the most suitable to investigate strategy tools-in-use. Earlier studies ethnographically approached the phenomenon of strategy tools-in-use (e.g. Jarzabkowski, 2008; Kaplan and Orlikowski, 2013, Paroutis et al., 2015), others in turn relied on interviews or questionnaires (Jarzabkowski et al., 2009; Stenfors and Tanner, 2007; Tassabehji and Isherwood, 2014; Wright et al., 2013). Thus, the field remains undecided about the most adequate methodology and research design. Ethnographic studies are able to portray a more distinct picture on strategizing activities but are usually limited to a small set of organizations and projects where researchers are allowed to observe strategic practices. However, studies that rely on interviews, questionnaires, or focus groups have the same issue, namely, how to access a meaningful sample and how to select appropriate participants to gather in-depth information on the researched phenomenon.

Moreover, due to the predominantly qualitative nature of this research, different forms of research bias might have limited the validity of the findings (Saunders et al., 2016; Gray, 2017). Researcher bias was an issue that had to be dealt with. Research findings that rely on non-random samples are almost impossible to generalize, since participants are usually selected on a judgmental respectively convenience basis. To limit the sampling bias different purposive sampling techniques (i.e. theoretical and volunteer sampling) were employed to reduce possible sources of bias. However, it was presumed that a certain amount of researcher bias would persist, which is why a two-phase triangulation (i.e. two subsequent data collection methods) was conducted to overcome the intrinsic bias of qualitative research approaches (Denzin, 1978, Torrance, 2012). On this basis, it can be assumed that the required validity of results has been achieved.

Limitations on Content

The research provides a more decisive snapshot on strategy tool-in-use compared to previous projects conducted in the SasP field but is limited to the information and experiences shared during data collection. The results might have been enhanced if focus had been given to only one or two practitioner perspectives. But due to existing research gaps that idea was discarded at the outset. In hindsight, the investigation could have spared the academics, as they were only conditionally able to relate their knowledge to the practical application of strategy tools. The research, however, aimed to portray different practitioner perspectives and thus followed the assumption of Jarzabkowski and Kaplan (2014, p. 556) that "...different actors might choose different tools and use them differently because of their diverse sources of power, varied levels of expertise, and the wide range of outcomes at stake". Nonetheless, the generated research results only revealed marginal differences between the investigated perspectives, which is why their separation has not proven to be a decisive factor.

The broad scope of the research might have also influenced the depth of its findings, as practitioners were investigated regardless of their industrial or professional background. It might have enhanced the quality of the findings by focusing on one particular industry to draw more detailed conclusions for other sectors. However, based on the research across complex, multidivisional and multinational organizations it was possible to gain a more comprehensive overview on the actual application of strategy tools, since most practitioners made references to different projects, departmental levels and contexts.

6.5 Recommendations

This section first offers practical recommendations to the different practitioner perspectives, which should ultimately enable them to conduct more effective strategy work. Second, suggestions for future research are provided on the basis of the findings and the identified limitations to equip prospective SasP researchers with the necessary insights and indications for so far unresolved issues.

6.5.1 Recommendation for Practitioners

Generally, practitioners should perceive tools as more than analytical frameworks (Brandenburger, 2019), since they are also useful to structure strategic tasks, support decision-making, reduce complexity, visualize information, produce results, and enable communication. These advantages demonstrate diverse application options that go beyond their classical purpose. Nonetheless, every practitioner should also be aware of tool limitations, as tools tend to oversimplify issues, often rely on static boundaries, can possibly lead to misleading results, consume time due to their complexity, and occasionally prioritize or bias important decisions.

Academics

The academics have a very decisive role regarding strategy tools, as they are typically the first to introduce practitioners to their prospective strategy toolkit. As teachers of strategy, they have to transform the underlying theory to practice. Thus, academics should view and disseminate strategy tools as tools-in-use. The following recommendations therefore refer to didactic as well as content-related developments that academics should consider.

To further develop didactics, strategic educators should apply more *project-based groupwork* with strategy tools, e.g. with the help of realistic, tool-oriented case studies. In this regard, it might be wise to convince practitioners, consultants or executives, to become involved, as they can share valuable information about their application experiences. This could also include the development of new teaching modules that directly focuses on a thorough and critical application of strategy or management tools.

Further, academics should open up their strategic management courses towards a more digitalized way of applying tools. Modern *Business Intelligence (BI) Software*, such as Tableau or Power BI,

could be employed to fully exploit the available data and make more informed inferences for the required information of the traditional strategy tools.

With regard to the content to be conveyed, academics need to concentrate on the actual application of strategy tools, hence they should focus on the *selection, adaptation and modification* of strategy tools. This goes beyond the traditional textbook approach, but it does provide a much more realistic image of strategic practice. For example, it should be emphasized that a tool does not give a definite answer in most cases but raises further questions. On that basis, a process typically evolves, which then leads to the integration of a planning and experience-oriented view of conducting strategy work. Hence, the focus should no longer be on the tool itself and its immediate benefits, but rather on the actions and processes the tool sets or keeps in motion.

The toolkit needs to be expanded and might also include a wider set of tools that might even come from other disciplines. Hence, students need to learn first what is available before selecting tools, which can result in more *dynamic strategy toolkit*. In this regard, the use of more dynamic tools, such as Scenario Planning, should also be emphasized, as these are more applicable to today's complex environment. In contrast to many other tools, Scenario Planning does not ignore the future and thus creates an alternative picture based on a thorough understanding of current trends. In this way, organizational visions can be checked for their usefulness and feasibility.

The adaptation and modification of strategy tools could be approached with different concepts. Either the academics encourage the development of individual, adapted or modified tools within class, or they need to involve practitioners to demonstrate their modification on the basis of past or current experiences. Based on the latter, these institutional practices could then be discussed and perhaps revised in direct interaction with the respective practitioners. Overall, academics should clearly emphasize that tool application requires creativity, which could possibly result from combining frameworks or variables to achieve formerly undiscovered outcomes.

Consultants and Executives

The 'true' practitioners, in turn, should first each create an *awareness for the determinants* of effective strategy tool application. Meaning, they need to emphasize that tool-based strategy work has to be accepted. To achieve acceptance, strategists need to guide first-time users by either applying simple tools or relying on tools that have already proven their success on an institutional basis. These aspects already indicate the centrality of the practitioner, as he or she is responsible to apply the chosen set of tools in an appropriate way. Selecting the right tools at the right time is yet another core issue consultants and executives should be concerned with, as many users believe that the majority of tools only function in a very specific context or situation. Thus, strategists need to explain and demonstrate how and in what ways they have previously applied tools, which requires a much more

communicative strategy process. In this regard, they should also focus on the required content, as most first-time users already fail at this juncture.

The best way to establish the necessary knowledge, skills, and acceptance could be the *documentation* of these practices (e.g. knowledge documents at McKinsey). Such a documentation should include the theoretical explanation, a list of incorporated variables and data, and best- as well as worst-case examples from past cases. On this basis, it will be possible to identify workshop and training necessities that ultimately stimulate *organizational learning*.

The adaptation of tools can also be a crucial factor for successful strategy work. Both, consultants as well as executives confirmed that they adapt their tools-in-use, although it should be noted that successful strategies stand and fall with *proper adaptation*. Therefore, strategists need to ensure that everyone involved first understands the initial purpose of the respective strategy tools, before adapting or modifying them to justify another purpose. Hence, true strategists should rather discourage other practitioners without proper knowledge and experience from adapting the tools' variables and parameters. If these practitioners insist on refining their strategy tools-in-use, they should first try to combine different tools to close the application gaps they have experienced, which causes less harm than other far-reaching changes.

Finally, consultants and executives should also *exploit the opportunities of digitization* with regards to their tools-in-use, since the availability of data as well as its processing possibilities have drastically increased. This means that modern strategists have to adapt to data analytics, which could be supported with BI software, e.g. Tableau, Power BI, etc. As such, the capabilities of this software have the power to enhance the tools' analytical depth and include real-time data, which leads to a more dynamic decision-making process.

6.5.2 Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should maintain its *focus on strategy tools-in-use* to continuously build theory on practice. This research has shown that strategy tools have a lot more potential than many practitioners would think. Even though the differences between the perspectives were subtle, it was valuable to gather diverse viewpoints on tool-based strategy work. Such studies with a close proximity to practice enable organizations conducting strategy work to rethink their review processes or at least the way they employ strategy tools. At best, SasP research supports future strategists to conduct more effective strategizing, since from it they receive a more realistic impression of how systematic strategy work is actually practiced. The proceeding recommendations cover content, teaching as well as methodological aspects to emphasize where future research should focus on.

Content

Most importantly future research should depict a *true practice lens*, which requires the observation of all practitioners that are involved in an organization's strategic review process. Meaning, if consultants are hired to support organizational strategy-making they need to be part of the research studies. The same applies to all staff members who are involved during strategy work, hence departmental and hierarchical boundaries should be dissolved to holistically explore the actual application of strategy tools. For example, middle managers should be involved by all means, as they have wide ranging strategic capabilities and mostly unrestricted access to the necessary information. Apart from that, future studies should emphasize more context related factors, such as company sizes, particular market arenas, or geographical regions. This also requires more research within multinational organizations or strategic consultancies by either focusing on specific industries or even countries. Yet, it might also be interesting to look at small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), since their strategic reviewing can be considered as much more reactive and rudimentary.

A further recommendation is that research takes into account the *digitization of strategy tools*. The accelerating digitization of business processes, and the associated processing of large amounts of data as well as their almost inexhaustible availability via the Internet, have considerable consequences for the use and development of strategy tools. Without any changes, the applicability of specific instruments will increasingly be questioned in the coming years. For example, some strategy tools are based on classic industry definitions and boundaries, which often no longer exist, as already evident in the mobility (e.g. Uber, Lime, or Liliium) and hospitality sector (e.g. Airbnb or Foodora). In such cases, the commonly applied industry analysis, Porter's Five Forces, loses its credibility, as it is unable to provide precise conclusions.

Based on this example, researchers should rethink the ways strategy tools are currently applied and rather investigate adaptation options that digitization can offer. Due to the large availability of data, it will be possible to analytically substantiate strategy work and thus question traditional ways of thinking. Accordingly, researchers could explore the role of BI software in enabling traditional strategy tools, such as Porter's Five Forces or the BCG Portfolio Matrix, to be linked to large databases and evaluate real-time analyses. The use of this software most likely leads to an acceleration of the analysis and decision-making processes.

Teaching

Future research could also aim at the *re-development of existing teaching modules*, instead of solely looking at strategy tools within the scope of strategic management or marketing modules. Today, such strategy modules should be taught with the necessary practical relevance, which most likely requires the involvement of practitioner-input to emulate a realistic practice scenario. To develop such a new module, researchers should follow an action research approach, as it addresses concrete practical problems and enables the derivation of recommendations for the utilization of socially

accepted constructs, e.g. the usage of strategy tools. Action research is typically used to develop new pedagogical and didactic curricula.

In this context, another option could be the development of an entirely new module that is directly targeting the application of strategy tools, which could be called ‘Management Tools and Instruments’. On the one hand, this will lead to an extension of the existing toolset, as research will be detached from the typical strategic disciplines. On the other hand, the actual tool requirements of strategists may be recognized in this way, which could lead to a more dynamic but above all more flexible strategy process.

Methodology

Further, the proportion of *mixed method studies* should increase, as they enhance the quality, reliability as well as the validity of SasP research projects. This research has demonstrated how powerful multiple methods can be, especially when relying on the grounded theory approach as research strategy. The diversity of research designs in SasP studies is steadily increasing, ranging from observational field studies to survey or interview approaches. Ethnographic observations will remain essential for the investigation of strategy tools-in-use, but an expanded portfolio of methods might even enhance the quality of the outcomes. Interviews as well as focus groups can be useful to gather in-depth insights on the actual application of strategy tools, as both provide room for discourse and critical appraisal. However, a longitudinal study that observes an entire strategic review process of different organizations in one industry or a broader sector has yet to be undertaken. Such studies would provide a better understanding about strategic execution and the tools involved, which is still a widely neglected topic in research and in practice.

References

- Acocella, I. (2012) The Focus Groups in Social Research: Advantages and Disadvantages. *Quality & Quantity*, Vol. 46, No. 4, pp. 1125-1136.
- Albin, P. S. & Foley, D. K. (1998) *Barriers and Bounds to Rationality: Essays on Economic Complexity and Dynamics in Interactive Systems*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, USA.
- Alvesson, M. & Sköldbberg, K. (2000) *Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research*. Sage, London, UK.
- Anderson, D. R., Sweeney, D. J., Williams, T. A., Camm, J. D., & Cochran, J. J. (2016) *Statistics for Business & Economics*. Cengage Learning, Stanford, CA, USA.
- Andrews, K. R. (1971) *The Concept of Corporate Strategy*. Dow-Jones-Irwin, Homewood, IL, USA.
- Angwin, D., Paroutis, S., & Mitson, S. (2009) Connecting up Strategy: Are Senior Strategy Directors a Missing Link? *California Management Review*, Vol. 51, No. 3, pp. 74-94.
- Ansoff, H. I. (1965) Corporate Strategy: An Analytical Approach to Business Policy for Growth and Expansion. McGraw-Hill, New York, NY, USA.
- Antonacopoulou, E. P. (2010) Making the Business School more ‘Critical’: Reflexive Critique based on Phronesis as a Foundation for Impact. *British Journal of Management*, Vol. 21, pp. 6-25.
- Appelbaum, S. H., & Steed, A. J. (2005) The Critical Success Factors in the Client-Consulting Relationship. *Journal of management development*, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 68-93.
- Aram, J.D., & Salipante, P.F. (2003) Bridging Scholarship in Management: Epistemological Reflections. *British Academy of Management*, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 189–205.
- Armbruester, T., & Kipping, M. (2001) Strategic Change in Top Management Consulting: Market Evolution and current Challenges in a knowledge-based Perspective. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, Vol. 2001, No. 1, A1-A6.
- Atluri, V., Dietz, M., & Henke, N. (2017) Competing in a world of sectors without borders. *McKinsey Quarterly*, July 2017, No.3, pp. 32-47.
- Balogun, J. (2003) From Blaming the Middle to Harnessing its Potential: Creating Change Intermediaries. *British Journal of Management*, Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 69-83.

-
- Balogun, J., Huff, A. S., & Johnson, P. (2003) Three Responses to the Methodological Challenges of Studying Strategizing. *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 1, pp. 197-224.
- Balogun, J., & Johnson, G. (2004) Organizational Restructuring and Middle Manager Sensemaking. *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 47, No. 4, pp. 523-549.
- Balogun, J., Jarzabkowski, P., Seidl, D., & Guerard, S. (2007) Strategy as Practice Perspective. In: Jenkins M., Ambrosini, V., & Collier, N. (eds.) *Advanced Strategic Management*, 3rd Ed., pp. 262-287, Palgrave, London, UK.
- Banker, R. D., Chang, H. H., & Majumdar, S. K. (1996) A Framework for Analyzing Changes in Strategic Performance. *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 9, pp. 693-712.
- Bazeley, P. & Jackson, K. (2013) *Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo*. 2nd Ed., Sage, London.
- Becker, H.S. (1998) *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While You're Doing It*. Chicago University Press, Chicago, IL, USA.
- Belmondo, C., & Sargis-Roussel, C. (2015) Negotiating Language, Meaning and Intention: Strategy Infrastructure as the Outcome of Using a Strategy Tool through Transforming Strategy Objects. *British Journal of Management*, Vol. 26, pp. 90-104.
- Belzile, J.A. & Oberg, G. (2012) Where to begin? Grappling with how to use Participant Interaction in Focus Group Design. *Qualitative Research*, Vol. 12, No. 4, pp. 459–72.
- Berman Brown, R. & Saunders, M. (2008) *Dealing with Statistics: What You Need to Know*. McGraw Hill Open University Press, Maidenhead, UK.
- Bernard, H. R. (1995) *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. AltaMira, Walnut Creek, CA, USA.
- Bickman, L. (1974) The Social Power of a Uniform. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 47-61.
- Biernacki, P. & Waldorf, D. (1981) Snowballing Sampling: Problems and Techniques of Chain Referral Sampling. *Sociological Methods & Research*, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 141-163.
- Bloor, M. (1978) On the Analysis of Observational Data: A Discussion of the Worth and Uses of Inductive Techniques and Respondent Validation. *Sociology*, Vo. 12, pp. 545-552.
- Boddy, C. R. (2016) Sample Size for Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Market Research*, Vol. 19, No. 4, pp.426 – 432.

-
- Bradley, C., & Dawson, A. (2013) The Art of Strategy [Online Video]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vyt9mAFxWd4> [Accessed 31 March 2019].
- Bradley, C., Hirt, M., & Smit, S. (2018) *Strategy Beyond the Hockey Stick: People, Probabilities, and Big Moves to Beat the Odds*. John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, NJ, USA.
- Brandenburger, A. (2019) Strategy Needs Creativity. *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 92, No. 2, pp. 58-65.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006) Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 77-101.
- Breckenridge, J. & Jones, D. (2009) Demystifying Theoretical Sampling in Ground Theory Research. *Grounded Theory Review*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 113-126.
- Breene, R. T. S., Nunes, P. F., & Shill, W. E. (2007) The Chief Strategy Officer. *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 85, No. 10, pp. 84-93.
- Bristow, A. & Saunders, M. (2014) Heightening your Awareness of your Research Philosophy (HARP) – Reflexive Tool, In: Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2016) *Research methods for business students*. 7th Ed., Pearson, Harlow, UK.
- Bryman, A. (1988) *Quantity and quality in social research*. Unwin Hyman, London, UK.
- Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2015) *Business research methods*. Oxford University Press, Cambridge, UK.
- Burrell, G. and Morgan, G. (1979) *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis*. Heinemann, London, UK.
- Burt, G., Wright, G., Bradfield, R., Cairns, G., & van der Heijden, K. (2006) The Role of Scenario Planning in Exploring the Environment in View of the Limitations of PEST and its Derivatives. *International Studies of Management and Organizations*, Vol. 36, No. 3, pp. 50–76.
- Cabantous, L. & Gond, J. P. (2011) Rational Decision Making as Performative Praxis: Explaining Rationality's Eternal Retour. *Organization Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 3, pp. 573-586.
- Calori, R. (1998) Philosophizing on Strategic Management Models. *Organization Studies*, Vol. 19, pp. 281–306.
- Carter, C., Clegg, S. R., & Kornberger, M. (2008) Strategy as Practice? *Strategic Organization*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 83-99.

-
- Cassell, C. (2015) *Conducting Research Interviews*. Sage, London, UK.
- Chandler, A. D. (1962). *Strategy and Structure: Chapters in the History of American Enterprise*. MIT Press, Boston, MA, USA.
- Charmaz, K. (2000) Constructivist and Objectivist Grounded Theory. In: Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (eds.) *Handbook of a Qualitative Research*. 2nd Ed., pp. 509-533, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
- Charmaz, K. (2006) *Constructing Grounded Theory*. Sage, London, UK.
- Charmaz, K. (2011) Grounded Theory Methods in Social Justice Research. In: Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 4th Ed., pp. 359-380, Sage, London, UK.
- Charmaz, K. (2014) *Constructing Grounded Theory*. 2nd Ed., Sage, London, UK.
- Cheng, C., & Havenvid, M. I. (2017) Investigating Strategy Tools from an Interactive Perspective. *IMP Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 127-149.
- Chesley, J. A., & Wenger, M. S. (1999) Transforming an Organization: Using Models to Foster a Strategic Conversation. *California Management Review*, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp. 54-73.
- Chia, R., & MacKay, B. (2007) Post-processual challenges for the emerging strategy-as-practice perspective: Discovering strategy in the logic of practice. *Human Relations*, Vol. 60, No. 1, pp. 217–242.
- Clark, D. N. (1997) Strategic Management Tool Usage: A Comparative Study. *Strategic Change*, Vol. 6, No. 7, pp. 417-427.
- Corbin, J. & Strauss, A. (1990) Grounded Theory Research: Procedures, Canons and Evaluative Criteria. *Qualitative Sociology*, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 3-21.
- Corbin, J. & Strauss, A. (2008) *Basics of Qualitative Research*. 3rd Ed. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
- Creswell, J. (2013) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. 3rd Ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
- Creswell, J. W. & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011) *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. 2nd Ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.

-
- Crotty, M. (1998) *The Foundations of Social Research*. Sage, London, UK.
- Cummings, S., & Angwin, D. (2004) The Future Shape of Strategy: Lemmings or Chimeras? *Academy of Management Perspectives*, Vol. 18, No. 2, pp. 21-36.
- Czarniawska, B. & Joerges, B. (1996) Travels of Ideas. In: Czarniawska, B. & Sevón, G. (eds) *Translating Organizational Change*, pp. 13-48, de Gruyter, Berlin, GER.
- Dameron, S., Lê, J. K., & LeBaron, C. (2015) Materializing Strategy and Strategizing Material: Why Matter Matters. *British Journal of Management*, Vol. 26, S1-S12.
- Davenport, T. H., Harris, J. G. & Morison, R. (2010) *Analytics at Work: Smart Decisions Better Results*. Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA, USA.
- De Certeau, M. (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life*. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, USA.
- De Vaus, D.A. (2014) *Surveys in Social Research*. 6th Ed., Routledge, Abingdon, UK.
- Denzin, N. K. (2017) *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods*. Routledge, Abingdon, UK.
- Dey, I. (1999) *Grounding Grounded Theory*. Academic Press, San Diego, CA, USA.
- Dodourova, M. T. (2008) *Industry Convergence and Partnerships: A Theory Grounded in the Computer, Telecommunications Media Industries*. Doctoral Thesis, London Southbank University.
- Douven, I. (2011) Abduction, In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available from: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/abduction/> [Accessed 31 March 2019].
- Dyson, R. G. (2004) Strategic Development and SWOT Analysis at the University of Warwick. *European Journal of Operational Research*, Vol. 152, No. 3, pp. 631-640.
- Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., & Jackson, P. (2012) *Management Research*. Sage, London, UK.
- Edmunds, H. (2000) *Focus Group Research Handbook*, McGraw Hill, New York, NY, USA.
- Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989) Building Theories from Case Study Research. *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 14, No. 4, pp. 532-550.
- Eriksson, P. & Kovalainen, A. (2016) *Qualitative Methods in Business Research*. 2nd Ed., Sage, London, UK.

-
- Ernst, B. & Kieser, A. (2002) In Search of Explanations for the Consulting Explosion, In: Sahlin-Andersson, K. & Engwall, L. (eds.) *The Expansion of Management Knowledge: Carriers, Flows and Sources*, pp. 47-73. Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, USA.
- Fann, K. T. (1970) *Peirce's theory of abduction*. The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, NED.
- Faraj, S. & Azad, B. (2012) The Materiality of Technology: An Affordance Perspective. In: Leonardi P. M., Nardi, B. A., & Kallinikos, J. (eds) *Materiality and Organizing: Social Interaction in a Technological World*. pp. 237–258, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.
- Feldman, M. S. & Orlikowski, W.J. (2011), Theorizing practice and practicing theory. *Organization Science*, Vol. 22, pp. 1240-1253.
- Fincham, R. & Clark, T. (2002) Preface: Management Consultancy – Issues, Perspectives, and Agendas. *International Studies of Management and Organization*, Vol. 32, No. 4, pp. 3-18.
- Finkelstein, S., & Hambrick, D. (1996) *Strategic leadership: Top Executives and Their Effects on Organizations*. West Educational Publishing, Minneapolis, MN, USA.
- Finkelstein, S., Hambrick, D. C., & Cannella, A. A. (2009) *Strategic leadership: Theory and Research on Executives, Top Management Teams, and Boards*. Oxford University Press, New York, NY, USA.
- Fisher, R. A. (1922) On the Interpretation of Chi-Squared from Contingency Tables, and the Calculation of P. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol. 85, No. 1, pp. 87–94.
- Fisher, R. A. (1934) *Statistical Methods for Research Workers*. 5th Ed., Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh, UK.
- Fleisher, C. S. & Bensoussan, B. E. (2015) *Business and Competitive Analysis: Effective Application of New and Classic Methods*. FT Press, Upper Saddle River, NJ, USA.
- Flick, U. (2009) *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. 4th Ed., Sage, London, UK.
- Flick, U. (2011) *Triangulation: Eine Einführung*. 3. Aufl., VS Verlag, Wiesbaden, GER.
- Floyd, S. W., & Lane, P. J. (2000) Strategizing throughout the Organization: Management Role Conflict and Strategic Renewal. *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 154-177.
- Floyd, S. W., & Wooldridge, B. (1992) Middle Management Involvement in Strategy and its Association with Strategic Type: A Research Note. *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 153-167.

-
- Floyd, S. W., & Wooldridge, B. (1997) Middle Management's Strategic Influence and Organizational Performance. *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3, pp. 465-485.
- Floyd, S. W., & Wooldridge, B. (2000) *Building Strategy from the Middle: Reconceptualizing Strategy Process*. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
- Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (1994) Interviewing: The Art of Science, pp. 361-376. In: Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
- Freedman, L. (2013) *Strategy: A History*. Oxford University Press, New York, NY, USA.
- Frost, F. A. (2003). The use of strategic tools by small and medium-sized enterprises: an Australasian study. *Strategic change*, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 49-62.
- Furusten, S. (2009) Management Consultants as improvising Agents of Stability. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, Vol. 25, No. 3, pp. 264-274.
- Gabriel, Y. (2000) *Storytelling in Organizations: Facts, Fictions and Fantasies*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.
- Ghemawat, P. (2002) Competition and Business Strategy in Historical Perspective. *Business History Review*, Vol. 76, No. 1, pp. 37-74.
- Ghobadian, A. & O'Regan, N. (2008) Where do we fit in the swings and roundabouts of strategy? *Journal of Strategy and Management*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 5-14.
- Glaser, B. (1978) *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory*. Sociology Press, Mill Valley, CA, USA.
- Glaser, B. (1992) *Basics of Grounded Theory*. Sociology Press, Mill Valley, CA, USA.
- Glaser, B. (2002) Constructivist Grounded Theory? *Forum Qualitativer Sozialforschung: Qualitative Social Research*, Vol. 3, No. 3, Art. 12.
- Glaser, B. & Strauss, A. (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Aldine, Chicago, IL, USA.
- Golsorkhi, D. (2006) *La Fabrique de la Stratégie: Une Perspective Multidimensionnelle*. Vuibert, Paris, F.
- Golsorkhi, D., Rouleau, L., Seidl, D., & Vaara, E. (2015) *Cambridge Handbook of Strategy as Practice*, 2nd Ed., pp. 1-29, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.

-
- Goodman, L. A. (1961) Snowball Sampling. *The Annals of Mathematical Statistics*, Vol. 32, No. 1, pp. 148-170.
- Goulding, C. (1998) Grounded Theory: The Missing Methodology of the Interpretivist Agenda. *Qualitative Market Research*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 50-57.
- Goulding, C. (2002) *Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide for Management, Business and Market Researchers*. Sage, London, UK.
- Gouldner, A.W. (1970) *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology*. Basic Books, New York, NY, USA.
- Grant, R. M. (2013) *Contemporary Strategy Analysis: Text and Cases*. 8th Ed., Wiley, Hoboken, NJ, USA.
- Grant, R. M. (2016) *Contemporary Strategy Analysis: Text and Cases*. 9th Ed., Wiley, Hoboken, NJ, USA.
- Gray, D. E. (2017) *Research in the Business World*. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994) Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research. In: Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 105-117) Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A. & Johnson, L. (2006) How Many Interviews Are Enough? An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability, *Field Methods*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 59–82.
- Guion, L. A., Diehl, D. C., & McDonald, D. (2011) Triangulation: Establishing the Validity of Qualitative Studies. *IFAS Extension - University of Florida*, Report No. FCS601, Gainesville, FL, USA.
- Gunn, R., & Williams, W. (2007) Strategic Tools: An Empirical Investigation into Strategy in Practice in the UK. *Strategic Change*, Vol. 16, pp. 201–16.
- Hambrick, D. C. (2004) The Disintegration of Strategic Management: It's Time to Consolidate our Gains. *Strategic Organization*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 91-98.
- Hambrick, D. C., & Mason, P. A. (1984) Upper Echelons: The Organization as a Reflection of its Top Managers. *Academy of management review*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 193-206.
- , J. (2000) Strategic Decision Making, Discourse, and Strategy as Social Practice. *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 37, pp. 955–977.

-
- Hill, T., & Westbrook, R. (1997) SWOT Analysis: It's Time for a Product Recall. *Long Range Planning*, Vol. 30, No. 1, pp. 46-52.
- Hodari, D. (2009). *Strategy Tools-in-Practice: Contextual Factors and Practical Use*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Surrey.
- Hodgkinson, G. P., & Wright, G. (2002) Confronting Strategic Inertia in a Top Management Team: Learning from Failure. *Organization Studies*, Vol. 23, pp. 949–77.
- Hutt R.W. (1979) The Focus Group Interview: A Technique for Counseling Small Business Clients. *Journal of Small Business Management*, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp.15-18.
- Jacobides, M. G. (2010) Strategy Tools for a Shifting Landscape. *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 88, No. 1-2, pp. 76-84.
- Jarratt, D., & Stiles, D. (2010) How are Methodologies and Tools framing Managers' Strategizing Practice in Competitive Strategy Development? *British Journal of Management*, Vol. 21, pp. 28–43.
- Jarzabkowski, P. (2000) *Putting Strategy into Practice: Top Management Teams in Action in Three UK Universities*. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Warwick University.
- Jarzabkowski, P. (2004) Strategy as Practice: Recursiveness, Adaptation, and Practices-in-Use. *Organization Studies*, Vol. 25, pp. 529–560.
- Jarzabkowski, P. (2005) *Strategy as Practice: An Activity-Based Approach*. Sage, London, UK.
- Jarzabkowski, P. & Wilson, D. C. (2006) Actionable Strategy Knowledge: A Practice Perspective. *European Management Journal*, Vol. 24, No. 5, pp. 348-367.
- Jarzabkowski, P., & Giulietti, M. (2007) *Strategic Management as an Applied Science, but Not as We (Academics) Know It*. Advanced Institute of Management, Aston University.
- Jarzabkowski, P., Balogun, J., & Seidl, D. (2007) Strategizing: The Challenges of a Practice Perspective. *Human Relations*, Vol. 60, No. 1, pp. 5-27.
- Jarzabkowski, P. (2008) Shaping Strategy as a Structuration Process. *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 51, pp. 621–650.
- Jarzabkowski, P., & Whittington, R. (2008) A Strategy-as-Practice Approach to Strategy Research and Education. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, Vol. 17, No. 4, pp. 282-286.

-
- Jarzabkowski, P., Giulletti, M., & Oliveira, B. (2009) *Building a strategy toolkit: lessons from business*. London, AIM Research.
- Jarzabkowski, P., Giulletti, M., Oliveira, B., & Amoo N. (2013) 'We Don't Need No Education'—Or Do We? Management Education and Alumni Adoption of Strategy Tools, *Journal of Management Inquiry*, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 4-24.
- Jarzabkowski P. & Pinch, T (2014) Sociomateriality is 'the NewBlack': Accomplishing Re-Purposing, Re-Inscripting and Repairing in Context. *M@n@gement*, Vol. 16, No. 5, pp. 579–592.
- Jarzabkowski, P. & Kaplan, S. (2014) Strategy Tools-In-Use: A Framework for Understanding 'Technologies of Rationality' in Practice. *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 4, pp. 537-558.
- Jick, T. D. (1979) Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Methods: Triangulation in Action. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 4, pp. 602-611.
- Johnson, G., Langley, A., Melin, L., & Whittington, R. (2007) *Strategy as Practice: Research Directions and Resources*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.
- Johnson, G., Melin, L., & Whittington, R. (2003) Guest Editor's Introduction Micro Strategy and Strategizing: Towards an Activity-Based View. *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 1, pp. 3-22.
- Johnson, G., Whittington, R., Scholes, K., Angwin, D., & Regnér, P. (2017) *Exploring Strategy: Text and Cases*. 11th Ed., Pearson, Harlow, UK.
- Johnson, P. and Clark, M. (2006) Mapping the Terrain: An Overview of Business and Management Research Methodologies. In: Johnson, P. and Clark, M. (eds.) *Business and Management Research Methodologies* (pp. xxv–lv) Sage, London, UK.
- Jones, A. (2003) *Management Consultancy and Banking in an Era of Globalization*. Palgrave/Macmillan, Houndsmill, UK.
- Kachaner, N. & Stewart, S. (2013) *Understanding the Role of the Chief Strategy Officer*. Available from <https://www.bcg.com/de-de/publications/2013/strategic-planning-understanding-role-chief-strategy-officer.aspx> [Accessed 31 March 2019].
- Kaplan, R. S., & Norton, D. P. (2008) Mastering the Management System. *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 86, No. 1, p. 62.

-
- Kaplan, S. (2007) Book Review: Strategy as Practice. *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 32, No. 3, pp. 986-990.
- Kaplan, S. (2008) Framing Contests: Strategy Making Under Uncertainty. *Organization Science*, Vol. 19, No. 5, pp. 729-752.
- Kaplan, S., & Jarzabkowski, P. (2006) *Using Strategy Tools in Practice: How tools mediate Strategizing and Organizing*. AIM Research, London, UK.
- Kaplan S., & Orlikowski, W. J. (2013) Temporal Work in Strategy Making. *Organization Science*, Vol. 24, No. 4, pp. 965–995.
- Kelemen, M. & Rumens, N. (2008) *An Introduction to Critical Management Research*. Sage, London, UK.
- Ketokivi, M. & Mantere, S. (2010) Two Strategies for Inductive Reasoning in Organizational Research. *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 315–33.
- Ketokivi, M., & Castaner, X. (2004) Strategic planning as an integrative device. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 3, pp. 337-365.
- King, N. (2004) Using Interviews in Qualitative Research. In: Cassell, C. and Symon, G. (eds.) *Essential Guide to Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research*. Sage, London, UK.
- King, N. (2012) Doing Template Analysis, In: Symon, G. and Cassell, C. (eds.) *Qualitative Organizational Research: Core Methods and Current Challenges*. Sage, London, UK.
- Kirk, J. & Miller, M. L. (1986) *Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research*. Sage, London, UK.
- Knights, D., & Morgan, G. (1991) Corporate Strategy, Organizations, and Subjectivity: A Critique. *Organization Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 251-273.
- Knott, P. (2006) A Typology of Strategy Tool Applications. *Management Decision*, Vol. 44, No. 8, pp. 1090-1105.
- Knott, P. (2008) Strategy tools: Who really uses them? *Journal of Business Strategy*, Vol. 29, No. 5, pp. 26-31.
- Krueger, R. A. (2014) *Focus groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*. 5th Ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.

-
- Krueger, R.A. & Casey, M.A. (2009) *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, 4th Ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
- Kuzel, A. (1992) Sampling in Qualitative Inquiry. In: Crabtree, B. and Miller, M. (eds.) *Doing Qualitative Research*. pp. 31–44, Sage, Newbury Park, CA, USA.
- Langford, B. E., Schoenfeld, G., & Izzo, G. (2002) Nominal Grouping Sessions vs. Focus Groups. *Qualitative Market Research*, Vol. 5, pp. 58–70.
- Langley, A. (1986) *The Role of Formal Analysis in Organizations*. Unpublished PhD thesis, HEC Montréal.
- Langley, A. (1989) In Search of Rationality: The Purposes behind the Use of Formal Analysis in Organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 4, pp. 598–631.
- Lee, R.M. (2000) *Doing Research on Sensitive Topics*. Sage, London, UK.
- Levi-Strauss, C. (1966) *The Savage Mind*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, USA.
- Levy, D. L. (2000) Applications and Limitations of Complexity Theory in Organization Theory and Strategy. In: Rabin, J., Miller, G. J., & Hildreth, W. B. (eds.) *Handbook of Strategic Management*, 2nd Ed., Dekker, New York, NY, USA.
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Sage, Los Angeles, CA, USA.
- Lozeau, D., Langley, A., & Denis, J. L. (2002) The Corruption of Managerial Techniques by Organizations. *Human Relations*, Vol. 55, No. 5, pp. 537-564.
- Lundgren, M. & Blom, M. (2011) Strategy Consultants doing Strategy: How Status and Visibility affect Strategizing. *Lund Institute of Economic Research Working Paper Series*, Lund, SWE.
- Maitlis, S. & Lawrence, T. B. (2003) Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark: Understanding Failure in Organizational Strategizing. *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 1, pp. 109-139.
- Mantere, S., & Vaara, E. (2008) On the Problem of Participation in Strategy: A Critical Discursive Perspective. *Organization Science*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 341-358.
- Mantere, S. (2005) Strategic Practices as Enablers and Disablers of Championing Activity. *Strategic Organization*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 157-184.
- March, J. G. (2006) Rationality, Foolishness, and Adaptive Intelligence. *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 47, No. 3, pp. 201-214.

-
- Marcus, A. A., Goodman, R. S., & Grazman, D. N. (1995) The Diffusion of Strategic Management Frameworks. *Advances in Strategic Management*, Vol. 12B, pp. 115-145.
- Marshall, B., Cardon, P., Poddar, A. & Fontenot, R. (2013) Does Sample Size matter in Qualitative Research? A review of Qualitative Interviews in IS Research. *Journal of Computer Information Systems*, Vol. 54, No. 1, pp. 11-22.
- Mason, J. (2002) *Qualitative Researching*. 2nd Ed., Sage, London, UK.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2009) Designing a Qualitative Study. In: Bickman, L. and Rog, D.J. (eds.) *Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods*. 2nd Ed., pp. 214-253, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2013) *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. 3rd Ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
- Mayring, P. (2007) On Generalization in Qualitatively Oriented Research. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum Qualitative Social Research*, Vol. 8, No. 3.
- McCabe, D. L. & Narayanan, V. K. (1991) The Life-Cycle of the PIMS and BCG Models. *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 20, No. 4, pp. 347–352.
- McGrath, R.G. (2013): *The End of Competitive Advantage*. Harvard Business Review Press, Boston, MA, USA.
- McKenna, C. D. (2006) *The World's Newest Profession: Management Consulting in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge University Press, New York, NY, USA.
- Melin, L., Ericson, T., & Müllern, T. (1999) *Organizing in Strategizing*. Paper presented at the Nordfek Conference, Helsinki, FIN.
- Mezias, J., Grinyer P., & Guth, W. D. (2001) Changing collective cognition: A process model for strategic change. *Long Range Planning*, Vol. 34, No. 1, pp. 71–96.
- Miles, B. M., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014) *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. 3rd Ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
- Mintzberg, H. (1989). *Mintzberg on Management: Inside our strange World of Organizations*. Free Press, New York, NY, USA.
- Mintzberg, H. (1990) The Design School: Reconsidering the Basic Premises of Strategy Formation. *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 3, pp. 171-195.

-
- Mintzberg, H. (1994) *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning: Reconceiving Roles for Planning, Plans, Planners*. Free Press, New York, NY, USA.
- Mintzberg, H. (2004). *Managers, not MBAs: A Hard Look at the Soft Practice of Managing and Management Development*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco, CA, USA.
- Mintzberg, H., & Waters, J. A. (1985) Of Strategies, deliberate and emergent. *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 257-272.
- Mintzberg, H., B. Ahlstrand, & J. Lampel (1998) *Strategy Safari: A Guided Tour Through the Wilds of Strategic Management*. Prentice Hall, Hempstead, NY, USA.
- Mintzberg, H., Ghoshal, S., Lampel, J., & Quinn, J. B. (2003) *The Strategy Process: Concepts, Contexts, Cases*. 4th Ed., Pearson Education, Harlow, UK.
- Moisander, J., & Stenfors, S. (2009) Exploring the Edges of Theory-Practice Gap: Epistemic Cultures in Strategy-Tool Development and Use, *Organization*, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 227-247.
- Morgan, D. L. (1997) *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research*. 2nd Ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
- Morgan, D. L. (2008) Snowball Sampling. In: Given, L. M. (eds.) *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
- Nastasi, B.K., Hitchcock, J.H. & Brown, L.M. (2010) An inclusive Framework for Conceptualizing Mixed Methods Typologies. In: Tashakkori, A. & Teddlie C. (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioural Research*, 2nd Ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
- Nerur, S., Rasheed, A., & Natarajan, V. (2008) The intellectual Structure of Strategic Management Field: An Author co-citation Analysis. *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 319-336.
- Neuman, W.L. (2014) *Social Research Methods*. 7th Ed., Pearson, Harlow, UK.
- Nordqvist, M., & Melin, L. (2008) Strategic Planning Champions: Social Craftspersons, Artful Interpreters and Known Strangers. *Long Range Planning*, Vol.41, No. 3, pp. 326-344.
- O'Shannassy, T. (2010) Board and CEO Practice in Modern Strategy-Making: How is Strategy developed, who is the Boss and in what Circumstances? *Journal of Management & Organization*, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 280-298.
- O'Higgins, E., & Weigel, J. (1999) Hob: A New Tool for Tracking and Increasing Value Added. *Long Range Planning*, Vol. 32, No. 1, pp. 65-74.

- Oakley, A. (1999) Paradigm Wars: Some Thoughts on a Personal and Public Trajectory. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 247-254.
- Oliveira, B., Rosa, A., & Antonio, N. (2008) *Strategy Tools Use in Companies: A Survey*. Paper presented at the British Academy of Management Conference, September 10th - 11th, Harrogate, UK.
- Oliver, D. G., Serovich, J. M., & Mason, T. L. (2005) Constraints and Opportunities with Interview Transcription: Towards Reflection in Qualitative Research. *Social Forces*, Vol. 85, No. 2, pp. 1273-1289.
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Jiao, Q. G., & Bostick, S. L. (2004) *Library Anxiety: Theory, Research, and Applications*. Scarecrow, Lanham, UK.
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Dickinson, W. B., Leech, N. L., & Zoran, A. G. (2009a) A Qualitative Framework for Collecting and Analyzing Data in Focus Group Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 1-21.
- Onwuegbuzie, A.J., Johnson, R.B. & Collins, K.M.T. (2009b) Call for Mixed Analysis: A Philosophical Framework for Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 114-139.
- Oppenheim, A.N. (1992) *Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement*, 2nd Ed., Pinter, London, UK.
- Orlikowski, W. (2000) Using Technology and Constituting Structures: A Practice Lens for Studying Technology in Organizations. *Organization Science*, Vol. 12, No. 4, pp. 404-428.
- Orlikowski, W. (2002) Knowing in Practice: Enacting a Collective Capability in Distributed Organizing. *Organization Science*, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 249-273.
- Orlikowski, W. J. (2015) Practice in research: phenomenon, perspective and philosophy. In: Golsorkhi, D., Rouleau, L., Seidl, D., & Vaara, E. (eds.) *Cambridge Handbook of Strategy as Practice*. 2nd Ed., pp. 33-57, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.
- Paroutis, S., & Pettigrew, A. M. (2005) Making strategy in the multi-business firm. In: Floyd, S. W., Roos, J., Jacobs, C. D., & Kellermanns, F. W. (Eds.) *Innovating Strategy Processes*. Blackwell, Oxford, pp. 97-110.
- Paroutis, S., & Pettigrew, A. (2007) Strategizing in the Multi-Business Firm: Strategy Teams at Multiple Levels and over Time. *Human Relations*, Vol. 60, No. 1, pp. 99-136.

-
- Paroutis, S., & Heracleous, L. (2013) Discourse revisited: Dimensions and Employment of First-Order Strategy Discourse during Institutional Adoption. *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 34, No. 8, pp. 935-956.
- Paroutis, S., Franco, A., & Papadopoulos, T. (2015) Visual Interactions with Strategy Tools: Producing Strategic Knowledge in Workshops. *British Journal of Management. Special Issue: Materializing Strategy and Strategizing Materials*, Vol. 26, pp. 48-66.
- Paroutis, S., Heracleous, L. & Angwin, D. (2016) *Practicing Strategy: Text and Cases*. 2nd Ed., Sage, London, UK.
- Patton, M. (2015) *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice*, 4th Ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
- Paul, H. & Wollny, V. (2014) *Instrumente des strategischen Managements: Grundlagen und Anwendung*. 2nd Ed., Oldenbourg, München, GER.
- Pearson, K. (1900) X. On the Criterion that a Given System of Deviations from the Probable in the Case of a Correlated System of Variables is such that it can be reasonably supposed to have arisen from Random Sampling. *The London, Edinburgh, and Dublin Philosophical Magazine and Journal of Science*, Vol. 50, No. 302, pp. 157-175.
- Peirce, C. S., & De Wall, C. (2014) *Illustrations of the Logic of Science*. Open Court, New York, NY, USA.
- Pickton, D. W., & Wright, S. (1998) What's SWOT in Strategic Analysis? *Strategic Change*, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 101–109.
- Porter, M. E. (1979) How Competitive Forces Shape Strategy. *Strategic Planning: Readings*, pp. 102-117.
- Porter, M. E. (1980) *Competitive Strategy*. Free Press, New York, NY, USA.
- Porter, M. E. (1985) *Competitive Advantage*. Free Press, New York, NY, USA.
- Prahalad, C. K., & Hamel, G. (1994) Strategy as a Field of Study: Why Search for a New Paradigm? *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 15, No. S2, pp. 5-16.
- QSR International (2016), *Run a Matrix Coding query*. Available from: http://help-nv11.qsrinternational.com/desktop/procedures/run_a_matrix_coding_query.htm [Accessed 31 March 2019].

-
- Reckwitz, A. (2002) Toward a Theory of Social Practices: A Development in Cultural Theorizing. *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 243-263.
- Reeves, M., Haanaes, K., & Sinha, J. (2015) *Your Strategy needs a Strategy: How to Choose and Execute the Right Approach*. Harvard Business Review Press, Boston, MA, USA.
- Reeves, M., Love, C., & Tillmanns, P. (2012) Your Strategy needs a Strategy. *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 90, No. 9, pp. 76-83.
- Regnér, P. (2003) Strategy Creation in the Periphery: Inductive Versus Deductive Strategy Making. *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 1, pp. 57-82.
- Reichertz, J. (2004) Abduction, Deduction and Induction in Qualitative Research. In: Flick, U., von Kardorff, E. & Steinke, I. (eds.) *A Companion to Qualitative Research*. pp. 159-164, Sage, London, UK.
- Rigby, D. K. (1993) How to Manage the Management Tools. *Planning Review*, Vol. 21, No. 6, pp. 8-15.
- Rigby, D., & Bilodeau, B. (2017) *Management Tools & Trends 2017*. Bain & Company.
- Rouleau, L. (2005) Micro-Practices of Strategic Sensemaking and Sensegiving: How Middle Managers Interpret and Sell Change Every Day. *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 7, pp. 1413-1441.
- Rouleau, L. (2013) Strategy-as-Practice Research at a Crossroads. *M@n@gement*, Vol. 16, No. 5, pp. 574-592.
- Ryan, G., & Bernard, H. R. (2003) Techniques to Identify Themes. *Field Methods*, Vol.15, No. 1, pp. 85–109.
- Sahlin-Andersson, K., & Engwall, L. (2002) *The Expansion of Management Knowledge: Carriers, Flows, and Sources*. Stanford Business Books, Stanford, CA, USA.
- Sandelowski, M. (1995) Sample Size in Qualitative Research. *Research in Nursing and Health*, Vol. 18, No.2, pp.179–183.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. (2012) *Research Methods for Business Students*. 6th Ed., Pearson, Harlow, UK.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. (2016) *Research Methods for Business Students*. 7th Ed., Pearson, Harlow, UK.

-
- Saxton, T. (1995) The Impact of Third Parties on Strategic Decision Making: Roles, Timing and Organizational Outcomes. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 47-62.
- Schatzki, T. R., Knorr-Cetina, K., & von Savigny, E. (2001) *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*. Routledge, London, UK.
- Seidl, D., & Whittington, R. (2014) Enlarging the Strategy-as-Practice Research Agenda: Towards Taller and Flatter Ontologies, *Organization Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 10, pp. 1407-1421.
- Sekaran, U. & Bougie, R. (2013) *Research Methods for Business*, 6th Ed., Wiley, Chichester, UK.
- Silman, A. J., Macfarlane, G. J. & Macfarlane, T. (2018) *Epidemiological Studies: A Practical Guide*. 3rd Ed., Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.
- Simon, H. A. (1978) Rationality as Process and as Product of Thought. *American Economic Review*, Vol. 68, No. 2, pp. 1-16.
- Small, M. L. (2009) 'How many Cases do I need?' On Science and the Logic of Case Election in field-based Research. *Ethnography*, Vol.10, No.1, pp. 5–38.
- Spee, A. P., Tanner, L., & Gunn, R. (2008) *Strategy Tool Use across Bavaria, Finland and Wales*. Paper presented at the British Academy of Management Conference, September 10th-11th, Harrogate, UK.
- Spee, A. P., & Jarzabkowski, P. (2009) Strategy Tools as Boundary Objects, *Strategic Organization*, Vol. 7, pp. 223–32.
- Stacey, R. D. (2007) *Strategic Management and Organizational Dynamics*. 5th Ed., Prentice Hall, Essex, UK.
- Stenfors, S. (2007) *Strategy Tools and Strategy Toys: Management Tools in Strategy Work*. Helsinki School of Economics, Helsinki, FIN.
- Stenfors, S. & Tanner, L. (2007) Evaluating Strategy Tools through Activity Lens. Working Papers W-419, In: Stenfors, S. (eds.) *Strategy Tools and Strategy Toys: Management Tools in Strategy Work*. Helsinki School of Economics, Helsinki, FIN.
- Stewart, D. W. & Shamdasani, P. M. (2015) *Focus Groups. Theory and Practice*. Sage, London, UK.

-
- Strauss, A. (1987) *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*. Cambridge University Press, New York, NY, USA.
- Strauss, A. (1990) *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*. 2nd Ed., Cambridge University Press, New York, NY, USA.
- Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1998) *Basics of Qualitative Research*. 2nd Ed., Sage, London, UK.
- Sturdy, A., Clark, T., Handley, K., & Fincham, R. (2009) *Management Consultancy: Boundaries and Knowledge in Action*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.
- Suchman, L., Blomberg, J., Orr, J. E., & Trigg, R. (1999) Reconstructing Technologies as Social Practice. *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 43, No. 3, pp. 392–408.
- Suddaby, R. (2006) What Grounded Theory is Not. *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 49, No. 4, pp. 633-642.
- Sundin, O. & Johannisson, J. (2006) Pragmatism, Neo-pragmatism and Sociocultural Theory: Communicative Participation as a Perspective in LIS. *Journal of Documentation*, Vol. 61, No. 1, pp. 23-43.
- Tashakkori, A. & Teddlie, C. (2010) *The Sage Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioural Research*. 2nd Ed. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
- Tassabehji, R., & Isherwood, A. (2014) Management Use of Strategic Tools for Innovating during Turbulent Times. *Strategic Change*, Vol. 23, No. 1-2, pp. 63-80.
- Teddlie, C. & Yu, (2007) Mixed Methods Sampling: A Typology with Examples. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 77-100.
- Thurmond, V. (2001) The Point of Triangulation. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, Vol. 33, No. 3, pp. 254–256.
- Timmermans, S. & Tavory, I., (2007) Advancing Ethnographic Research through Grounded Theory Practice. In: Bryant, A. and Charmaz, K. (eds.) *Handbook of Grounded Theory*, pp. 122-140. Sage, London, UK.
- Treacy, M., & Sims, J. (2004) Take Command of your Growth. *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 82, No. 4, pp. 127-133.

- Tsoukas, H. & Knudsen, C. (2002) The Conduct of Strategy Research. In: Pettigrew, A., Thomas, H., & Whittington, R. (eds.) *The Handbook of Strategy and Management*, Chapter 18, pp. 411–435, Sage, London, UK.
- Tsoukas, H. & Knudsen, C. (2003) *The Oxford Handbook of Organization Theory: Meta-Theoretical Perspectives*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.
- Tukey, J. W. (1977) *Exploratory Data Analysis*. Addison-Wesley, Reading, UK.
- Vaara, E., & Whittington, R. (2012) Strategy-as-Practice: Taking Social Practices Seriously. *Academy of Management Annals*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 285-336.
- Van den Steen, E. (2017) Strategy and the Strategist: How it matters Who develops the Strategy. *Management Science*, Vol. 64, No. 10, pp. 1-19.
- Van Maanen, J. (1995) Style as Theory. *Organization Science*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 133–143.
- Varyani, M. E., & Khammar, M. (2010) *A review of Strategy-as-Practice and the Role of Consultants and Middle Managers*. Master Thesis, Chalmers University of Technology, Göteborg, SWE.
- Vuorinen, T., Hakala, H., Kohtamäki, M., & Uusitalo, K. (2018) Mapping the Landscape of Strategy Tools: A Review on Strategy Tools published in Leading Journals within the past 25 years. *Long Range Planning*, Vol. 51, No. 4, pp- 586-605.
- Webb, A. (2014) What Strategists Need: A Meeting of the Minds. *McKinsey Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 3, pp. 38-51.
- Westley, F. (1990) Middle Managers and Strategy: Micro Dynamics of Inclusion. *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 5, pp. 337–351.
- Wheelen, T. L., Hunger, J. D., Hoffman, A. N., & Bamford, C. E. (2014) *Strategic Management and Business Policy*, 14th Ed., Pearson, Harlow, UK.
- Whittington, R. (1996) Strategy as Practice. *Long Range Planning*, Vol. 29, No. 5, pp. 731-735.
- Whittington, R. (2003) The Work of Strategizing and Organizing: For a Practice Perspective. *Strategic Organization*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 117-125.
- Whittington, R., Jarzabkowski, P., Mayer, M., Mounoud, E., Nahapiet, J., & Rouleau, L. (2003) Taking Strategy Seriously: Responsibility and Reform for an Important Social Practice. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, Vol. 12, No.4, pp. 396–409.

-
- Whittington, R. (2004) Strategy after Modernism: Recovering Practice. *European Management Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 62-68.
- Whittington, R. (2006) Completing the Practice Turn in Strategy Research. *Organization Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 5, pp. 613-634.
- Whittington, R., Molloy, E., Mayer, M. & Smith, A. (2006) Practices of Strategizing/Organizing: Broadening Strategy Work and Skills. *Long Range Planning*, Vol. 39, pp. 615–29.
- Whittington, R. (2007) Strategy Practice and Strategy Process: Family Differences and the Sociological Eye. *Organization Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 10, pp. 1575–1586.
- Whittington, R., & Cailluet, L. (2008) The Crafts of Strategy. *Long Range Planning*, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp. 217-247.
- Worren, N., Moore, K., & Elliott, R. (2002) When Theories Become Tools: Toward a Framework for Pragmatic Validity. *Human Relations*, Vol. 55, No. 10, pp. 1227-1250.
- Wright, R. P., Paroutis, S. E., & Blettner, D. P. (2013) How Useful Are the Strategic Tools We Teach in Business Schools? *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 1, pp. 92-125.
- Yin, R. (2014) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 5th Ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
- Yin, R. K. (2016) *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*, 2nd Ed., Guilford Press, New York, NY, USA.

Appendix

A Interview Guide, Academics

Interview Guide – Different Perspectives on Strategizing		
Date/Time:		Location:
Participant:		Education:
Consent: Written <input type="checkbox"/> Verbal <input type="checkbox"/>		
Perspective: Executive <input type="checkbox"/> Consultant <input type="checkbox"/> Academic <input type="checkbox"/>		
Organization:		Industry:
Department:		Hierarchical Level:
Audio-recording: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
No.	Questions	Answer
Part	Introduction Questions	
Q.1	What is your current position and area of responsibility within the organization?	
Q.2	How have you been involved in strategy work so far (role)?	
Q.3	What experiences do you have with strategy work?	
Q.4	What are in your view typical strategic problems? Please describe at least three typical problems.	
Q.5.	How would you or should strategists/organizations attempt to solve such strategic projects? And do you or should they follow a significant process that guides the strategy work?	
Part	Theory related Questions	
Q.6	How would you describe strategy tools?	

Q.7	Which of the following strategy tools do you <u>know</u>?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SWOT/TOWS - Key Success Factors - Core Competences Analysis (Tree) - Scenario Planning - Value Chain - Porter's Five Forces - Resourced-Based Analysis (VRIO) - Industry Life Cycle - PESTLE Analysis - Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey) - Porter's Generic Strategy Model - Strategic Group Analysis - Ansoff's Product/Market Matrix - Bowman's Strategy Clock - Corporate Parenting Matrices (Ashridge) - Blue Ocean Four Action Framework - (Tool/Technique you prefer to use) - (Tool/Technique you prefer to use) - (Tool/Technique you prefer to use) - (Tool/Technique you prefer to use) 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Q.8	<p>Are you familiar with the terms 'strategizing' or 'strategy-as-practice'?</p> <p>What meaning do you associate to them?</p> <p>If not, could you possibly make a suggestion?</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>
Part	Practice related Questions	
Q.9	In what situation should strategists/organizations use strategy tools to conduct their strategy work? – Please also explain how.	

Q.10	<p>The strategic management process is oftentimes divided into four stages – analysis, formulation, implementation, and evaluation and control. In what phase should strategists/organizations most frequently use strategy tools?</p> <p>When looking at the list again, during what phase would you typically <u>use</u> the following tools?</p>																																													
		<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Use</th><th>Phase</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td><td>0 A F I E</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Use	Phase		0 A F I E	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Use	Phase																																													
	0 A F I E																																													
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																													
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																													
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																													
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																													
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																													
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																													
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																													
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																													
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																													
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																													
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																													
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																													
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																													
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																													
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																													
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																													
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																													
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																													
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																													
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																													
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SWOT - Key Success Factors - Core Competences Analysis - Scenario Planning - Value Chain - Porter's Five Forces - Resourced-Based Analysis (VRIO) - Industry Life Cycle - PESTLE Analysis - Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey) - Porter's Generic Strategy Model - Strategic Group Analysis - Ansoff's Product/Market Matrix - Bowman's Strategy Clock - Corporate Parenting Matrices (Ashridge) - Blue Ocean Four Action Framework - (Tool/Technique you prefer to use) - (Tool/Technique you prefer to use) - (Tool/Technique you prefer to use) - (Tool/Technique you prefer to use) 																																													
Q.11	Referring to a specific strategic problem, which strategy tool has particularly supported you/your organization the most/least?																																													

Q.12	How do you appraise the success and workload of the strategy tools outlined below, and how would you rate their efficiency?	
	Please tick as appropriate.	Efficiency
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SWOT - Key Success Factors - Core Competences Analysis - Scenario Planning - Value Chain - Porter's Five Forces - Resourced-Based Analysis (VRIO) - Industry Life Cycle - PESTLE Analysis - Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey) - Porter's Generic Strategy Model - Strategic Group Analysis - Ansoff's Product/Market Matrix - Bowman's Strategy Clock - Corporate Parenting Matrices (Ashridge) - Blue Ocean Four Action Framework - (Tool/Technique you prefer to use) - (Tool/Technique you prefer to use) - (Tool/Technique you prefer to use) - (Tool/Technique you prefer to use) 	<p>Low - High</p> <p>0 1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p>
Q.13	Did you or should strategists/organizations adapt the tools-in-use to the specific organizational context? Please provide examples.	Yes No
Q.14	To what extent are strategy tools used to reach a rational answer rather than post-rationalizing decisions that are already made?	
Q.15	What are the advantages of using strategy tools in practice?	
Q.16	What are the disadvantages of using strategy tools in practice?	
Q.17	When looking at current strategy tools used in organizations, how would you assess their value in the future?	

Q.18	How would you evaluate the impact of strategy tools?	
Part	Closing Questions	
Q.19	How can strategy tools enhance the efficiency of an organization's strategy process?	
Q.20	What are the conditions for the successful utilization of strategy tools?	
Q.21	What problems should future strategy tools aim to solve?	
Part	Finish	
Q. 22	Do you have any more questions or is there something you would like to add?	

B Interview Guide, Consultants and Executives

Interview Guide – Different Perspectives on Strategizing		
Date/Time:		Location:
Participant:		Education:
Consent: Written <input type="checkbox"/> Verbal <input type="checkbox"/>		
Perspective: Executive <input type="checkbox"/> Consultant <input type="checkbox"/> Academic <input type="checkbox"/>		
Organization:		Industry:
Department:		Hierarchical Level:
Audio-recording: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
No.	Questions	Answer
Part	Introduction Questions	
Q.1	What is your current position and area of responsibility within the organization?	
Q.2	What is your current role in strategy work?	
Q.3	What experiences do you have with strategy work?	
Q.4	What are in your view typical strategic problems? Please try to describe various typical problems that come to your mind.	
Q.5.	How would you/your organization attempt to solve such strategic projects? And do you follow a significant process that guides the strategy work?	
Part	Theory related Questions	
Q.6	How would you describe strategy tools?	

Q.7	Which of the following strategy tools do you <u>know</u>?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SWOT/TOWS - Key Success Factors - Core Competences Analysis (Tree) - Scenario Planning - Value Chain - Porter's Five Forces - Resourced-Based Analysis (VRIO) - Industry Life Cycle - PESTLE Analysis - Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey) - Porter's Generic Strategy Model - Strategic Group Analysis - Ansoff's Product/Market Matrix - Bowman's Strategy Clock - Corporate Parenting Matrices (Ashridge) - Blue Ocean Four Action Framework - (Tool/Technique you prefer to use) - (Tool/Technique you prefer to use) - (Tool/Technique you prefer to use) - (Tool/Technique you prefer to use) 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Q.8	<p>Are you familiar with the terms 'strategizing' or 'strategy-as-practice'?</p> <p>What meaning do you associate to them?</p> <p>If not, could you possibly make a suggestion?</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>
Part	Practice related Questions	
Q.9	In what situation do you/does your organization use strategy tools to conduct your/its strategy work? – Please also explain how.	

Q.10	<p>The strategic management process is oftentimes divided into four stages – analysis, formulation, implementation, and evaluation and control. In what phase do you/does your organization most frequently <u>use</u> strategy tools?</p> <p>When looking at the list again, during what phase would you typically use the following tools?</p>																																															
		<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Use</th><th>Phase</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td><td>0 A F I E</td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Use	Phase		0 A F I E	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Use	Phase																																															
	0 A F I E																																															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																															
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>																																															
Q.11	Referring to a specific strategic problem, which strategy tool has particularly supported you/your organization the most/least?																																															

Q.12	How do you appraise the success and workload of the strategy tools outlined below, and how would you rate their efficiency?	
	Please tick as appropriate.	Efficiency
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SWOT - Key Success Factors - Core Competences Analysis - Scenario Planning - Value Chain - Porter's Five Forces - Resourced-Based Analysis (VRIO) - Industry Life Cycle - PESTLE Analysis - Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey) - Porter's Generic Strategy Model - Strategic Group Analysis - Ansoff's Product/Market Matrix - Bowman's Strategy Clock - Corporate Parenting Matrices (Ashridge) - Blue Ocean Four Action Framework - (Tool/Technique you prefer to use) - (Tool/Technique you prefer to use) - (Tool/Technique you prefer to use) - (Tool/Technique you prefer to use) 	<p>Low - High</p> <p>0 1 2 3 4 5</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p>
Q.13	Do you/does your organization adapt the tools-in-use to the specific organizational context? Please provide examples.	Yes No
Q.14	To what extent are strategy tools used to reach a rational answer rather than post-rationalizing decisions that are already made?	
Q.15	What are the advantages of using strategy tools in practice?	
Q.16	What are the disadvantages of using strategy tools in practice?	
Q.17	When looking at current strategy tools used in your organization, how do you assess their value in the future?	

Q.18	How would you evaluate the impact of strategy tools?	
Part	Closing Questions	
Q.19	How can strategy tools enhance the efficiency of your organization's strategy process?	
Q.20	What are the conditions for the successful utilization of strategy tools?	
Q.21	What problems should future strategy tools aim to solve?	
Part	Finish	
Q. 22	Do you have any more questions or is there something you would like to add?	

C Questionnaire Guide

Questionnaire - Theory and Practical Use of Strategy Tools

Information Sheet

You are invited to take part in a PhD research study titled **“Different Perspectives on Strategizing – Theory and Practical Use of Strategy Tools”**. The study is undertaken by the doctoral student **Philipp Schneemann** from London South Bank University. As user of strategy tools in practice, you represent the chosen target group of organizational strategists (e.g. executive or consultant perspective).

The purpose of this research is to investigate strategizing and to provide a better understanding of the utilization of strategy tools from true practice perspectives. If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire. The questionnaire further examines the themes and categories that evolved during an earlier interview study. It requires approximately **15-20 minutes** and is completed online at your computer.

The applied safety standards of this research follow the principals of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) drafted by the European Union (EU). There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this survey and taking part is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you can still withdraw prior to clicking the ‘I agree’ button without adversely affecting any professional or personal relationships. However, once you submit your responses, it would be impossible to remove them, because all data is collected anonymously. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential, and digital data will be stored in secure computer files. Any report of this research that is made available to the public will not include your name or any other individual information by which you could be identified.

If you have questions or concerns about this study, you can contact the researcher by mail or phone. If you wish to receive any further information, or have any complaints about the way you have been dealt with or other concerns, you can contact any of the academic supervisors (Shushma Patel - shushma@lsbu.ac.uk or Herbert Paul – herbert.paul@hs-mainz.de) for this study. Finally, if you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can contact the Chair of School of Business Ethics Panel - Sheena Murdoch (murdochs@lsbu.ac.uk).

Best Regards,

Philipp Schneemann

Doctoral Student

London South Bank University

schneemp@lsbu.ac.uk

Consent Form

Thank you for your interest in this research. Before you participate, I need to make sure you know what this research is about, what your involvement will be and that you consent to take part.

By clicking the 'I Agree' button to begin the online questionnaire I understand:

1. I have been given a written explanation of the research I am about to participate in and I know what is involved in my participation.
2. My participation in this research is voluntary and I am free to withdraw prior to clicking the 'I Agree' button without giving any reason. Therefore, I am aware that the researcher will not be able to remove my responses once they are submitted conclusively.
3. My identity will not be linked to my data and that all information remains anonymous.
4. I have been provided with the name and contact details of the researcher, Philipp Schneemann (schneemp@lsbu.ac.uk), to contact if there are questions or concerns about this research.
5. I am confirming that I am 18 years of age or older, have read and understood this consent form and agree to participate in this research study.

I Agree

I do not Agree

Demographic Questions

What is your **gender**?

Male Female

What is your **age**?

21-29 years old
30-49 years old
50-64 years old
65 years and over

Do you have a **business education**?

Yes No

If not, please specify your educational background below:

What is your **highest level of education**?

None
High School
Apprenticeship
Bachelor/Diploma
Master/MBA
PhD/Doctoral Studies

Background Information

Which **perspective** are you part of?

Consultant Executive

What **industry/sector** is your organization part of?

Automotive
Chemical
Consulting
Engineering
Finance
IT
Manufacturing
Media
Pharma
Retail
Telecommunications
Transportation
Other

What is your current **main responsibility** in your organization?

General Management
Strategy
Sales/Purchasing
Operations
Finance
Controlling
Other

How would you consider your **hierarchical level** in the organization?

Low (i.e. Operative Management)
 Medium (i.e. Middle Management)
 High (i.e. Senior, Top Management)

How many **years of practical experience** do you have **in strategy work**?

1 - 2 years
 3 - 5 years
 5 - 10 years
 more than 10 years

Strategy Toolkit

Which strategy tools do you **know**, and which ones have you **used**?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Please select at least 16 answer(s).

	Don't Know	Know	Used
Ansoff's Product/Market Matrix			
Blue Ocean Four Action Framework			
Bowman's Strategy Clock			
Core Competences Analysis (Tree)			
Corporate Parenting Matrices (Ashridge)			
Industry Life Cycle			
Key Success Factors			
PESTLE Analysis			
Porter's Five Forces			
Porter's Generic Strategy Model			
Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey)			
Resourced-Based Analysis (VRIO)			
Scenario Planning			
Strategic Group Analysis			
SWOT/TOWS			
Value Chain			

Are there any other **personally preferred tools** that you use/have used, which are **not** represented in the list?
 (if applicable, please name max. 4)

Personally preferred tool 1:
 Personally preferred tool 2:
 Personally preferred tool 3:
 Personally preferred tool 4:

Efficiency

How would you rate the **efficiency** of the tools **you have already used**?

Efficiency: Total workload (input) compared to the usefulness of results (output).

Note: Only rate tools you have already used.

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

	Inefficient	Needs Development	Somewhat Efficient	Efficient	Very Efficient
Ansoff's Product/Market Matrix					
Blue Ocean Four Action Framework					
Bowman's Strategy Clock					
Core Competences Analysis (Tree)					
Corporate Parenting Matrices (Ashridge)					
Industry Life Cycle					
Key Success Factors					
PESTLE Analysis					
Porter's Five Forces					
Porter's Generic Strategy Model					
Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey)					
Resourced-Based Analysis (VRIO)					
Scenario Planning					
Strategic Group Analysis					
SWOT/TOWS					
Value Chain					
Personally preferred Tool 1					
Personally preferred Tool 2					
Personally preferred Tool 3					
Personally preferred Tool 4					

Effectiveness

How would you rate the **effectiveness** of the tools you have already used?

Effectiveness: The degree to which objectives are achieved and the extent to which targeted problems are solved by the respective tool.

Note: Only rate tools you have already used.

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

	Unsatisfactory	Needs Development	Somewhat Effective	Capable and Effective	Very Effective
Ansoff's Product/Market Matrix					
Blue Ocean Four Action Framework					
Bowman's Strategy Clock					
Core Competences Analysis (Tree)					
Corporate Parenting Matrices (Ashridge)					
Industry Life Cycle					
Key Success Factors					
PESTLE Analysis					
Porter's Five Forces					
Porter's Generic Strategy Model					
Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey)					
Resourced-Based Analysis (VRIO)					
Scenario Planning					
Strategic Group Analysis					
SWOT/TOWS					
Value Chain					
Personally preferred Tool 1					
Personally preferred Tool 2					
Personally preferred Tool 3					
Personally preferred Tool 4					

Cause for Application

Why do you apply tools to conduct strategy work?

You can select all answers if applicable.

To approach a problem systematically
 To analyze an unknown situation
 To prepare for a change
 To fulfill an order
 Other

Strategic Problems and Objectives

Do certain **strategic problems or objectives** initiate the use of strategy tools for you?

Yes No

Which strategic **problems and objectives** most likely trigger the use of strategy tools?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Please select at least 1 answer(s).

	Not at all Likely	Slightly Likely	Moderately Likely	Very Likely	Completely Likely
Changing Environments (micro/macro)					
Cost Efficiency					
Growth					
Positioning					
Ressource Allocation					
Other					

Advantages and Disadvantages

How **important** are the following **advantages** while using strategy tools in practice for you?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

	Not Important	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Important	Very Important
Enable communication					
Support decision making					
Produce results					
Reduce complexity					
Provide structure					
Help to visualize					
Other					

How **problematic** are the following **disadvantages** while using strategy tools in practice for you?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

	Not Problematic	Slightly Problematic	Moderately Problematic	Problematic	Very Problematic
Complex application					
Misleading results					
Oversimplify issues					
Priotize decision					
Static nature					
Other					

Different Stages

Do you/does your organization apply strategy tools **during a dedicated process** (e.g. analysis, formulation, implementation, and evaluation and control)?

Yes	No
-----	----

Assuming there is a process, during which **phase(s) of the strategic management process** would you typically use the tools presented in the list?

Note: Only for tools you have already used.

You can tick more than one answer per row.

	Analysis	Formulation	Implementation	Evaluation & Control
Ansoff's Product/Market Matrix				
Blue Ocean Four Action Framework				
Bowman's Strategy Clock				
Core Competences Analysis (Tree)				
Corporate Parenting Matrices (Ashridge)				
Industry Life Cycle				
Key Success Factors				
PESTLE Analysis				
Porter's Five Forces				
Porter's Generic Strategy Model				
Portfolio Matrices (BCG/McKinsey)				
Resourced-Based Analysis (VRIO)				
Scenario Planning				
Strategic Group Analysis				
SWOT/TOWS				
Value Chain				
Personally preferred Tool 1				
Personally preferred Tool 2				
Personally preferred Tool 3				
Personally preferred Tool 4				

Decision Making

How frequent do you/does your organization use strategy tools **to reach a decision**?

Never
Rarely
Sometimes
Often
Always

How frequent do you/does your organization use strategy tools **to proof a decision**?

Never
Rarely
Sometimes
Often
Always

Dependencies

Which of the following **factors** influence the effective application of tools the most?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

	Not at All Influential	Slightly Influential	Moderately Influential	Very Influential	Extremely influential
Acceptance					
Content					
Practitioner					
Situation/Context					
Other					

Adaptation

Do you/does your organization **adapt** the tools-in-use to conduct strategy work?

Note: Adaptation stands for the alteration, adjustment, or customization of tools

Yes No

If yes, which of the following **reasons** most likely lead to the adaptation of strategy tools?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

	Not at All Likely	Slightly Likely	Moderately Likely	Very Likely	Completely Likely
Organizational Context					
Theoretical Limitations					
Dynamic Environments					
Other					

Role

When looking at your organization, do strategy tools have an **influence** on strategy work?

Yes No

How do you evaluate the **influence** of strategy tools on strategy work?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
Impact (i.e. trigger action)					
Meaning (i.e. convincing power)					
Importance (i.e. significance)					

Future Development

When looking at current strategy tools used in your organization, how do you assess their **value in the future** (i.e. future value)?

None
Low
Moderate
High
Very High

Do you agree or disagree that tools will **be used** to conduct strategy work **in the future** (i.e. future existence)?

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Undecided
Agree
Strongly Agree

Which of the following **factors should be prioritized** to further develop strategy tools in the future?

Tools should...

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Please select at least 3 answer(s).

	Not a priority	Low priority	Medium priority	High priority	Essential
Adapt to Dynamic Industry Environments					
Support more Content					
Increase Flexibility (Lean or Agile Approaches)					
Other					

End of Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. We truly value the information you have provided.

If you have any comments on the questionnaire or the project, or you wish to receive information on the conclusions of the research, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher (Philipp Schneemann - schneemp@lsbu.ac.uk).

Many thanks,

Philipp Schneemann

D Focus Group Guide

Engagement Questions

1. Considering the research topic, what interests you most regarding strategy tool-in-use?
2. Thinking about the past year, have you applied (a) strategy tool(s) during your practical work?
 - a. If yes, which one and what for?
 - b. If not, did you apply any other approaches?

Exploration Questions

3. Based on the previous results the top three strategy tools-in-use are the SWOT/TOWS, Portfolio Matrices, and Key Success Factors. Were you expecting this result or is it rather surprising? Why?
4. There are certain strategic problems and objectives that initiate the use of strategy tools. Referring to the preliminary research results, ‘positioning’ and ‘growth’ most likely trigger tool application. Why is it necessary to approach these issues with tools?
5. The main advantage of using strategy tools in practice seems to be that they ‘provide structure’. Why is structure so important for strategy work?
6. The greatest disadvantage of using strategy tools in practice seems to be that they ‘oversimplify issues’. Can you describe a practical example for this issue?
7. In an organization’s strategic management process most strategy tools are used during the analysis and formulation phase (i.e. before the strategic decision). What could be the reasons for that?
8. Many tools are also used as proof after the strategic decision has been made (i.e. post-rationalization), even though the majority of the surveyed practitioners claimed that tools are primarily used to ‘reach’ a decision instead of ‘proofing’ it. Why is post-rationalization still happening?
9. Referring to the surveyed participants, the ‘acceptance’ of tools influences their effective application the most. Why does acceptance play such a big role?
10. A great majority of practitioners claimed to adapt tools-in-use to conduct strategy work. Why is their adaptation nowadays indispensable?
11. Most of the surveyed strategists were certain that strategy tools will have a value and further exist in the future. However, to further develop and adjust them, practitioners should mainly focus on increasing their ‘flexibility’. Why should tools be more flexible?

Closing Question

12. When looking at the developed definition for 'strategy tools', would you consider it as sufficient?
Feel free to comment on whatever comes to your mind.
13. Due to my research you should now be aware what 'strategy-as-practice' stands for. When looking at modern strategy work, what would you recommend to researchers in this field? Where should they focus on and how could they better adjust to the practical world?
14. Lastly, do you have any questions or is there something you would like to add?

E Codebook – Semi-Structured Interviews

A codebook, in NVivo, stands for a list of the thematic nodes and descriptions that is developed as part of a qualitative analysis. It is usually employed to structure theory development and to identify comparable categories for possible matrix coding queries. Overall, 36 coding themes were identified and divided into four tree nodes (integral elements of research). Two of these four, 'strategizing' and 'strategy-as-practice', had no subordinate categories, as the author was only concentrating on the theoretical meaning and definition of such terms. Theory-related and definitional information was also coded for the tree node 'strategy tools', albeit it had four major underlying categories (or parent nodes) 'efficiency', 'future development', 'role', and most importantly 'usage'. Lastly, the tree node 'strategy work' was broken in two major categories. These refined and reorganized categories enabled the development of theoretical explanations of the studied phenomenon.

Node - Name	Node - Description
Integral Elements of Research	Theoretical basis of Research
Strategizing	Definitions, suggestions of the term strategizing incl. examples
Strategy-as-Practice	Definitions, suggestions of the term strategy-as-practice incl. examples
Strategy Tools	Definitions, suggestions of the term strategy tools incl. examples
Efficiency - Effectiveness	Efficient/Effective use of tools, what drives efficiency/effectiveness, increased efficiency/effectiveness,
Future Development	Development and change of tools, should be more dynamic, agile, standardized, and include foresight
Role	Impact, success, meaning, importance of tools in practice
Usage	What are tools used for? When, where, how? Examples of tools-in-use
Adaptation	Adapted tools, why adapted, need to adapt, customized, altered, incl. Examples
Advantages	Why are tools helpful or supportive?
Communication	Communicate, discuss, talk, discussion, dialog, transparency
Decision-Making	Support, guide the thinking process, steering, agreeing, agreement, reaching consensus, stimulate brainstorming
Results-Outcome-Output	Summarizing, achieving information or outcomes, gathering information, access information, understanding results and issues, raise questions, meaning, conclusion

Simplicity	Reduce complexity, simple, quick overview, standardization, one-page overview
Structure	Systematic approach, basis for analysis, structured, not to forget something, sense making, lead to understanding, starting point
Visualization	Visualize, visualization, creating/drawing a picture
Disadvantages	What problems occur while using tools, when, how, where?
Complexity	Complexity, time consuming, lack of agility, administrative burden, high workload
Misleading/Dysfunctional	Political decisions, no real outcome, distraction, meaningless, no proven results, too theoretical, not a real solution
Oversimplification	Over-standardize, over-generalize, justification, gut-feeling decisions
Prioritization	Losing focus, too much faith, trust or belief in tools, biased results
Static	Static nature, not flexible enough, flexibility, dynamism, not dynamic, too theoretical
Dependence	Using tools depends on...?
Acceptance	Creating belief, to accept, to give advice, should be convincing, to convince people, accepted from top down to bottom up
Content	Content, content management, data or information
Context-Situation	Situations, depends on the situation, context, depending on the context, different context, topic, depends on the topic, client, project, or problem
Practitioners	Role of users, practitioners, strategists, people, prepared mindset, experience, competence, knowledge, users
Rationalization	Tools used to reach rationale answers or used to post-rationalize decisions
Post-Rational	Tools used to post-rationalize, predefined answers and decisions
Rational	Tools used to reach a rational answer, based on real outcomes

Strategy Work	Definitions, suggestions of the term strategy work.
Process	Strategy seen as a process that is supported through tools, approaches, frameworks
Analysis	Tools used during analysis, or to analyze, references to analyses
Formulation/Planning	Tools used during formulation, or to formulate, references to formulation
Implementation	Tools used during implementation, or to implement, references to implementation
Evaluation/Control	Tools used during evaluation and control, or to evaluate and control, references to evaluation and control
Strategic Problems – Objectives	Problems and Objectives, strategic questions, tasks, projects

F Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Usage

Academic – A1 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

With adapted categories on the axis they are used

Reference 2

All the emergent strategy approaches are not used by older players but by younger companies

Reference 3

the Ansoff Matrix really helped to tell what the new target is used for

Reference 4

the five forces were also really helpful, because the company was large and confronted with substitutes, which they did not really face before

Reference 5

using tools in a regular interval can be really helpful to recognize and manage changes in order to become aware of the adaption of necessities or changed needs

Reference 6

using the standardized tools regularly and trying to emphasize that they can be adapted, albeit they do not have to

Academic – A2 – 14 References coded

Reference 1

using strategy tools, and I guess we will come back to this later, should at least try to simplify the strategy work for actual practitioners.

Reference 2

they have a function and they are all usable

Reference 3

They are all used by practitioners because they are simplistic.

Reference 4

Porter's Five Forces analysis it can be a very nice way of looking at your environment, of looking at competitors, of looking at new market entries, of looking at potential products/services or innovations that substitute your existing technologies, etc. Such a tool can be very helpful to get a better understanding of your environment, but I guess without looking or adopting a resource-based perspective by looking at your internal resources they can also be misleading.

Reference 5

when you look at these tools you can clearly state that they are helpful

Reference 6

SWOT, Scenario Planning, and the Portfolio Matrices, as they cover most of the topics that need to be considered while undertaking strategy work

Reference 7

in a real industry environment, I think Porter's tools are rather limited in their function

Reference 8

You apply these techniques anyway, even if you do not name them Porter's Five Forces or the Generic Strategy Model.

Reference 9

The simple tools like the SWOT are inevitable.

Reference 10

Overall, I would say that organizations should on the one hand search broadly to get all lot of information to improve their decision making, and on the other hand they of course need to be a little bit pragmatic. Do not over search! At some point it is simply enough.

Reference 11

So, you have to understand the problem first and then these tools support you to shed light on them.

Reference 12

Everything should be weight, evaluated, and proven before you decide to go on.

Reference 13

Again, a realistic perception of the applicability of these tools would be helpful in order to use them to structure your problem.

Reference 14

You have to decide on your own as an organization, whether you have gathered a sufficient amount of information.

Academic – A3 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

It is not about the question - in what situation should organizations use these - the answer is simple - they should use these!

Reference 2

What most academics think is, but also of course practitioners, I have to use to use a strategy tool because I am in "a situation".

Reference 3

The reality is - it is not about the question in what situation should strategists or organizations use strategy tools. It should be rather clear that organizations should use strategy tools to conduct their strategy work in any case or let us say situation.

Reference 4

the SWOT sits on the bridge between analysis and formulation. If you use this tool in a meaningful way it is for sure the most powerful or useful tool, because it becomes a discipline summary of the issues and is also the disciplined start-off point for the strategies.

Reference 5

Whereas most of the other ones you can pigeonhole the meaning as you can put them in one box or another box, but SWOT analysis covers loads of boxes.

Reference 6

if you are a fantastically entrepreneurial manager or business you might be able to get through without all these things. If you are an ordinary business or a business that has reached some sort of maturity, then you have to use these strategy tools, because otherwise you just do not know where to go.

Academic – A4 – 9 References coded

Reference 1

using strategy tools, maybe with some exceptions, is absolutely necessary.

Reference 2

All of them are extremely useful for the strategic management process.

Reference 3

A significant situation is hard to find, I think they should be used in every situation.

Reference 4

One tool was for sure the business model canvas. It has been extremely helpful in the formulation stage where the existing strategy was reevaluated, and continually based on this evaluation strategic decisions were taken.

Reference 5

The Five Forces analysis, when performed properly, can be extremely insightful. Not so much in the context of going through the classical checklist that tells you something about industry attractiveness, but mostly in identifying the implications and basically the actions you could take based on the findings of the model. In a sense trying to reshape the industry and defining the rules of competitors that play in this entire game. These results become extremely interesting and you basically use the findings of the Five Forces analysis to step into strategy formulation - in a word the pre-stage.

Reference 6

I have to tell you that it depends on how you use these tools. From my practical experience I very often see companies that use these tools in a very static way.

Reference 7

They for example perform the PESTLE analysis and they are simply happy to have a great checklist for figuring out what the trends and strategic implications are, while looking at the context of political, economic factors etc. But interestingly enough, what I see very often, that companies leave it there.

Reference 8

Whereas the interesting strategic part of PESTLE analysis would be to develop scenarios.

Reference 9

overall most of these tools can be applied in different contexts and have a significant contribution

Academic – A5 – 17 References coded

Reference 1

In my former company we mostly used tools that were rather simple.

Reference 2

Surprisingly, the SWOT analysis was always quite effective, even though too simple in most cases.

Reference 3

all of Porter's frameworks we used quite a frequently, even though they were already developed in the 80s. All were still highly useful.

Reference 4

Blue Ocean we have rather used for discussion in order to find the right industries or markets for our existing and new products.

Reference 5

use them when needed, or at stopping points in your strategy work in order to simplify a complex problem.

Reference 6

you always use these tools to undertake a strategic task, and I think there is usually no actual situation where you should plan with or definitely have to use a certain tool.

Reference 7

difficult to nail down one particular situation or event for applying them, but using them should be connected to your corporate culture.

Reference 8

If your company uses them for one or the other process, then try to use them when you are expected to do so.

Reference 9

If applied properly, they will definitely help you to formulate or implement your new strategy.

Reference 10

Sometimes it even helps you to revise the old or former strategy.

Reference 11

Interestingly, even at our University we use the SWOT analysis. Maybe for German Universities that is not really common, but my school actually uses this tool quite extensively.

Reference 12

The Value Chain, VRIO, Porter's Five Forces were also used during my time in the industry, and maybe Porter's Generic strategies to some extent.

Reference 13

I was absolutely surprised that in practice most of the 'standard' tools are actually applied.

Reference 14

At the end of the day it was just the most conventional ones that have been used.

Reference 15

The more complex ones are rather not used.

Reference 16

The tool that was problematic or least useful - has been the value chain. It is quite complex when you use it for a huge company. We were using it for our business unit only, but still this consisted of 15000 people. It was difficult to get all the data together and if you have some data gaps you need to make estimations. Finally, we had a model based only on estimations and then we thought let us take a practical approach, because this absolutely makes no sense.

Reference 17

Although you may not formally use the tools you should at least try to think in these either simple or more complex structures.

Consultant – C1 – 9 References coded

Reference 1

Well, I think the combination of Porter's Five Forces and the PESTLE analysis is really strong, and the Blue Ocean Four Action Framework was just perfect. The SWOT and KSFs are also really strong, but I would put them on a secondary degree. The VRIO framework is also very important for getting insights and creating an overview of the capabilities.

Reference 2

Maybe the generic strategy model is sometimes really too theoretical, because it is really black and white, as you cannot find a spot in between.

Reference 3

The work is done by filling in the framework.

Reference 4

Sometimes it just takes time to get the right data in place.

Reference 5

if you really want to know what I have used a lot, then most of the times it has been the Porter's Five Forces, the PESTLE analysis, and the Blue Ocean Framework. Those three together have been quite useful and also efficient when I consider the time invested and the success of the outcomes.

Reference 6

In my view these tools are used to develop a strategy and therefore it should be about effectiveness.

Reference 7

So, we always have to look at them from a distance and ask ourselves if there are other factors that we need to consider here.

Reference 8

I do not think the tools themselves are bad. If you are in a market where things are changing a lot, then you need to use the tools more often.

Reference 9

When you are looking at the world it maybe sometimes happens that an organization is not able to use a tool anymore, which happens when nobody in the organization has a full overview and then a tool would lose its power, as this would not be something that will solve the issue for you.

Consultant – C2 – 19 References coded

Reference 1

to find solutions in a collaborative and very customer-centric way.

Reference 2

As a management and strategy consultant we use strategy tools or methods within our daily project work. So, we are strategizing the whole day.

Reference 3

I think in 70% or 80% of each project you have various tools that you are using.

Reference 4

We approach every strategic problem very systematically, and we try to ease up the process by applying the tools that are readily available.

Reference 5

Sometimes we even let our customer decide, which tool they want us to use.

Reference 6

The most used tool and the best used tool is the SWOT

Reference 7

The transformation map is a little bit more complex, but you have a very focused documentation of your goals, your targets, and the way from your actual situation to the overall target.

Reference 8

I love scenario planning, as it allows defining more than one strategy, and on your way to implement a strategy you have checkpoints. If something happens on your way to your target you cannot lack to choose an alternative scenario. In the early stage you maybe have to do a little bit more work, but this makes your strategy process more secure.

Reference 9

it is absolutely worthwhile using them

Reference 10

I would always recommend using tools, because of their proven success.

Reference 11

Maybe it is also helpful to gather partial results first and then you go on.

Reference 12

The most important advantage of using strategy tools is that you are forced to work in a very independent and objective way.

Reference 13

It is better to work with them, instead of simply grounding your work on numbers and the beliefs or gut-feeling of narcissist managers.

Reference 14

Some tools are simply commodity and you have to know them, because it is part of your daily business.

Reference 15

We often used benchmarking. Within our strategy process we used benchmarking in order to track if the strategy, the target, or the transformation idea was running in the right direction. We were able to measure performance, control milestones, or track the effects on the cost efficiency and things like that.

Reference 16

You can change them between different projects, you have a defined method, you have predefined steps to build a strategy, and so your consultants can change the tools between projects.

Reference 17

If you do not of have some sort of knowledge management, and at the next stage it is called experience management, you will not be able to successfully use strategy tools in practice.

Reference 18

In my eyes it is a must to use such tools while doing strategy work, because otherwise they would not have been developed in the first place.

Reference 19

Tools should be used to solve practice related problems.

Consultant – C3 – 10 References coded

Reference 1

scenario planning, which was very interesting

Reference 2

The SWOT is nothing more than basically just structuring the way we think about a problem.

Reference 3

that you also have a suggestion of how to approach or how to use these frameworks in a sense of: how would we use that? do we have to conduct a series of interviews with the C-Level guys; or are we going to have a big workshop with around 40 people in one room where we are going to use "consensus technologies" - or something similar where we can basically vote for an answer or the best way to arrive the answer as quick as possible.

Reference 4

There are probably a lot of tools we have used at McKinsey, but probably under a different name.

Reference 5

a tool they have used a lot, which is called the Eisenhower Matrix - urgent and important are the two dimensions of it.

Reference 6

scenario planning. So basically, looking at different "highly uncertain outcomes", which was actually already a plus to give the client a feeling for what are the things that could happen. You have three or four scenarios and then the client can think about how likely these scenarios are for him, and what are you going to do to be prepared. So, the whole process to find out - what are the drivers in the future that people at the organization, from very different departments, perceive as important.

Reference 7

SWOT, which is done on one piece of paper, similar with the value chain or the Five Forces.

Reference 8

Scenario planning is a little bit more complicated, but in this sense it can probably help you more than the simple tools as it has many more insights that are basically packed into the idea of the framework.

Reference 9

SWOT, Value Chain or the Five Forces, these are things that can help you

Reference 10

there is a lot of fancy stuff you can do and then there is of course always a reference chapter in the PDs on how to apply significant instruments in different industries e.g. energy industry, automotive industry, utilities industry etc.

Consultant – C4 – 10 References coded

Reference 1

First of all, we had to analyze the current positioning of the client. For that we used parts of the framework of Porter and we also used the SWOT as a starting point to think and analyze the current strategic situation of our client and the industry.

Reference 2

But as I said, we do not say let us do the SWOT or let us look into the Five Forces, we are rather interested in the questions within these frameworks that appeared in our thinking process.

Reference 3

I am not sure whether we put the templates on the table and analyzed everything along them, but of course we know them and used questions from the tools to start our strategic analysis in order to look into the current situation and priorities.

Reference 4

In the case we consider a tool as not useful, we do not use it.

Reference 5

the most common frameworks that I use, or we use are the simple ones, because those are the ones that are most thought through.

Reference 6

The structure of them should be clear and not complex, and it should be obvious what results they can deliver.

Reference 7

Another example is the SWOT, because it is so easy we use it as it is. This holds also true for the Ansoff matrix.

Reference 8

we only use them to recall the underlying questions and not to strictly follow a process

Reference 9

Since I am working in a strategic consultancy I can for sure say that they play a major role

Reference 10

Of course, we have those tools written down in our knowledge documents and we also have templates that are usually ready to present

Consultant – C5 – 10 References coded

Reference 1

if you talk about classic models that are around - of course we apply them to create some sort of a mental framework or mindset of how to look at, and which perspective we want to take during steps the company is taking - like bringing in a new product, improving a product, taking away a product from the market, offering new services, or going in cooperation etc.

Reference 2

we used some of the traditional models to create some structure, but it was more an intuitive process

Reference 3

If we talk about experiments for instance, that was and is a tool that we have used on a daily basis, and I would say scenario planning is something that we have applied, which is something that I would apply as a starting point for setting the strategy for the upcoming years. But scenario planning can also be applied to see where you are now and what has changed within your scenarios, and what new scenarios are maybe possible now.

Reference 4

dynamic simulation is something we have used to get a more detailed level for very complex problems that are more related to the internal circumstances

Reference 5

I mean there is no tool that led us to a completely catastrophic decision.

Reference 6

We use scenario planning, which is a very open tool. You need to interpret somehow and make it useful for yourself. We used it to make budget decisions to create a best case, worst case and a base case. In general, three different budget scenarios that helped us to come to our decisions. We also used scenario planning for strategic moves in markets, e.g. entering a new market.

Reference 7

Experimenting is very general, but we used it mainly to test a product or our campaigns for instance.

Reference 8

The MVP is more a debate of what you think is really the minimal viable product feature that you want to test. PESTLE, SWOT - we just took these tools for debates.

Reference 9

I like feedback-loops, meaning tools and I think that the impact of strategy is made visible, which can directly be experienced by operations in their daily life.

Reference 10

If you are unable to apply the tools in real life and you do not see the results they can produce, you should rather stop using them.

Executive – E1 – 15 References coded

Reference 1

my favorite tool the Why, How, What? Approach as it allows you to use it at the lowest level, but especially at the highest you can use it a lot to start structuring your first thoughts.

Reference 2

we used most of them when we were presented with an absolutely surprising or shocking problem

Reference 3

How else would you start a task where you actually do not know how it is going to be in 6 months?

Reference 4

In strategy it is often about the question: does it fit with what we as a company have done in the past? At this point all the usual strategic questions pop up again and you know the tools that are going to help you to solve these issues.

Reference 5

you use many tools to understand your surroundings and it is perfectly fine that you use them

Reference 6

Why? How? What? has helped me the most.

Reference 7

The other tool that helped the most was the game theory and we use it a lot. This tool was somehow an eye-opener for me and we went to such an extreme that we spent a full workshop on the functionality of it.

Reference 8

When thinking about the outside world for sure the PESTLE and the Five Forces pop up, and for sure you can use them, but it depends on where on my strategic scale I am.

Reference 9

On a lower, maybe regional, level the Five Forces have been extremely useless, because the picture it is drawing was simply too broad. Looking at the industry itself is something you should do on the board level, but not when you are part of a lower level implementation team. Such tools have led my team to the point where they felt comfortable, but not to the customer and the opportunity that was connected to them.

Reference 10

You need to understand where you are, you need to be able to communicate, you need to be able to follow up, you need to be able to come back, and only then the use of tools can drive success.

Reference 11

With these tools you are trying to create sense in a world that you cannot really grasp, as you of course cannot know anything, but you need to make decisions to move forward, and you need something that guides you.

Reference 12

a tool is a tool; use it when you need it; do not use it when do not need it; but carry your box around and if new tools come up put them in; and every time you are approaching a problem open the toolbox and pick the tools with the greatest fit.

Reference 13

Use them as a support or right next to your established strategy process

Reference 14

You need to use the right tools for the right situation, and also the right people working on the right types of strategy at the right time.

Reference 15

I guess one of the biggest mistakes is to use them isolated from your process, since the integration is much more important than most strategists think.

Executive – E2 – 8 References coded

Reference 1

in our strategic planning process the strategy work is absolutely template driven, which is probably the case for most corporates. Included in these templates are the strategy tools in order to conduct strategic analyses.

Reference 2

they are applied at least once a year, when we do our strategy review, but also when we do other projects, which is rather an ad-hoc decision.

Reference 3

We look at the tools and decide to use one based on the situation or problem we are facing - does it make sense or rather not?

Reference 4

MOST - absolutely the portfolio matrix. It was very useful when we defined the overall strategy and then derived the business field strategies.

Reference 5

After having defined these units we put everything into the portfolio to map all new fields against each other in terms of attractiveness and their competitive position.

Reference 6

Delta analysis to keep our process efficient and to just focus on what has really changed

Reference 7

It is always a combination of doing tool work and the reflection of the reality.

Reference 8

Based on our portfolio analysis and value chain analysis we really undertook some real-world decisions e.g. to divest businesses, to close businesses, and also to decide where to invest.

Executive – E3 – 10 References coded

Reference 1

What I liked very much in practical terms was the SDG - strategic decision group - methodology/approach. The underlying idea was to provide a methodology to brainstorm about perceived obstacles, about decisions that you can actively make, and about uncertainties; and here trying to put likelihoods to the uncertainties and to model really expected value NPVs with e.g. tornado diagrams and so on. It was a pretty sophisticated approach, because it also trains you how to assess likelihoods in your interviews without anchoring people. Generally, it was used to really figure out how confidence intervals for certain uncertainties could look like.

Reference 2

Maybe another tool or mechanisms that need to be in place when it comes to strategy work are hypotheses. People have to or should always formulate hypotheses in order to validate those and not to discard those. So this is a rather unscientific approach but it really helps to formulate something where people need to object the interview partners, because then you can be really sure there is enough evidence for a certain point.

Reference 3

tools lead to more precise questions rather than results

Reference 4

hypotheses can be useful to overcome or answer these questions

Reference 5

Some of those tools like SWOT analysis, key success factors or Value Chain have most frequently been used within the projects I have worked for. But this is basically it, as tools like the PESTLE analysis can only barely be used in practice, and the BCG/McKinsey matrices are rather used when an external consultancy comes in.

Reference 6

Unfortunately, SWOT and core competences analysis are mostly prefilled by some self-announced experts in the company and then they are presented, and nobody really cares.

Reference 7

If anything really helps then it is scenario planning, because when moderated correctly it generates new ideas and new insights.

Reference 8

when it is there you probably use it, but it is not because of the strategy tool that you get to certain results

Reference 9

Ideally you use these tools when you are facing an unknown situation, or when you feel something is happening, changing, or commoditizing, so that you really need to change your entire company.

Reference 10

You always implicitly use at least elements of those tools otherwise there would be none of them in actual use.

Executive – E4 – 7 References coded

Reference 1

So there are many people that do not have the interest to have transparency, and do not have clarity, and therefore you apply a clear framework that requires a complete assessment along certain dimensions of a specific question, then this will create the needed transparency.

Reference 2

Here the much blamed and very simple SWOT analysis can become a very efficient tool, as it requires not only strengths but also weaknesses, and not only opportunities but also threats. You can have a pretty lengthy discussion and a SWOT of a certain business in order to force people to stop hiding certain issues, that people might perceive as jeopardy to either their reputation or positioning of their area of responsibility, which they usually do not like.

Reference 3

With every change in our strategy, there has to be some analysis and here we can use the given tools to structure our thinking, which has always been very stimulating and helpful.

Reference 4

the SWOT, for example, can be used for almost everything, but some of your tools are only useful for certain aspects of strategy development.

Reference 5

the value chain analysis, as it can work as a prediction for profit margin.

Reference 6

By the way, tool that was least helpful: we do not have the time to play around with misleading tools, if something goes wrong you have to fix it. There is one way to really frustrate an organization: giving them useless tools.

Reference 7

But all this has something to do with expectation management - what do you expect from a tool or a framework? Of course, this highly depends on your own input.

Executive – E5 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

we take strategic evaluation tools and try to figure out how a strategic decision measures up when it comes to strategic analysis

Reference 2

Systematic work can help organizations to overcome this weakness, but most organizations lack to use the tools and concepts in an appropriate manner.

Reference 3

You have the instruments at hand and you have to use them with a lot of creativity to find a specific customized strategic solution for one of your strategic projects.

Reference 4

We use strategic tools or strategic evaluation as a concept for checking our business decisions.

Reference 5

I think there is a basic rule: the more complex a tool is, the less useful it is in your strategic process.

Reference 6

Strategy tools are normally used in bigger corporations

G Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Advantages of Tool Usage

Communication

Academic – A1 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

help to communicate, to sell and reduce uncertainties or risks

Academic – A2 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

tools are helpful to see some directions or scenarios where a market may develop into, which is also extremely nice to get people on the same page. When you sit with your colleagues from different functional areas, when you talk to people from the marketing department, when you talk with your engineers, when you talk to people from the sales department, in order to get a common understanding of the strategic issues you are facing.

Reference 2

tools might be helpful to foster this shared understanding of certain issues

Academic – A3 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

As tools to help managers to make decisions they might have an impact in terms of their facilitation skills

Academic – A4 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

to discuss certain strategic problems/issues.

Reference 2

their communicative power is outstanding

Reference 3

when you need to build a discussion around a problem.

Reference 4

Tools lead to communication and therefore to agreements.

Academic – A5 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

It is a structured process that can also serve as a basis for discussion with others.

Reference 2

Tools do not only lead to discussion they also enable communication.

Reference 3

These tools enable you to think simple and encourage discussion.

Consultant – C1 – 9 References coded

Reference 1

They are used to communicate and that is really what strategy tools should be about; and in many cases I explain why we should use one or another tool, as it is all about communication and using a framework in order to get from A to B.

Reference 2

It is really about; does it communicate what you want to communicate?

Reference 3

I think all frameworks that I use are efficiently used to communicate things, but this does not say that there are some that are less efficient.

Reference 4

the blue ocean strategy framework is highly useful to communicate

Reference 5

The main advantage is communication!

Reference 6

The quality of your strategy improves by looking into all the things and issues that pop up during e.g. discussions with the client.

Reference 7

if they are able to clearly communicate what you want to say, then they always have an impact

Reference 8

I absolutely think that tools enhance the efficiency of the process, because you have already some means of communication in place. But the client also has to be part of this communication and he should have an idea of what you are doing

Reference 9

The tools make things easier, because you always have a dialog starting point or let us say a common ground for your discussion.

Consultant – C2 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

when using a tool, the information that is presented is transparent

Consultant – C3 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

in practice they are used to create some level of communication between the managing teams.

Reference 2

only help you to ask the right questions

Consultant – C5 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

The other part is bringing in different perspectives to open everybody's mind a little bit more as well as engaging people in debate, which is also very important.

Reference 2

communication is highly power-driven

Reference 3

PESTLE, SWOT - we just took these tools for debates.

Reference 4

Tools were more used to open up for discussion and then coming to a conclusion.

Reference 5

when well applied they open up the mindset.

Reference 6

Every tool that leads to direct feedback is the right tool.

Executive – E1 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

it clearly starts with visualization and if you do not have the overview then you will see it; or if I have the overview I am able to tell you what the surrounding is about and what the issues are, and then you can have a meaningful discussion with me.

Reference 2

Within the implementation I would use the tools to communicate where I would like to go.

Reference 3

A powerful visualization does more than just planning, it also helps you to communicate, therefore implement, and therefore tells you if we have reached the solution or if we have not.

Executive – E2 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

also very helpful for the communication with the top managers

Reference 2

You of course discuss your results with the management team whether these conclusions are really reflecting their gut feeling, their management view, or if they rather not do it.

Executive – E3 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

Strategy tools are a vehicle of bringing people together in order to speak about one topic, and by that they can create prepared minds and structured thinking. Not less, not more.

Reference 2

to brainstorm about perceived obstacles, about decisions that you can actively make, and about uncertainties

Reference 3

when you need help to moderate a discussion

Reference 4

help to facilitate the discussion process of people that are not so much associated with strategic questions every day

Executive – E4 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

create the needed transparency

Reference 2

The tools are particularly useful to create transparency, as they force you to position certain aspects, businesses, or capabilities into some sort of framework.

Reference 3

Create transparency

Reference 4

Tools simply help to structure the process and again they deliver transparency.

Executive – E5 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

A strategic tool is a framework, or a basic concept on how to analyze external and internal information in a way that I can use it for communication.

Reference 2

For communication input from management, the board of directors, etc. and as a communication output for showing people where to go and why to go there, and why this makes sense.

Reference 3

In my opinion strategy is a communication process and if you look at organizations and big corporates especially

Reference 4

strategy communication is about creating belief

Reference 5

to get valuable in-depth input of people (e.g. used as a basis for discussion).

Reference 6

strategy tools can use their advantage of easing up the communication process.

Decision Making

Academic – A1 – 7 References coded

Reference 1

help us a lot not to forget certain aspects

Reference 2

help to get more people on board, so that they buy into a decision

Reference 3

help to explain why a certain decision was made, why a new road is chosen

Reference 4

tools might even bring a better solution than something that is just lying in front of you (e.g. annual reports, growth rates, etc.)

Reference 5

make a decision more systematic as well as the entire process/approach

Reference 6

Tools can also show new routes, which an organization might have to go, and they might help to explain changes as well as impacts of changes in the organization by numbers

Reference 7

helpful for people to understand, to prove and to improve

Academic – A2 – 7 References coded

Reference 1

improve your ability to come up with a solution or decision on a certain problem.

Reference 2

tools are helpful to see some directions or scenarios where a market may develop into, which is also extremely nice to get people on the same page. When you sit with your colleagues from different functional areas, when you talk to people from the marketing department, when you talk with your engineers, when you talk to people from the sales department, in order to get a common understanding of the strategic issues you are facing.

Reference 3

Overall, one further function of these tools is to provide people with a certain sensitivity, which is important to come up with a decent strategy.

Reference 4

The better your information, the more reliable your strategic decisions will be.

Reference 5

It is not the ambition of these tools to come up with some sort of validated solution, but rather with results that enforce intuitive and action-based decision making.

Reference 6

They force you to make your own assumptions.

Reference 7

They speed up decision making when applied properly.

Academic – A3 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

strategy tool is a tool to help managers to identify issues and solutions

Reference 1

provide you with a pathway and a structure to reflect on what is going on outside and inside the business, and how can you bring these two together in terms of what the business should be doing in the future. So, it is very much a structure and a pathway.

Reference 1

As tools to help managers to make decisions they might have an impact

Reference 1

They help managers to look at what needs changing and what they can possibly do with an issue that has been identified.

Academic – A4 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

they rather guide us to what is happening

Reference 2

When applied properly, tools can also contribute to a better coordination among top management.

Reference 3

Tools help to prioritize and then it becomes a matter of agreeing in order to pursue a strategy.

Reference 4

You use the tools to agree on some specific elements that are critical for strategy development and at the same time you are agreeing on expected future scenarios.

Reference 5

Tools lead to communication and therefore to agreements.

Reference 6

Seeing this picture is critical in order to be able to take strategic decisions.

Academic – A5 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

strategy tools are frameworks that support the strategy making process in a structured way.

Reference 2

to simplify strategic decision making.

Reference 3

should usually guide strategic decision making.

Consultant – C1 – 9 References coded

Reference 1

Tools work as some sort of guideline or audit.

Reference 2

Maybe another advantage is that these tools are creating creativity, because they raise questions like: how is this working? They make people think about a situation or possibilities.

Consultant – C2 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

they are satisfying the need of being objective and moderate instruments to define targets and the way to reach these

Reference 2

So, these tools secure your own process of managing and making decisions and recommendations.

Reference 3

In practice you need guided processes and the tools are one way of having that.

Reference 4

use these tools for your decision making

Reference 5

for each decision you have to make within the project or your own organization you should make use of such tools, which does not mean you should only rely on them

Consultant – C3 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

These instruments provide you with a way of how you can reach a conclusion.

Reference 2

90% of the frameworks are just structure combined with intelligent questions you could ask yourself.

Reference 3

"consensus technologies" - or something similar where we can basically vote for an answer or the best way to arrive the answer as quick as possible.

Reference 4

can help you to prioritize

Reference 5

educates you about the process or the methodology of how to apply them

Reference 6

helps you to understand what the important steps are in order to make something out of this work.

Consultant – C4 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

The biggest issues in new projects are the right questions we should ask, and therefore tools can help to guide this process.

Reference 2

the Value Chain was used as an overall guideline; meaning going step by step through all the functions

Reference 3

They will grant you new dimensions or questions to solve your problem.

Consultant – C5 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

the main purpose of a strategy tool is to give some sort of a guideline to get an insight. An insight that you would not usually see in a very complex situation.

Reference 2

They rather help you to set a direction.

Reference 3

when properly applied they open up the mindset.

Executive – E1 – 9 References coded

Reference 1

you start to understand your surroundings better and it also allows you to think what this data is telling me about where I should go.

Reference 2

In strategy it is often about the question: does it fit with what we as a company have done in the past? At this point all the usual strategic questions pop up again and you know the tools that are going to help you to solve these issues.

Reference 3

Let us use tools that force me to think in ways that I dislike, so that they tell you whether you have missed something.

Reference 4

The game theory is our umbrella to reach a logical decision. We test everything that we do and we level the results with our targets. It was quite useful when we planned to launch our new brand, as it was guiding our decision-making process.

Reference 5

They force me to do something.

Reference 6

They force me to obtain data that challenge my beliefs and that enlarge my knowledge in order to move to something that creates value.

Reference 7
something that guides you

Reference 8
Tools are more or less a way to present information, which you can use to make decisions and maybe also assumptions.

Reference 9
Use them as a support or right next to your established strategy process and I promise that you will find new viewpoints on the results you have previously gathered without even thinking about a tool.

Executive – E3 – 2 References coded

Reference 2
to stimulate brainstorming

Reference 2
when moderated correctly it generates new ideas and new insights

Executive – E5 – 3 References coded

Reference 1
We use strategic tools or strategic evaluation as a concept for checking our business decisions.

Reference 2
So, if we feel that a decision is so important that it is required or at least advantageous to check back with some rational concepts, we try to use tools for it.

Reference 3
supporting elements

Results-Outcome-Output

Academic – A1 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1
to gain additional insights besides the gut feeling and experiences that managers and employees do have

Academic 2 – A2 – 7 References coded

Reference 1
provides you with some potential avenues of how to proceed

Reference 2
But the main part for using these tools is about gathering information, because the better your informatory basis, the better the decisions will be that are related to your strategy. But if you have gathered all the information, all the statistics, all the possible trends that may emerge, you will need to find a way to come up with one of the tools (e.g. scenario planning) to simplify the whole possibilities that may emerge in the future.

Reference 3
In these instances, the tools can be helpful to map the key problems, the key themes that have emerged during the strategy process.

Reference 4
helpful to get a better understanding of your environment

Reference 5
The basic idea is always to get or to gather information.

Reference 6
It is not the ambition of these tools to come up with some sort of validated solution, but rather with results that enforce intuitive and action-based decision making.

Reference 7
The answers you will grasp are supportive - not more, not less.

Academic 3 – A3 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

strategy tool is a tool to help managers to identify issues and solutions

Reference 1

the SWOT sits on the bridge between analysis and formulation. If you use this tool in a meaningful way it is for sure the most powerful or useful tool, because it becomes a discipline summary of the issues and is also the disciplined start-off point for the strategies.

Academic – A4 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

with them you develop a much better understanding of what is happening

Reference 2

In a way tools can also help to raise questions in order to predict future outcomes, and to get closer to the desired results.

Reference 3

basically provide the organization with the ability to see the whole picture, or let us say to see a good part of the whole picture.

Academic – A5 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

using these tools in order to understand business problems

Consultant – C1 – 9 References coded

Reference 1

to get from A to B

Reference 2

The tools have a meaning.

Consultant – C2 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

You know where you have to start, and you always have a cloudy idea of your target with a great variety of different scenarios.

Reference 2

There are usually different dimensions you have to bear in mind, and especially when using a tool the information that is presented is transparent

Consultant – C3 – 7 References coded

Reference 1

These instruments provide you with a way of how you can reach a conclusion.

Reference 2

They can also help me to outline important aspects of a problem I should consider while looking for answers.

Reference 3

90% of the frameworks are just structure combined with intelligent questions you could ask yourself.

Reference 4

looking at different "highly uncertain outcomes"

Reference 5

process to find out - what are the drivers in the future that people at the organization, from very different department, perceive as important.

Reference 6

you have lot of knowledge in a good strategy tool, which enables you to claim: what are the questions that we should ask? This process could be translated to condensed knowledge in my opinion. Tools carry a lot condensed knowledge to make it clearer.

Reference 7

It might be helpful to migrate these theoretical results into practical actions

Consultant – C4 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

interested in the questions within these frameworks that appear in our thinking process

Reference 2

these strategy tools, as you name them, are quite powerful troubleshooters to build up this "holistic" view.

Reference 3

In projects, I have worked in, these 3-4 tools were mostly a good starting point, as we already had questions readily available.

Reference 4

They can help you to consider all aspects of a problem, but this depends on the framework you are applying.

Reference 5

Most of the frameworks are designed to allow you to consider and cover all aspects, so that you do not forget something that might be important.

Reference 6

To sum up, it is good to use these tools to grasp the entire problem in a holistic way and not to forget important aspects on the one hand side

Consultant – C5 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

give some sort of a guideline to get an insight

Reference 2

they give some sort of a framework for a process within the strategy team to come to insights and conclusions.

Executive – E1 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

Once you have visualized your findings it changes your assumptions, it opens up possibilities, it brings in strategic questions, it tells you where your gaps are, it helps you to perhaps move from I do not know what I do not know to I know what I do not know and therefore I can go and get it.

Reference 2

Tools are ways to force me to get information, which I hate to do, and that is what people find tedious.

Reference 3

The tools tell you what you should know, but they also tell you what you do not.

Reference 4

The tools force me to get data in that I do not have, and I did not know that I am missing it.

Reference 5

The tools give you the questions, why do not you make use of them?

Reference 6

Use them as a support or right next to your established strategy process and I promise that you will find new viewpoints on the results you have previously gathered without even thinking about a tool.

Executive – E2 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

Some tools are helpful to do that in order to come to some good results

Reference 2

if you apply them in a correct way you can really come to your conclusion

Reference 3

they really add new perspectives

Reference 4

You normally have a relatively easy concept combined with a relatively easy tool and if you apply it in the right way you can come to some good conclusions.

Executive – E3 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

tools lead to more precise questions rather than results

Reference 2

when moderated correctly it generates new ideas and new insights

Executive – E4 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

Of course, you are trying to solve a problem or a question, but tools rather lead you to new questions, which are extremely helpful, as you might forget important aspects without this sort of "structured way" of thinking.

Executive – E5 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

tools are about information processing

Simplicity*Academic – A1 – 1 Reference coded*

Reference 1

a strategy tool is a standardized process, procedure or approach used to analyze a company's environment in order to draw major conclusions and describe business activities

Academic – A2 – 8 References coded

Reference 1

strategy tools help you to make some very complex issues more manageable

Reference 2

to deal with complexity

Reference 3

They are all used by practitioners because they are simplistic.

Reference 4

The simple tools like the SWOT are inevitable.

Reference 5

Most tools are very general frameworks and they are helpful to look at key influences that may affect your success in certain markets

Reference 6

You can use them to visualize complex problems, and they help people to deal with bounded rationality in order to deal with complexity.

Reference 7

Most of them are simple to apply and they are a great starting point when you are trying to solve a strategic issue.

Reference 8

Most, but not all of them, are easy to understand for any type of person that is confronted with them.

Academic – A5 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

to simplify a complex problem

Reference 1

These tools enable you to think simple and encourage discussion.

Reference 1

trend of using the more simple tools - simple, effective and powerful

Consultant – C1 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

All of these tools have very basic underlying theories and especially when you are connecting resources and capabilities to the market environment.

Reference 2

those tools will always be handy to apply

Reference 3

The tools make things easier, because you always have a dialog starting point or let us say a common ground for your discussion.

Consultant – C2 – 8 References coded

Reference 1

we try to ease up the process by applying the tools that are readily available

Reference 2

The most used tool and the best used tool is the SWOT, because it is very simple, and each person, each customer, and each employee can assess this tool.

Reference 3

The portfolio matrix is even simpler, and it is very easy to use, and it is simple to define what you want to do with this tool.

Reference 4

Cause and Effect Chain is also simple and really nice to apply in a real project.

Reference 5

Tools like the SWOT analysis are very simple and easy to understand without investing too much time to learn all the basic rules connected to it.

Reference 6

Overall they were invented to make things easier, and this is how you should see and apply them.

Reference 7

Tools are a transparent way of doing strategy work, as everyone is able to understand them.

Reference 8

They are simple

Consultant – C3 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

simple way of looking at issues

Reference 2

done on one piece of paper

Reference 3

They can be applied to various situations, because they are generic in a sense.

Consultant – C4 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

the most common frameworks that I use, or we use, are the simple ones, because those are the ones that are most thought through.

Reference 2

a complex problem in a very easy and transparent framework in order to structure it

Reference 3

Those strategy tools help you to describe or understand a complex problem a client is facing so that you can define the problem in a very sharp way.

Reference 4

to structure and visualize your solution in a very easy and comfortable way.

Consultant – C5 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

the main purpose of a strategy tool is to give some sort of a guideline to get an insight. An insight that you would not usually see in a very complex situation.

Reference 2

a tool is good for someone, who is completely new to a market in order to get an overview on one page, which basically tells him in which market the company is embedded.

Executive – E1 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

bringing complex data into a meaningful set of ideas

Reference 2

the game theory together with the Why? How? What? Thinking has been the main driver of success for the branding example, because both were really simple.

Reference 3

Their simplicity is clearly an advantage.

Reference 4

A simple result is enough

Reference 5

simplify things

Executive – E2 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

it is always a simplification of the complexity in order to grab real important things

Reference 2

easy and fact based

Reference 3

You normally have a relatively easy concept combined with a relatively easy tool and if you apply it in the right way you can come to some good conclusions.

Executive – E3 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

From a mathematical perspective you work on something and then you suddenly realize you can universalize a certain pattern and this will always be prevalent, and that is the power of those tools; that you can adapt them to various situations.

Executive – E5 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

The more simple a concept is, the easier it is to create belief using this concept.

Reference 2

The more accepted it is, the easier it is to create belief. The “simplicity” and the “image” of a tool - if you want to find two specific attributes.

Reference 3

Strategy tools simplify a very complex world we live in and it also simplifies the input on the one hand and the communicative output on the other hand.

Reference 4

tools are important to ease up information in order to make it accessible

Reference 5

The bigger the company is, the more important strategic tools are, because they standardize information, analysis and communication.

Structure*Academic 1 – A1 – 5 References coded*

Reference 1

only helpful to conduct a systematic approach and not to forget important aspects

Reference 2

always used in the background as some kind of basis

Reference 3

helpful to recognize and manage changes in order to become aware of the adaption of necessities or changed needs

Reference 4

make a decision more systematic as well as the entire process/approach

Reference 5

help not to forget important aspects

Academic – A2 – 8 References coded

Reference 1

The tools may help you to regulate uncertainty

Reference 2

These tools can be used to structure a problem, to structure your thinking, to structure the entire process so to say.

Reference 3

structuring of very complex issues

Reference 4

tools can help you to structure complex issues

Reference 5

the tools are already successful when they were able to structure some parts of information for you, and up to this point I think it is worth using them

Reference 6

The tools help you to structure the initial problem that has been raised.

Reference 7

As tools help you to structure and to visualize complex problems with regard to your strategy I am sure that they also foster a sharp-mental model among all employees.

Reference 8

use them to structure your problem

Academic – A3 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

Tools deliver a structure to your thinking.

Reference 2

in classical strategy making it is all about: we need to have a structure, because either we have grown too quickly, or we are not growing enough, or we are not quite sure what is going on out there, or even we are not sure what makes us different.

Reference 3

it becomes a discipline summary of the issues and is also the disciplined start-off point for the strategies

Reference 4

provide you with a pathway and a structure to reflect on what is going on outside and inside the business, and how can you bring these two together in terms of what the business should be doing in the future. So, it is very much a structure and a pathway.

Reference 5

But the whole thing is, businesses or let us say managers must use something to structure their work and I think this what tools are able to deliver.

Academic – A4 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

can help you to build a framework

Academic – A5 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

strategy tools are frameworks that support the strategy making process in a structured way.

Reference 2

valuable for having a structured approach of how to do things and to understand your business and the environment.

Reference 3

It is a structured process that can also serve as a basis for discussion with others.

Reference 4

Tools provide you with a clear and structured framework

Consultant – C1 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

One very important other thing is that they force you not to forget any significant areas.

Reference 2

Tools make your analysis more structured and more solid.

Consultant – C2 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

You know where you have to start, and you always have a cloudy idea of your target with a great variety of different scenarios.

Reference 2

strategy tools help you to understand the actual situation and to find a way to at least clarify the next steps

Reference 3

approach every strategic problem very systematically

Reference 4

they structure your thinking

Reference 5

immediate starting point for your project work

Consultant – C3 – 11 References coded

Reference 1

The structure or process delivered through the consultancy simply helps you to be more focused.

Reference 2

A strategy tool most importantly provides you with structure or something that helps you to structure your own thoughts.

Reference 3

The SWOT is nothing more than basically just structuring the way we think about a problem.

Reference 4

90% of the frameworks are just structure combined with intelligent questions you could ask yourself.

Reference 5

closest approach towards structuring their thinking

Reference 6

In true consulting projects we use them to start our reviewing process,

Reference 7

All these strategic tools are more or less only a structure

Reference 8

The main advantages of strategy tools are sense-making and structuring.

Reference 9

useful to develop structure and to make sense of difficult strategy tasks even in the far future.

Reference 10

They can always be helpful to at least start the process.

Reference 11

strategy tool itself is only a framework that gives you structure

Consultant – C4 – 10 References coded

Reference 1

Strategy tools are frameworks to solve problems in a structured and question-based way.

Reference 2

the SWOT, KSFs, Value Chain and the Five Forces. I think those have been the most helpful ones when I think back. In projects, I have worked in, these 3-4 tools were mostly a good starting point, as we already had questions readily available.

Reference 3

a complex problem in a very easy and transparent framework in order to structure it

Reference 4

to work in a really structured way along the problem

Reference 5

and on the other to structure and visualize your solution in a very easy and comfortable way.

Reference 6

They are something you should always have on your mind and something that you can use to structure your thinking.

Reference 7

the tools, if you know them really well, can provide you with a set of good questions in order to grasp the problem and they can also give you a good idea on how to structure the solution.

Consultant – C5 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

we used some of the traditional models to create some structure, but it was more an intuitive process

Reference 2

give some sort of a guideline

Reference 3

A strategy tool will give you some structured guideline of how to look at all sorts of criteria and helps to get various insights.

Reference 4

They can give structure to overcome complexity

Reference 5

These tools, in the best way, give a structure

Executive – E1 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

you can use it a lot to start structuring your first thoughts.

Reference 2

bringing complex data into a meaningful set of ideas

Reference 3

you start to understand your surroundings better and it also allows you to think what this data is telling me about where I should go.

Reference 4

Using tools is probably part of this practical approach as it helps you to structure your issues.

Reference 5

the tools came apart when we needed a starting point

Reference 6

you use many tools to understand your surroundings and it is perfectly fine that you use them

Executive – E2 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

they are a means of structuring your thinking.

Reference 2

The tools are structuring your thinking, which is really the core advantage.

Executive – E3 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

they can create prepared minds and structured thinking

Reference 2

when you need to structure a problem

Reference 3

Tools help you to structure your problem

Executive – E4 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

giving a logical structure for the analysis of a problem, because even non-strategists find it extremely helpful to structure their own thought process.

Reference 2

With every change in our strategy, there has to be some analysis and here we can use the given tools to structure our thinking, which has always been very stimulating and helpful.

Reference 3

structure the thought process

Reference 4

I try to use tools or frameworks that can structure a thought process, but these should not be too narrow and simplistic.

Reference 5

Tools simply help to structure the process and again they deliver transparency.

Reference 6

you might forget important aspects without this sort of "structured way" of thinking

Executive – E5 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

Systematic work can help organizations to overcome this weakness, but most organizations lack to use the tools and concepts in an appropriate manner.

Visualization

Academic – A2 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

They help you to solve your problem in a clear and visible way in order to improve your ability to come up with a solution or decision on a certain problem.

Reference 2

help you to visualize your problem

Reference 3

they enable you to visualize future developments

Reference 4

Other concepts, like the portfolio matrices are maybe not that fundamental, but they can be extremely helpful to visualize your different activities, your market position, and of course it can be nice to get an overview of your portfolio.

Reference 5

to visualize complex problems

Reference 6

As tools help you to structure and to visualize complex problems with regard to your strategy I am sure that they also foster a sharp-mental model among all employees.

Academic – A4 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

Strategy work becomes more touchable and visualized when using these tools.

Reference 2

basically provide the organization with the ability to see the whole picture, or let us say to see a good part of the whole picture.

Reference 3

Seeing this picture is critical in order to be able to take strategic decisions.

Consultant – C4 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

The SWOT was the overall picture

Reference 2

Our portfolio matrix is an easy and very good way to visualize the situation within one or more competitive markets

Reference 3

when you present your solution then the tools allow you to visualize your findings in a very transparent and well understandable way.

Reference 4

structure and visualize your solution in a very easy and comfortable way.

Reference 5

The can work as eye-openers! I think this best expresses their role.

Consultant – C5 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

I like feedback-loops, meaning tools and I think that the impact of strategy is made visible, which can directly be experienced by operations in their daily life.

Executive – E1 – 17 References coded

Reference 1

Strategy tools for me are a means to either visualize

Reference 2

But overall, I think, it starts with visualization, from which you can go into planning, into the scenario where I have to change basic assumptions because the data told me something else to what I initially thought.

Reference 3

it clearly starts with visualization and if you do not have the overview then you will see it; or if I have the overview I am able to tell you what the surrounding is about and what the issues are, and then you can have a meaningful discussion with me.

Reference 4

Once you have visualized your findings it changes your assumptions, it opens up possibilities, it brings in strategic questions, it tells you where your gaps are, it helps you to perhaps move from I do not know what I do not know to I know what I do not know and therefore I can go and get it.

Reference 5

The visualization allows you to plan, change, post-rationalize, and that is how I and also people use these tools.

Reference 6

you use them to visualize and then plan, identify gaps, etc.

Reference 7

visualize our weaknesses or things that we might have overlooked

Reference 8

it comes down to visualization

Reference 9

People understand a picture better than long texts.

Reference 10

A powerful visualization does more than just planning, it also helps you to communicate, therefore implement, and therefore tells you if we have reached the solution or if we have not.

Reference 11

Tools are most used to visualize

Reference 12

visualization that helps me through all the phases.

Reference 13

Visualization - which I can use to plan, to communicate, and to structure.

Reference 14

In strategy we do not know what the reality is but we have tools that give us the picture.

Reference 15

visualize ideas

Reference 16

visualize gaps, and they visualize possibilities

Reference 17

Tools are more or less a way to present information, which you can use to make decisions and maybe also assumptions.

Executive – E4 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

In a certain way you always have to visualize your portfolio along various dimensions, and therefore the tools are so far the easiest approach.

H Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Disadvantages of Tool Usage

Complexity

Academic – A2 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

The more complex tools are sometimes problematic, as not all of them lead you to a vital answer or an answer you might be looking for.

Academic – A3 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

It is more difficult to use it with service organization than the typical manufacturing organizations, and people tend to get a bit tired when they have to apply it. It does not really inspire people, as it is too time consuming and you cannot see the sense behind it right from the start.

Reference 2

Unless you are smart and reasonably flexible you can end up taking managers through this whole process

Academic – A4 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

a lot of failures happen when people apply these tools. Most managers only go half the way.

Reference 2

when used properly using strategy tools can be a very timely process

Academic – A5 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

The more complex ones were rather not used.

Reference 2

The tool that was problematic or least useful - has been the value chain. It is quite complex when you use it for a huge company. We were using it for our business unit only, but still this consisted of 15000 people. It was difficult to get all the data together and if you have some data gaps you need to make estimations.

Reference 3

When it is getting too abstract the convincing power is quite low.

Consultant – C2 – 7 References coded

Reference 1

very complex, which makes it sometimes very problematic, because I need a customer with very high level of maturity while using this tool

Reference 2

So, if you try to work with a customer or partner with a fairly low level of maturity it will be very hard to use rather complex strategic tools.

Reference 3

Tools like scenario planning will not bring the effect you want to get. It is a nice and important tool and I think it is one of the best strategic tools I can see on this list, but it is not easy to use at all.

Reference 4

producing results can be very time consuming

Reference 5

The context has to be well thought of and using them is also risky, because you spend a lot of time to produce a significant output.

Reference 6

time consuming and not as easy as it seems

Reference 7

in practice it is not really easy to get a real measure

Consultant – C5 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

creates a distance between many people that have no real approach to this academic abstract level.

Reference 2

if you put in too much time and effort to formalize things that you already know without a tool, than you just waste a lot of time with academic discussions that are basically not necessary.

Reference 3

it takes too much time and effort to come to conclusions

Reference 4

If you need a lot of research to feed the tool it would get too complicated and nobody has the time to gather huge loads information, which becomes old very quickly.

Executive – E1 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

in other situations they will rather be a waste of time

Reference 2

Tools perhaps increase complexity even though you wanted to lower the complexity while using them.

Reference 3

Tools can either complexing things that are simple or they oversimplify things that are complex, but you will only have that complaint if you use the wrong tools. A simple result is enough; you do not have to complicate it, because you have the feeling: oh this is not enough.

Executive – E2 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

Using them is clearly very time consuming

Reference 2

In the beginning using tools is not efficient, as it is just something where you have to invest a lot of time.

Reference 3

If the tool is too time consuming and too complex that you even have to be a strategy expert to understand it, then the implementation of the tool will not be possible as nobody would accept it.

Executive – E3 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

can create an administrative burden, as they force people to fill out templates, which should rather be done in a dialog format

Reference 2

The fact that they are simply used does not mean that it is simple to fill them with valuable content.

Executive – E4 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

quite time consuming and laborious

Reference 2

pretty discussion and market research based

Executive – E5 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

I think there is a basic rule: the more complex a tool is, the less useful it is in your strategic process.

Reference 2

Having a tool based strategy process is usually very time consuming. Using tools is not really an agile concept. It requires a big corporate environment, which is hard to steer/manage.

Reference 3

it is very time consuming and normally there is a strategy review every two or three years.

Reference 4

If tools become less time consuming their role would be much more important.

Misleading*Academic – A2 – 5 References coded*

Reference 1

I guess without looking or adopting a resource-based perspective by looking at your internal resources they can also be misleading

Reference 2

in a real industry environment, I think Porter's tools are rather limited in their function

Reference 3

The more complex tools are sometimes problematic, as not all of them lead you to a vital answer or an answer you might be looking for.

Reference 4

In many cases they raise another question, which is quite helpful, but people get highly frustrated as they were expecting something else.

Reference 5

When have we reached a result? This question usually remains unanswered.

Academic – A3 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

I am not sure whether I can describe any of the tools from your list as misleading or useless, but maybe the value chain. I have mixed views on the model. It is more difficult to use it with service organization than the typical manufacturing organizations, and people tend to get a bit tired when they have to apply it. It does not really inspire people, as it is too time consuming and you cannot see the sense behind it right from the start. I still use it, but I would say it is not exceptional.

Reference 2

sometimes leads to absolute nonsense

Academic – A4 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

managers resist in getting involved in such a process as they consider it as rather not useful

Reference 1

It takes a lot of time to develop the acceptance for the tools, as they only have limited outcomes for companies.

Academic – A5 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

misleading or problematic to use them, because they are simply not flexible enough.

Consultant – C1 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

Maybe the generic strategy model is sometimes really too theoretical, because it is really black and white, as you cannot find a spot in between. Sometimes the work is simply not done when you say: alright now I am the cost leader and that is it. I think there should be a lot of more options, and that is maybe the purpose for Bowman's strategy clock even though it is also too theoretical. With these kinds of tools, it is really not useful to communicate.

Reference 2

If you are only looking into the things that are mentioned in the tools you will probably develop a misleading strategy, because not every tool can be generalized for any situation.

Reference 3

There are always other indicators that you might not see while using these tools.

Consultant – C2 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

Without being familiar with or without having any experience they most likely lead you to wrong decisions.

Consultant – C3 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

the content is not coming from the tool itself!

Reference 2

Of course, the results are not directly translated into actions, but no one truly names the results of tools as convincing arguments when standing in front of an executive.

Reference 3

most them do not really matter in the real world

Consultant – C4 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

Scenario Planning was at some point problematic, as our client thought the scenarios that we provided are all going to happen. He was absolutely confused, because it was the first time that somebody approached their company with something like that. It is based on assumptions and that is why we think it is rather superficial.

Reference 2

Following them strictly will harm your project as you will not deliver the outcomes that the client might expect from you.

Consultant – C5 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

They cannot solve everything or completely enlighten the strategy process, that is for sure.

Reference 2

but if I consider the endless strategy slide decks I have seen in board meetings I cannot say that strategy tools are very helpful, because they do not help you to do the job.

Reference 3

Every tool that leads to direct feedback is the right tool. For the other tools, I do not think that they have a real impact. These tools, in the best way, give a structure and in the worst case they are just a distraction.

Executive – E1 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

On a lower level the Five Forces have been extremely useless, because the picture it is drawing was simply too broad. Looking at the industry itself is something you should do on the board level, but not when you are part of a lower level implementation team.

Reference 2

in other situations they will rather be a waste of time or they can even be misleading.

Reference 3

Especially the tools like the PESTLE and the Five Forces and even the SWOT are sometimes a no fit for this lower level stuff, because they cannot provide you with anything that solves a very specific problem.

Reference 4

Using the wrong tool for the wrong thing, because nobody really guides you here.

Reference 5

If we are only filling out templates for the sake of slide decks, then we should stop using them, because this makes absolutely no sense. The how to do it is seen as the why are we doing this.

Executive – E2 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

So, if you do not have this process in between to conduct this gap analysis with the reality, then tools could possibly lead you to a wrong decision, which would be a disaster for a company.

Reference 2

a tool has some advantages, but it cannot portray the whole reality as it is.

Reference 3

A tool itself is not solving a problem.

Executive – E3 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

Unfortunately, SWOT and core competences analysis are mostly prefilled by some self-announced experts in the company and then they are being presented and nobody really cares.

Reference 2

when it is there you probably use it, but it is not because of the strategy tool that you get to certain results

Reference 3

sent around to people where it does not even make sense.

Reference 4

a decentralized recollection of information, which can usually go straight into the bin, because no one evaluated and controlled the input

Executive – E4 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

the Five Forces, as this tool simply does not do anything. It is a list of random facts whereby the user decides on the power, which makes it highly biased. The danger of strategy tools is their virtue of being a simplification of reality and they are meant to be a simplification of reality, but if you use a framework and the most important aspect for your industry is not even part of it, then it can be totally misleading. But this basically holds true for every framework.

Reference 2

Tools can help here and there, but they do not provide the solution.

Reference 3

these tools never lead you to a solution, or let us say they are not providing you with a solution.

Reference 4

What Porter has done is very simple. He categorized a complex world into five different influence factors and certain industries and he just missed some. Such a tool in my view is highly superficial and sometimes even misleading.

Oversimplification*Academic – A1 – 3 References coded*

Reference 1

basis for gut feeling decisions

Reference 1

risk of over-standardizing and feeling too save

Reference 1

bare the risk that you prepare a decision by analyzing profoundly, by formulating too simple, etc

Academic – A2 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

All the tools you have listed are tools that you can easily criticize for being over-simplistic

Reference 2

In grasping such a complex problem, like a strategy, it can be very difficult to overgeneralize in order to reach a solution in various different industry settings, or service settings, or even university settings.

Reference 3

might be too over simplistic

Reference 4

in a real industry environment, I think Porter's tools are rather limited in their function

Reference 5

Oversimplistic

Reference 6

Tools simplify issues and you have to be aware of that.

Academic – A4 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

They for example perform the PESTLE analysis and they are simply happy to have a great checklist for figuring out what the trends and strategic implications are, while looking at the context of political, economic factors etc. But interestingly enough, what I see very often, that companies leave it there.

Academic – A5 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

Surprisingly, the SWOT analysis was always quite effective, even though too simple in most cases.

Reference 2

a lot of more dimensions play a role.

Consultant – C1 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

Sometimes the work is simply not done when you say: alright now I am the cost leader and that is it.

Consultant – C2 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

Sometimes they are just too simple.

Consultant – C3 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

not a one size fits all solution

Reference 2

a simple tool like the SWOT, which is done on one piece of paper, similar with the value chain or the Five Forces

Reference 3

Scenario planning is a little bit more complicated, but in this sense it can probably help you more than the simple tools as it has many more insights that are basically packed into the idea of the framework.

Reference 4

not a big fan of the one size fits all solution approach

Reference 5

I do not think that you are going to reinvent the wheel with them

Consultant – C4 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

This very structured way of doing strategy work can sometimes hinder you to extract the whole value of your solution.

Consultant – C5 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

In general, there is a need to simplify complexity, but the oversimplification of the tools can be problematic.

Reference 2

If I apply the tool I tend to simplify, but if I simplify too much just to use the tool, then it has no real use for my company anymore.

Executive – E1 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

On a lower level the Five Forces have been extremely useless, because the picture it is drawing was simply too broad. Looking at the industry itself is something you should do on the board level, but not when you are part of a lower level implementation team.

Reference 2

Especially the tools like the PESTLE and the Five Forces and even the SWOT are sometimes a no fit for this lower level stuff, because they cannot provide you with anything that solves a very specific problem.

Reference 3

Tools can either complexing things that are simple or they oversimplify things that are complex, but you will only have that complaint if you use the wrong tools.

Executive – E2 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

a tool is just a tool

Executive – E4 – 7 References coded

Reference 1

The danger of strategy tools is their virtue of being a simplification of reality and they are meant to be a simplification of reality, but if you use a framework and the most important aspect for your industry is not even part of it, then it can be totally misleading. But this basically holds true for every framework.

Reference 2

In a way you should always have a bucket for other aspects, because every framework is and has to be a simplification, but that is also the danger.

Reference 3

When you oversimplify the danger starts.

Reference 4

One word – “oversimplification” of the real world.

Reference 5

should not be too narrow and simplistic.

Reference 6

Looking at the Five Forces, it is an oversimplification of the influences of a certain industry.

Reference 7

What Porter has done is very simple. He categorized a complex world into five different influence factors and certain industries and he just missed some. Such a tool in my view is highly superficial and sometimes even misleading.

Executive – E5 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

if you simplify a tool too much the TOP management tends to lose the belief in you.

Reference 2

In such a case I often added some complexity to give people a feeling that more than a single variable was used to come to an advice.

Reference 3

The main disadvantage or problem is “also” the high degree of simplicity, even though it helps managers in most cases.

Reference 4

Biggest disadvantage: reducing complexity too much.

Prioritization*Academic – A1 – 3 References coded*

Reference 1

feeling too save

Reference 2

If you do not adapt the tools to a particular situation, then there is a huge risk of feeling save, because of using tools but neglecting important aspects

Reference 3

forgetting to focus on the implementation and all the detailed work you have to do

Academic – A2 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

blindly relying on them while conducting strategy work will not lead you anywhere

Reference 2

The results sometimes get too much attention, as people get the feeling that they have really achieved something.

Reference 3

If you are too naive in using such tools, if you belief that these tools will do the work for you, it will not probably work out that well.

Reference 4

Never belief in their results!

Academic – A3 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

they expect that the tools deliver true results instead of more questions

Reference 2

Strategy tools do not change things!

Academic – A4 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

They for example perform the PESTLE analysis and they are simply happy to have a great checklist for figuring out what the trends and strategic implications are, while looking at the context of political, economic factors etc. But interestingly enough, what I see very often, that companies leave it there.

Academic – A5 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

Relying too much on tools will probably lead to a loss of flexibility.

Consultant – C1 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

you cannot find a spot in between

Reference 2

If you are only looking into the things that are mentioned in the tools you will probably develop a misleading strategy, because not every tool can be generalized for any situation.

Reference 3

I said that they trigger the thinking process, but on the other side they also limit your thinking, as people base their entire work on them.

Consultant – C2 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

Often times these tools tell you the truth, but unfortunately nobody wants to know see it.

Consultant – C3 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

a structure is something that puts boundaries on your thinking

Reference 2

can be something that prevents you from thinking outside the box and the box in this case would be the strategy tool.

Consultant – C4 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

They have impact, but probably not if you blindly apply them and wait for the coin to drop.

Consultant – C5 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

Of course, on the flip-side of discussing too much on ideal work you raise the chance to discuss too much within your box. So, you are not pushing the boundaries of the box enough. You remain within your box, within your solution room, and belief what you think is the only possible way.

Executive – E1 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

A simple result is enough; you do not have to complicate it, because you have the feeling: oh this is not enough.

Reference 2

the danger is that you rely on everything that they tell you

Reference 3

you have to make sure that your results do not change anything that might be dangerous for your entire existents

Executive – E2 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

too much based on the personal perception scoring of the guy who is doing the analysis

Reference 2

If you are really believing that tools deliver the truth, then very bad results can appear.

Executive – E3 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

tool results tend be biased

Reference 2

anchored and very much biased to the knowledge and experience of “highly” experienced colleagues

Executive – E5 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

strategy and numbers have often become an obsession of management to make a decision count.

Reference 2

"Things go under your radar..." - there are tiny pieces of information that become very important for your strategy as systematic strategic processes tend to over go them, which means you are losing focus without even recognizing it.

Static*Academic – A2 – 4 References coded*

Reference 1

Many tools have been developed in less dynamic times.

Reference 2

Today, we are already looking at Industry 4.0 where nothing is the same anymore, and here I think using such static frameworks without adaptation or an update will not lead you anywhere.

Reference 3

You have to raise the awareness that most of these tools are rather developed for static industry landscapes and not for the very disruptive innovation cycles we are facing today.

Reference 4

sometimes too static, and not up to date

Academic – A3 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

when it comes to rapid industries people rather see them as a distraction.

Reference 2

they can be a bit cumbersome

Reference 3

they can be rather boring and people might think that this is fine in theory but not in practice

Reference 4

one could say that the tools are too static or the results they are delivering are too static

Academic – A4 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

I very often see companies that use these tools in a very static way.

Reference 2

strategic plan can grow up to be a liability in the context that it determines what the organization will do and how it should do it, and they cannot see the dynamic nature it should have.

Academic – A5 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

a rather static nature and nowadays things change quite fast.

Reference 2

Strategy is an ongoing process, but sometimes it can be too dynamic for the tools mentioned here.

Reference 3

they are simply not flexible enough

Reference 4

the biggest amount of tools is just too static.

Consultant – C1 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

the generic strategy model is sometimes really too theoretical, because it is really black and white

Reference 2

I think there should be a lot of more options, and that is maybe the purpose for Bowman's strategy clock even though it is also too theoretical.

Reference 3

Tools can also be static, if we think about the rapidly changing markets we are currently facing, but this also has to do with how often you update your strategy and how broad your basic analyses are.

Reference 4

the creative side of strategy development is something that is not really covered within the frameworks

Consultant – C2 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

original tools have their boundaries, and finding a way to circumvent them is sometimes the biggest part of the work, because in many cases they simply will not fit as they are

Consultant – C3 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

too much theory and not enough practice

Consultant – C4 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

If you use the tools or the strategic frameworks in a very strict way, then in many cases they are not really applicable to problems you are facing.

Reference 2

The strictness and their static nature is a problem

Consultant – C5 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

most of the traditional ones are too static

Executive – E2 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

tools cannot really reflect the whole complexity of the world

Reference 2

tools are not designed for each and every problem that you have

Executive – E4 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

very static tools

I Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Strategic Problems – Objectives

Academic – A1 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

Typical problems are securing the company's position for the future, since everyone knows the environment is changing, and sticking to an old-fashioned business model will not last forever

Reference 2

much more faced by the management team, is the assurance of constant growth

Reference 3

to avoid becoming redundant, which is linked to the first step of securing the future position of a company and for sure this is also linked to cost efficiency and making processes and creating a more efficient organization

Reference 4

rapid industrial change in recent years, everything is more emergent and dynamic

Reference 5

Basically, all the dynamic problems and the turn rates in industries and markets have to be covered

Academic – A2 – 16 References coded

Reference 1

involved in conceptualizing new programs for students, finding new ways for generating new revenues for the school

Reference 2

how to position our school compared to our competitors, how to sustain constant student income, or how to become more professional and up to date

Reference 3

focusing on digital transformation

Reference 4

How to implement a new digital infrastructure into a traditional industry organization?

Reference 5

Currently, most projects focus on digitalization and this clearly makes sense, as everything is moving extremely fast.

Reference 6

how we would like to position ourselves against our competitors; what are our key resources; what are our areas of expertise?

Reference 7

when you look at universities then basic strategic questions are: what are our core competencies; in which areas can we attract students; in which areas can we attract research funds?

Reference 8

These are highly strategic problems for a university, and this is also a big problem at our University, which is a very general university with the entire spectrum of different fields and subjects.

Reference 9

So, do we want to play on all these fields or do we want to focus our resources?

Reference 10

Another example would be the positioning related to your competitors; who are your competitors?; are you really competing with private universities or rather public universities?; what is the competition based on?; is it a competition where you want to get the best students possible or is it rather a competition related to the acquisition of research funds, or industry money for example.

Reference 11

difficult to position yourself based on teaching

Reference 12

how can you objectively evaluate the quality of teaching?

Reference 13

Positioning is the key strategic problem of all types of organizations.

Reference 14

You want to foresee the future of your organization for next couple of years and therefore you need a lot of information to do that.

Reference 15

strategic issues are mostly too complex to have one best way to address this issue

Reference 16

The reasons why strategy making takes that long are mostly political.

Academic – A3 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

After that micro strategies came apart in order to develop more department-based strategies.

Reference 2

what is it about your business that could be developed outside your core industry,

Reference 3

we have not had the chance to think strategically for years and when we do we sit around as a management team and get absolutely nowhere. So, in many cases the biggest issue is the question: can we go through a process?

Reference 4

in classical strategy making it is all about: we need to have a structure, because either we have grown too quickly, or we are not growing enough, or we are not quite sure what is going on out there, or even we are not sure what makes us different.

Reference 5

Solving strategic problems should start with the idea of getting "them" to discover - what are the issues and what they should do about them.

Reference 6

Such companies lost out by being out-innovated and out-technologized.

Academic – A4 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

In terms of strategic problems, I can say that every company is facing them on the macro and micro economic level.

Reference 2

Today, most companies focus on an industry level, but strategic problems may also have to do with the company itself and of course also with what is happening in the external environment, looking at the industry context, looking at the value chain and so on.

Academic – A5 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

strategic sales planning, which involved the selection and analysis of appropriate customers, as well as the related competitors. Based on this information I had to decide on a strategy and priorities my department had to focus on.

Reference 1

Due to the limited resources of most customers we needed to prioritize in order to decide how to approach them.

Reference 2

the social component of strategic management comes into play. How to establish relationships?

Reference 3

Although, you know that you would be the perfect partner for Hyundai or Toyota, and you also know that you are number 1 in quality, innovation and prices, the execution of your strategy does not really work.

Reference 4

Therefore, you need to have established close relationships with your customers, which I think is the most difficult part in practice.

Reference 5

we mostly used them for typical strategic tasks like growing externally through the expansion to a new market, or if your product has reached saturation stage and you needed a new strategy to make it profitable again etc.

Consultant – C1 – 11 References coded

Reference 1

The first one was for a real estate fund. I was asked to explore how it is possible to shape their business. They had been in a red ocean and I had to figure out how they could reposition themselves.

Reference 2

Another project was for a University, which was also about repositioning. The question was: how you create a campus that makes you stand out from all the other Universities.

Reference 3

The last true strategic project I have been working on was for the Dutch Railroad Company. Here we were asked to develop strategies for the retail areas at train stations, which was absolutely focused on creating a new commercial strategy.

Reference 4

It always has to do with how the company wants to position itself in the future.

Reference 5

It either wants to expand, it wants to increase its quality, it wants to reduce its costs, it wants to search for synergies, it wants to consolidate, or it wants to find new collaborative agreements.

Reference 6

One of the main things I always encountered was that most managers do not know anything about the difference between business strategy and corporate strategy.

Reference 7

we want to reposition ourselves, become unique, do something with quality, make cost reductions, develop a new business

Reference 8

So, listen to the questions and the issues of your clients and then decide on the strategic path you want approach this problem with.

Reference 9

I think the really big changes within the world are always developing rapidly and at the same time slow, as you usually know what direction they are taking.

Reference 10

So, how to create value for what we see in the market?

Reference 11

There are a lot of different activities within an organization and then it sometimes becomes very unclear what the core business is about, and then a first step should be: where should we put our focus on and what are the success factors that really need to be in place to become effective in order to be able to develop a strategy.

Consultant – C2 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

building digital strategies to optimize processes, and especially at the moment increasing the usage of IT for a better digital government

Reference 2

cost reduction is still one of the most common strategic questions consultancies usually have to work on

Reference 3

We have more problems and challenges to improve efficiency or capitalize benefits of digital potential.

Reference 4

most often we have problems with the demographic challenges, either on the customer or on the political level, and therefore we have to find answers on how to work with the demographic changes that we will face within the next decades

Reference 5

if you have a complete transformation project we use these along all four or three stages.

Consultant – C3 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

trying to identify the demand for a specific resource that a country needs to import, and based on this evaluation or model we outlined different options that the country basically has in order to distribute this resource in the country

Reference 2

A strategic problem deals with mid- to long-term issues you have to think about, because other than that it would be a tactical problem.

Reference 3

a strategic problem basically evolves around things where you have to set, or you have to decide for a path you have to or want to walk down for the next months or years.

Reference 4

McKinsey prides itself in being the guys you call if you have a strategic problem.

Consultant – C4 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

how to enter markets where the customer is not placed or not involved yet

Reference 2

A strategic problem appears, when a customer or client is not really sure how to answer to a new market, where he has not played a role yet. For example, this can be market entry strategies which are quite a typical task for us to solve.

Reference 3

the currently overarching topic of digital transformation. Meaning that a lot of our customers or let us say all of our clients are facing really disruptive situations in some areas, as too many digital opportunities occur at the same time; e.g. opening new sales channels, redesigning production processes, etc. Through the occurring digital phenomenon many clients are facing disruptive situations and therefore we were asked to solve these problems for them by coming up with new digital driven strategies.

Reference 4

the last decade it was all about the positioning of our clients e.g. in the sense of their cost position many companies showed true weaknesses, as they were unable to make the transition by themselves. So here we mainly had to develop cost-reduction strategies.

Reference 5

The smallest part, but it is still a significant part, are mergers and acquisitions.

Consultant – C5 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

steps the company is taking - like bringing in a new product, improving a product, taking away a product from the market, offering new services, or going in cooperation etc.

Reference 2

to create an ideal world for strategy debate, which also leads to distance in deciding where the company stands at the moment.

Reference 3

gap between the potential of the company and where the company wants to be can get very wide

Reference 4

You may find catastrophic decisions by ignoring a disruptive trend or sleeping over it.

Executive – E1 – 14 References coded

Reference 1

The company I am working for wants to build a new plant somewhere, which is an investment of around 1 Billion Euros, and I am responsible for the decision - where do we or where should we do it?

Reference 2

The other example; we have a few businesses, one of them consists 80% of that business and it represent 12 Billion in net sales yearly. We want to reorganize the structure from the top down to become more customer focused, which includes 35000 of the 47000 people at our company. How do we set a basic framework for this issue?

Reference 3

where do we position ourselves, how do we compete, against whom are we competing, where do we want to lunch?

Reference 4

we have just bought a portfolio and a team, where our task is to integrate two portfolios and two teams. This project is a post-acquisition integration at a local level.

Reference 5

where are we going? Quo vadis? Where are we going and why are we here?

Reference 6

For example, our company has actually four businesses. So, problems are: should we be in all four? Should we have a fifth one? Should we make one independent? Should we actually combine two as we might see eventual synergies?

Reference 7

Another is if you take the biggest unit and that one is the one that covers many different pharmaceutical areas. This one represents 80% of our sales, the other stands for 20% of our sales, but in 5 years' time we expect that the biggest one will go down to 40%. So, do we invest in A or not, or do we manage for profitability? Do we dare to do that? Do we then invest in B to bring it 20% up, or are we now going to invest in areas where we have never been, which is the uncertainty of strategic questions or problems.

Reference 8

That is where you really need to think about what drives us, what are the needed capabilities? Are these capabilities we want to acquire? Or how does the market changes? That is where big strategic things come in, which is located on a very high organizational level.

Reference 9

how are we going to do this? Is the current setup, right? Does it fit for our purpose? If we go to battle, should we go with seven small troops or should we bring in a big brigade and just walk over the people? And there are probably reasons to do both at different times. And that "how-question" occurs a lot, like does this make sense? What about the setup of our unit or of our team? And you have this question at high levels, which is something I am doing right now, and you have it at lower levels where you should do it for small teams.

Reference 10

are we running the process or are we really asking strategic questions? With that I mean: are we sitting together every year to create strategy for business A, B, C and D and then the overall one, or do we also step back and say what about getting rid of business A, combining B and C, and starting E?

Reference 11

Various situations just pop in my head: do we want to buy a business? Do we want to sell a business? Do we want to reorganize a business? Do we want to start a new area of competence? So, these are typical situations, and I think you cannot go there without using any tools.

Reference 12

This can be a product launch, this can be an upcoming acquisition, or anything else that our company is planning to do within the near future

Reference 13

Usually at this point you bring in an external consultancy, but I belief that is not the right move, as you should first go and do this yourself.

Reference 14

We all try to do the same thing; we want to understand complex issues, and these issues start with very basic questions: why are we here? How are we going to solve this issue? What are we going to do about it?

Executive – E2 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

why do we have to have a strategy? This is truly the first thing you have to understand if you want to get to a specific goal in the future, and after that you have to answer the question of HOW should I do that.

Reference 2

where to define and locate the strategy? Is it a global strategy? Is it a regional strategy? Is it a business strategy?

Reference 3

at what level do I have to undertake the strategy work?

Reference 4

you will have to work on a target picture

Reference 5

how to get to the picture in order to decide what has to be done in terms of missing competencies, and then it comes to the question of execution and there you have to define what kind of priorities or initiatives you are carrying out

Reference 6

how can we develop these new business fields

Executive – E3 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

When a problem occurs, you have to put the right resources behind it.

Reference 2

short term, quota and result focused, and especially there a long-term investment plan needed to be really implemented and tracked, which was absolutely a big problem

Reference 3

The long-term plans often times had to be sacrificed for the sake of short-term results.

Reference 4

This holds true for all strategic matters such as expanding, cooperating, or divesting/investing.

Reference 5

When I was responsible for the project management office of a major restructuring I had to orchestrate 25 work streams in a fully value chain encompassing project from early research until new sales techniques, and I was also responsible to change the operating model of the company.

Executive – E4 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

the ultimate goal of strategy is, and here my BCG heritage is coming through, getting a competitive advantage. The question is: how do you get a competitive advantage?

Reference 2

Getting a competitive advantage means that have to ask yourself: what can you do better, or faster, or differently than your closest competitors?

Reference 3

you need to have an understanding of how your external environment and business environment probably looks like. What are your own capabilities?

Reference 4

In general, from a practical perspective one of the main tasks for strategy development is creating transparency, and if you have never worked in a big company then you probably do not have a glimpse of an idea how difficult such a task is to achieve.

Reference 5

What should I do with this kind of business? Should I keep it, because I just have it? Or do I need to restructure it? If I want to keep it, I can at least make an investment stop and focus on other more profitable areas.

Executive – E5 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

The more complex your business becomes, the more important it is to simplify the direction you want to go as an organization or as a certain business unit

J Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Stages of Strategy Process

Analysis

Academic – A1 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

they should be used in the analysis, because otherwise the analysis or the strategy formulation is just based on a gut feeling

Reference 2

strategists should focus on them in analysis, because when you have a profound analysis it is easier to become creative afterwards

Academic – A2 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

The analysis and formulation or let us say the actual strategic planning process was done by higher tier executives, which was still interesting, as they gave us the guideline and we were the ones that had to make it happen.

Reference 2

It might be helpful if you start your environmental analysis based on tools, as it is always hard to find a starting point.

Reference 3

they are most helpful in the early phases

Reference 4

in early stages, meaning in the environmental analysis and formulation, these tools might be very helpful to structure the problem

Academic – A3 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

Between analysis and formulation, I would put reflection, because if I do a strategic analysis day with a client we will actually maybe not go anywhere near formulation until a week or two later.

Reference 2

the SWOT sits on the bridge between analysis and formulation.

Academic – A4 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

This usually is related to environmental analysis, whether it is at the macro or micro level, but certainly it may also have to do with the stage of strategy development or formulation.

Reference 2

they are primarily used in strategy analysis and some of them are used in strategy development

Reference 3

The Five Forces analysis, when performed properly, can be extremely insightful. Not so much in the context of going through the classical checklist that tells you something about industry attractiveness, but mostly in identifying the implications and basically the actions you could take based on the findings of the model. In a sense trying to reshape the industry and defining the rules of competitors that play in this entire game. These results become extremely interesting and you basically use the findings of the Five Forces analysis to step into strategy formulation - in a word the pre-stage.

Reference 4

most tools that are currently used are related to the analysis stage

Academic – A5 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

For the analysis, of course, strategists and organizations should definitely use the tools.

Reference 2

in the first and in the last phase strategy tools are most important.

Reference 3

For sure you use them in analysis, but evaluation and control would also be good, as you benchmark the results with your initial plan.

Reference 4

The major portion is definitely applied in the analysis phase.

Reference 5

Analyzing environments is not what it used to be anymore.

Reference 6

the front-end of the strategy process, the analysis and formulation, often causes tremendous complications in firms, as it is difficult to reach consensus throughout the entire organization.

Consultant – C1 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

We always start with an analysis phase, and sometimes you had to sell that phase first, because people thought that we were just putting our ideas in place and tell everyone: here we go, this your new strategy.

Reference 2

That is the first step we always took and then we analyzed the environments and here we used tools like the PESTLE framework, Porter's frameworks, and the SWOT analysis.

Reference 3

analysis instruments to make clear how the environment is working

Reference 4

Strategy itself or the analysis is only mapping out what is happening, but what are you going to do about it? How are you going to deal with this environment? And at this point I always have the feeling that the power or the reach of the frameworks stops.

Reference 5

The frameworks are about the analysis and a little bit about the formulation, but the real formulation is more about being creative.

Consultant – C2 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

If you start with your consulting business in an early phase you usually use these for analysis and formulation. In this case the tools often belong to one project phase, or target, or milestone.

Reference 2

There is also another project type; we often call it change management. The customer has given himself a strategic target and a way to reach it. So, the analysis and formulation is done by the customer

Reference 3

we often use these tools in analysis and formulation

Consultant – C3 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

At McKinsey you focus on the first two steps, analysis and formulation

Consultant – C4 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

Definitely in the analysis phase, because it is the phase where you have to put yourself into the client's shoes, and where you have to create a holistic view of the current situation.

Reference 2

Therefore, I can only underline that we most frequently use these tools during analysis.

Consultant – C5 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

In reality there is a very strong use in analysis and formulation.

Executive – E1 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

The tools are used quite frequently within analysis.

Reference 2

you should most frequently use them in the analysis phase.

Reference 3

For analysis it is fine that you are using many more than you will in the end use for the formulation, but you have to make sure that you are not missing something.

Reference 4

You should think through all of your analysis and challenge your results, because the impact is already there, but you have to make sure that your results do not change anything that might be dangerous for your entire existents.

Executive – E2 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

This is for sure in the analysis stage.

Reference 2

For us it is highly useful to do an analysis in a very structured way and therefore you can easily apply these tools.

Reference 3

In all the other stages we include the information that we have gathered during the analysis, but the majority of strategy tools is definitely used in the first phase.

Executive – E3 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

We definitely use them most for analysis and formulation.

Executive – E4 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

With every change in an organization's strategy, there has to be some analysis, and here we can use the given tools to structure our thinking, which has always been very stimulating and helpful.

Reference 2

The majority of tools we are using for analysis. On one hand for the analysis of the external environment/market environment, and on the other in order to discover our internal capabilities.

Executive – E5 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

You have to have a basic or an advanced understanding of strategic analysis and strategic tools, but you have to be able to adapt them to the situation in your company

Reference 2

We perform, let us say, a strategic analysis lite. So, we try to get a basic idea in which strategic direction this decision could possibly lead us.

Formulation*Academic – A1 – 4 References coded*

Reference 1

they should be used in the analysis, because otherwise the analysis or the strategy formulation is just based on a gut feeling

Reference 2

In formulation they might be helpful, albeit we have to question the traditional work of Porter for example

Reference 3

But maybe, it is the ability to systematize the strategy formulation and the breakdown of all strategic changes that need to be brought into action

Reference 4

The follow up after strategy formulation, a board decision, etc. - is the real hard work to do and there lies the blind spot for the future

Academic – A2 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

The analysis and formulation or let us say the actual strategic planning process was done by higher tier executives, which was still interesting, as they gave us the guideline and we were the ones that had to make it happen.

Reference 2

in early stages, meaning in the environmental analysis and formulation, these tools might be very helpful to structure the problem

Reference 3

When you formulate your strategy you have to make various decisions like: what will be my products in the future? how do we spend our R&D budget? etc.

Academic – A3 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

Between analysis and formulation, I would put reflection, because if I do a strategic analysis day with a client we will actually maybe not go anywhere near formulation until a week or two later.

Reference 2

If I got as far as strategy formulation with clients then I will spend a day with them to turn those pre-formulated strategies into actual proper objectives and action plans, but then I will typically leave them to get on with it.

Reference 3

the SWOT sits on the bridge between analysis and formulation.

Academic – A4 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

This usually is related to environmental analysis, whether it is at the macro or micro level, but certainly it may also have to do with the stage of strategy development or formulation.

Reference 2

they are primarily used in strategy analysis and some of them are used in strategy development

Reference 3

These results become extremely interesting and you basically use the findings of the Five Forces analysis to step into strategy formulation - in a word the pre-stage.

Reference 4

Of course, strategic managers would rather like to focus on the formulation stage only, but they are also very critical factors for the successful implementation.

Reference 5

only a few of them are related to the formulation stage.

Academic – A5 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

If applied properly, they will definitely help you to formulate or implement your new strategy.

Reference 2

Formulation would rather be the result of the analysis.

Reference 3

For the formulation and implementation stage, I think, the available tools are not really convincing or even existent.

Reference 4

the front-end of the strategy process, the analysis and formulation, often really causes tremendous problems in firms, as it is difficult to reach consensus throughout the whole organization.

Consultant – C1 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

The frameworks are about the analysis and a little bit about the formulation, but the real formulation is more about being creative.

Consultant – C2 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

If you start with your consulting business in an early phase you usually use these for analysis and formulation. In this case the tools often belong to one project phase, or target, or milestone.

Reference 2

We often have projects where we stop at the formulation milestone, as the customer itself starts to implement and controls his strategy work from now on.

Reference 3

There is also another project type; we often call it change management. The customer has given himself a strategic target and a way to reach it. So, the analysis and formulation is done by the customer

Reference 4

we often use these tools in analysis and formulation

Consultant – C3 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

At McKinsey you focus on the first two steps, analysis and formulation

Reference 2

at Deutsche Bahn they also look a lot at formulation as there is a lot of discussion on how to put things and how you could phrase it

Consultant – C4 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

When it comes to formulation, I would call that the result of our projects or the advices that we give our clients, which basically shows them on how to approach such a situation, on how to access the market, or on how to conduct the merger, etc.

Consultant – C5 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

In reality there is a very strong use in analysis and formulation.

Executive – E1 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

They are also used a lot, but a bit less than in the analysis, in formulation.

Reference 2

For analysis it is fine that you are using many more than you will in the end use for the formulation, but you have to make sure that you are not missing something.

Reference 3

If you then go to formulation you would certainly use those tools where you have seen the biggest impact, whether it was opportunities or threats, and this is where you base your formulation on.

Executive – E2 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

Some tools create interlinks, e.g. the SWOT delivers valuable information in order to formulate objectives or develop the hypotheses.

Executive – E3 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

We definitely use them most for analysis and formulation.

Implementation*Academic – A1 – 3 References coded*

Reference 1

not so many tools, because implementation is just so particular for every single business

Reference 2

blind spot of strategy work, because researchers claim that it is not taught in business schools and therefore organizations lack to conduct it properly

Reference 3

a lot of implementation is taught tool-wise in project management, etc.

Academic – A2 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

A lot of tools were applied, but me and my team did not really use strategy tools during the implementation phase.

Reference 2

if you look at the entire strategy process, the biggest issue is the correct implementation

Reference 3

Strategy implementation also requires the willingness of people!

Reference 4

So, if you want to implement a strategy, you have to convince people.

Academic – A3 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

In my view, you can hardly find tools for implementation, and evaluation and control or at least I do not know them, but evaluation should basically be connected to all of them because otherwise you cannot be sure whether you did it right or wrong.

Academic – A4 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

Having said that, I also think that the divergent group of managers should participate in the decision-making process even in cases they are not aware of the topics that are addressed at the point in time. In most of the cases they will be the ones that are going to be asked to implement strategy, without knowing every technical detail. Of course, strategic managers would rather like to focus on the formulation stage only, but they are also very critical factors for the successful implementation.

Reference 2

we have two other stages where we do not see tools being used at all

Reference 3

research in the future: why do not we use particular tools for implementation and evaluation & control, and which tools could be useful within these two stages?

Academic – A5 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

If applied properly, they will definitely help you to formulate or implement your new strategy.

Reference 2

it is rather the implementation and evaluation that put strategy into action

Reference 3

Often times the implementation is problematic, because you have to motivate your people to step up and execute the formulated plan.

Consultant – C2 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

within the change management process we help our customers to implement these strategies

Reference 1

Our implementation and control phase are normally interlinked.

Consultant – C3 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

when it comes to implementation and evaluation & control you are normally not at the client side anymore

Consultant – C4 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

In implementation and evaluation & control it is also a bit different. I am not saying you do not do these stages without tools, but I think here you rather use other parameters.

Consultant – C5 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

Tools are much less used in implementation, which is more a hands-on approach. Although there are a lot of other tools we apply, like change management tools, in order to implement strategy.

Executive – E1 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

strategy implementation is not strategy.

Reference 2

They are almost completely not used in implementation

Reference 3

After that you go to implementation, which is actually project management, and you are suddenly able demonstrate where exactly you are by making connections to the tools you have used in the previous stages.

Reference 4

Within the implementation I would use the tools to communicate where I would like to go.

Reference 5

Strategy without implementation is the same as implementation without strategy, as both will not work without the other.

Executive – E3 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

For implementation and evaluation, you would need to be really lucky if people come back to you and ask: where are we with regard to implementation? Usually this is maximum 1/10 of the initiative, just to make the board feel good and tell them that something is happening, and that we are on the right track.

Reference 2

We used an implementation tracking tool, which was very much linked to our controlling systems and financial processes. With this tool we were able to track down measurement by measurement. I mean headlines for initiatives that needed to be implemented and then certain fulfillment criteria and metrics, and of course we needed prove to that. There were different stages of fulfillment and I had to report all implementation procedures and our current position (where we are) every week, and with that we saved more than 500 million on an annual basis.

Reference 3

So, an implementation tool should definitely be able to manage a project with all its components.

Executive – E4 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

When you translate strategy-as-practice to “bringing strategy to action or practice”, then this is the actual implementation for me.

Reference 2

It is the next step after the review and here you have to show your ability to bring your ideas to real life.

Executive – E5 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

For a start-up, being a very small unit, it does not make sense to implement (so to say) a strategy.

Reference 2

Even the word, implementation, is too big.

Evaluation and Control*Academic – A1 – 1 Reference coded*

Reference 1

they are most used in evaluation and control

academic – A3 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

In my view, you can hardly find tools for implementation, and evaluation and control or at least I do not know them, but evaluation should basically be connected to all of them because otherwise you cannot be sure whether you did it right or wrong.

Reference 2

The only tool that comes to my mind might be the balanced scorecard, but whether this is a fit I am not so sure.

Academic – A4 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

we have two other stages where we do not see tools being used at all

Academic – A5 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

in the first and in the last phase strategy tools are most important.

Reference 2

For sure you use them in analysis, but evaluation and control would also be good, as you benchmark the results with your initial plan.

Reference 3

it is rather the implementation and evaluation that puts strategy into action

Consultant – C1 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

Maybe also sometimes in evaluation and control, but honestly, we rather use them to guide this process.

Consultant – C2 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

We often have projects where we stop at the formulation milestone, as the customer itself starts to implement and controls his strategy work from now on.

Reference 2

we often have an ex-post evaluation to control the targets and benefits they achieve within their strategic projects

Reference 3

Our implementation and control phase is normally interlinked.

Consultant – C3 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

when it comes to implementation and evaluation and control you are normally not at the clients' side anymore

Reference 2

but they spend very little time in evaluating and controlling, which I would say is a true weakness.

Consultant – C4 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

In implementation and evaluation & control it is also a bit different. I am not saying you do not do these stages without tools, but I think here you rather use other parameters.

Consultant – C5 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

Evaluation and control is a more tool related approach like using KPIs and seeing how they have been developed - those types of tools. From evaluation and control you usually restart the analysis process again.

Executive – E1 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

I dare to say that in 99% of all cases companies do not even think about the last stage, because if they reach this stage they simply start the entire process all over again.

Executive – E3 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

For implementation and evaluation, you would need to be really lucky if people come back to you and ask: where are we with regard to implementation? Usually this is maximum 1/10 of the initiative, just to make the board feel good and tell them that something is happening, and that we are on the right track.

Executive – E4 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

We use a lot of them in the analysis phase and partially in the evaluation and control phase, but there only in a way to look how things change over time in order to compare it to the original setup.

K Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Rationalization

Rational

Academic – A2 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

approach to help people to deal with bounded rationality

Academic – A3 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

they are much stronger to reach rational answers

Consultant – C1 – 1 References coded

Reference 1

The tools should be used to reach a rational answer, but in practice the limited knowledge on strategy and its tools is the core problem.

Consultant – C2 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

In our case we have the ex-ante and ex-post problem. In order to define the ex-ante evaluation, you need some long-term experience, and if you are more coming from the ex-post side you can at least give a concrete answer e.g. when we use these strategy tools we will definitely reach the answer we are looking for.

Reference 2

I think the question depends on your management style.

Reference 3

Sometimes you have to ask yourself: have I reached this rational answer because I have used a strategy tool or was it rather my personal experience in the market?

Reference 4

Somebody who is capable of using a tool to reach a rational answer is a true strategist.

Reference 5

tools should be used to reach a rational answer

Reference 6

You need to have the proper experience to apply them; otherwise you will not be able to reach a rational answer at all.

Consultant – C3 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

at McKinsey, where you also have a lot of people that would say that the tools are heavily number driven, we claim that tools are definitely used to reach a rational answer, as we tend to sell these results.

Reference 2

we use tools or frameworks to reach a rational answer and we were not post-rationalizing decisions.

Consultant – C4 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

It depends on the tool we speak about.

Reference 2

If you use all the tools that I mentioned in the analysis phase it is definitely a good lever to explore the problem, to get to know the problem, to get deeper into the problem, and to develop hypotheses for a possible solution. All that rather stands for reaching a rational answer.

Reference 3

But in the big majority of the cases the tools are really used to reach a rational answer, because otherwise there would be no surplus for us to spend time with them.

Executive – E1 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

When you do it yourself, then tools are actually used for what they have been developed for

Executive – E2 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

Although there are a lot of researchers and maybe also practitioners that are telling this, I would still claim that there is always a rational answer coming out of these tools.

Reference 2

we are not trying to justify our results, as we always do the analysis from scratch, but of course you always have to ask yourself - is that really an analysis or is that what I would like to have as a result? This can only be prevented if you really question yourself all the time. It is for sure not about belief! It is rather about facts and figures.

Reference 3

So, some answers are simply clear and they are given, so you do not have to invest time again

Executive – E3 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

So, it is a mixture of post-hoc rationalization and really finding the right answer

Reference 2

Strategic questions or problems should always be open

Reference 3

Of course, there are other industries where these tools are absolutely a great solution, but they should always lead you to a rational answer and not elsewhere.

Executive – E4 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

when we use it, we deliberately use it to come to a rational answer.

Reference 2

you have to make sure while you are working with tools, that they are not abused for certain interests.

Reference 3

So, it is not an intrinsic feature of a specific tool it is a matter of how you work with your business partners.

Post-Rational*Academic – A1 – 2 References coded*

Reference 1

In practice, they are not really used to achieve a goal, but rather used to post-rationalize a decision

Reference 2

by using one of the top consultancies, because they put their stamp below of the findings and then the BOD will accept the decision

Academic – A2 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

You apply these techniques anyway, even if you do not name them Porter's Five Forces or the Generic Strategy Model.

Reference 2

So, if you change your strategy, or if you want to focus your resources on different markets or different technologies - all these types of decisions will always lead to resistance among employees or conflicts among departments, but here a lot of post-rationalization can happen in order to justify these decisions.

Reference 3

I would not necessarily say that the answers to strategic problems are already decided at the start of the process, but nevertheless I clearly state that using tools is not really about finding rational answers

Reference 4

It is not about finding rational or optimal solutions, it is rather about finding solution that fit the aspiration level.

Reference 5

Organizations do not search for perfect answers, they all have a certain aspiration level and this level helps them to balance the different interests between all stereotypes that are part of the entire process.

Academic – A3 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

There are for sure situations, where you get that sort of post-rationalizing decisions. If you are brought in to use a tool to support that, then actually a good strategist will sit down with the manager who is asking you to do this.

Reference 2

ultimately using a significant tool is to justify a decision that they are probably not that confident about.

Reference 3

The manager is going to say: no, we need this tool for our investors.

Academic – A4 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

Of course, the idea is not to use them for post-rationalization, but the truth is that it happens quite frequently.

Reference 2

What happens pretty often is that decisions are taken and then you go into the aftermath with a tool to build a convincing case for your board of directors.

Academic – A5 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

If your company uses them for one or the other process, then try to use them when you are expected to do so.

Reference 2

There are many stakeholders involved, and some of them take a very close look at how you do your work and how your arguments make sense, and maybe they think that the tools are rather used to post-rationalize.

Consultant – C1 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

start to explain what strategy is about and if somebody asks you to post-rationalize I would recommend to decline on this wish

Reference 2

Sometimes marketing people need these tools to post-rationalize, that is for sure. If a slide deck looks good and well-structured the board sometimes buys the crap.

Consultant – C2 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

I think the question depends on your management style.

Reference 2

Sometimes you have to ask yourself: have I reached this rational answer because I have used a strategy tool or was it rather my personal experience in the market?

Reference 3

Often times the tools are used to justify findings, or to proof that the idea of a C-level manager was right, which is probably your point. That happens, but only with unexperienced tool users.

Reference 4

if they are used for post-rationalization then you might not trust the result, because the solution will most likely be biased.

Consultant – C3 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

Sometimes too many static quantitative measures play the major role, where decision makers do not care about any other qualitative results.

Reference 2

In the McKinsey cosmos you would say that easy tools are used to find the right arguments for an answer.

Reference 3

we used the tools or framework to reach a rational answer and we were not post-rationalizing decisions.

Consultant – C4 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

It depends on the tool we speak about.

Reference 2

Maybe some of them, which are also good to visualize a structure e.g. portfolio matrices, are in some cases used to post-rationalize a decision.

Reference 3

Our clients know that we are famous for specific tools and therefore our bosses occasionally force us to come up with the [company] solution, which is for sure not always the right way to approach a client's problem.

Consultant – C5 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

Some of the tools were sometimes required by the board. So we used them to fulfill the needs of the board, but not to get a real insight out of it.

Reference 2

there are situations, especially in larger organizations, where you could end up having a situation where you need to post-rationalize an already set goal or strategy. The most often you would hear: It would be good, if we would come to the same conclusion and maybe you cross-check it with your set of tools. That is normally CXO language for: Please give me the results that I want!

Reference 3

there are also situations where they are misused to post-rationalize decisions.

Executive – E1 – 9 References coded

Reference 1

The visualization allows you to plan, change, post-rationalize, and that is how I and also people use these tools.

Reference 2

in 95% of the cases within business practice it is a post-rationalization, if not more

Reference 3

most of the tools forced us to do what we were asked for

Reference 4

When you do it yourself, then tools are actually used for what they have been developed for, but unfortunately, they will still be used to post-rationalize later on. I often sit in presentations and I mostly know where people want to go, and what they are presenting is not un-useful.

Reference 5

Their result is the one they want to present, but it is not the full picture, because it could possibly make their project miserable.

Reference 6

Tools are most used to visualize, and this visualization is either used to post-rationalize, which means I present a part of the truth that I want to present, and in good sense they are actually used to plan or to challenge.

Reference 7

If we are only filling out templates for the sake of slide decks, then we should stop using them, because this makes absolutely no sense. The how is seen as the why.

Reference 8

Sometimes they are only established to say: here we go, this our new strategy process, which is wrong. The tools should not be used for the idea to establish a process.

Reference 9

The answer to your question is: tools have a huge impact and usually very positively, but the danger is that you rely on everything that they tell you. Let me make this clear, I think that is why post-rationalization can be so dangerous, because people trust you as they all think: oh great, when I look at this picture I truly get it.

Executive – E2 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

we are not trying to justify our results, as we always do the analysis from scratch, but of course you always have to ask yourself - is that really an analysis or is that what I would like to have as a result? This can only be prevented if you really question yourself all the time. It is for sure not about belief! It is rather about facts and figures.

Executive – E3 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

Unfortunately, SWOT and core competences analysis are mostly prefilled by some self-announced experts in the company and then they are being presented and nobody really cares.

Reference 1

if you like the tool and you think it is worth spending time on it then please do it, but if it is just used to demonstrate your findings I would not recommend to spend too much time on it.

Reference 1

It is something in between unfortunately. The decisions are being made in some heads of people, which can either be the project leader who is asking for strategic support, or by one or two of the board members. So, it is a mixture of post-hoc rationalization and really finding the right answer.

Reference 1

Strategic questions or problems should always be open and if somebody from the board would ask me to post-rationalize a decision with the help of a tool then I would not offer my services to him.

Executive – E4 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

If you do not have transparency, then the answer will be pushed towards a certain interest.

Reference 2

you have to make sure while you are working with tools, that they are not abused for certain interests.

Reference 3

So it is not an intrinsic feature of such tools, it is a matter of how you strategy work with your business partners.

Executive – E5 – 9 References coded

Reference 1

One of the main problems of strategy work is post-rationalization

Reference 2

There is a senior manager, or a managing director and he gets hired because of his experience in the industry. This single person comes to a decision and uses the concepts of strategy to post-rationalize it.

Reference 3

Solving the problem of post-rationalization in strategic projects is fairly impossible as these managers believe everything they say

Reference 4

strategy and numbers have often become an obsession of management in order to make a decision count.

Reference 5

In a way they want to proof their decision with the help of numbers and strategic concepts. It is like a religion!

Reference 6

It is a problem that can very often be seen in bigger companies and corporates!

Reference 7

Strategy is used to post-rationalize decisions that have already been made.

Reference 8

the business of management and strategy consultants is often not really based on conducting an environmental analysis or to formulate a strategy that is appropriate for a specific company, but rather to post-rationalize management decisions.

Reference 9

to justify the advantages of management decisions that have already been made.

L Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Dependence

Acceptance

Academic – A1 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

The company had a rather reluctant approach to tools

Reference 2

People have to be willing to use them and have to be familiar with them

Academic – A2 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

So, if you want to implement a strategy, you have to convince people.

Reference 2

You have to convince your middle managers, you have to convince people with a closer contact to the actual problem, which are people at a lower level who are in contact with the customer.

Reference 3

These are the people you have to involve in early stages to get their impression of a problem, but you also have to convince these people in later stages in order to show them that it is actually a good idea to follow a certain strategy.

Reference 4

And lastly, it is hard to commit everyone in the organization to deliver the needed information.

Reference 5

The impact extremely depends on your experience, on your background, and your general openness towards such tools, and of course this is also highly dependent on the acceptance within the organization itself. Without this, the impact will rather be limited.

Reference 6

Acceptance is important, which is strongly connected to your background, but if you apply tools everyone involved should be committed.

Academic – A3 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

if you are a fantastically entrepreneurial manager or business you might be able to get through without all these things. If you are an ordinary business or a business that has reached some sort of maturity, then you have to use these strategy tools, because otherwise you just do not know where to go. To translate all this, it is more or less the acceptance of the tools so to say

Reference 2

You need the people to understand the tools, you need them to buy into the use of the tools, and in many cases you need them to have a facilitator who understands the concept behind the tools and the practice behind applying them.

Academic – A4 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

it is quite important to convince them that tactics, where they may allocate much more time, are as important as the strategy development process which is basically the one that should determine the tactics.

Reference 2

It takes a lot of time to develop the acceptance for the tools, as they only have limited outcomes for companies.

Reference 3

What I learned from practice is that you have to make sure that all people involved in your strategy process, even technicians or engineers, accept the tools and frameworks you want to use to solve strategic tasks.

Reference 4

Especially these people do not see that much value in the tools, but you need these people and you need their creative contribution to bring the insights to life

Academic – A5 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

using them should be connected to your corporate culture.

Reference 2

they can convince others e.g. your colleagues.

Reference 3

When it is getting too abstract the convincing power is quite low.

Reference 4

When you use these tools you always need to take into account, that you need to convince everyone that is involved in such a process. Also, engineers need to buy the idea of using tool to reach a rational answer.

Reference 5

Usually it is not only one person that makes the decision - it is a team. Then you need to get consensus from others. At some point you need to convince your entire organization.

Reference 6

strategists should not forget the corporate culture as the application of tools has to be accepted throughout the entire organization.

Consultant – C1 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

One sentence to clarify all this: you have to make sure that the client knows what strategy is, and after that you go forward and explain the difference between corporate and business strategies.

Reference 2

Of course, acceptance plays a role, but this is your responsibility. You are there to explain what these things can do and with that you create the commitment for using the tools.

Reference 3

You have to explain the surplus to the average people, middle managers, engineers, etc. If you are asking me the question: What are the conditions for the successful utilization of strategy tools? It is really about the understanding what strategy is! The engineer example is perfect, as they always say: oh, the managers do not understand this; and that is probably true, but they do not understand the managers either.

Reference 4

Here you can use explanations of how these tools connect market demand to technology solutions, and if you are able to do that, then they both understand each other.

Consultant – C2 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

If you do not explain your changes you will probably get different problems on the customer side, as they are mostly unable to catch up with your findings.

Reference 2

If people are not familiar with the tools, it is sometimes almost impossible to create the acceptance for them.

Consultant – C3 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

the consultancy says: what we have seen in practice is that this way of doing it is the one true way and it has worked in various other cases so far.

Reference 2

more or less a bottom up approach on collecting stuff that you think is important and then you try to come up with something that makes them fit together

Reference 3

when they have the real-life test of what you have thought about they fail to execute it without your support, because people do not accept it.

Reference 4

the impact is pretty low, as most of them are not really applied nor accepted.

Reference 5

for the normal guys in an organization a strategy tool is nothing that really bothers them in their daily operations.

Consultant – C4 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

I think one success driver is when your client understands the way you think and the way how and why you apply a tool. So, it is really helpful if you provide your clients with some limited understanding of the tool itself. They are the ones that have to accept to work with the tools. That holds also true for our organization.

Consultant – C5 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

You create a strategy slide deck and you fail to implement the strategy, because your organization is simply not ready for it.

Reference 2

It depends on the mindset within the company and it is the question of how to approach and engage stakeholders, and outside parties.

Reference 3

Of course, it depends on the acceptance of the tools, but if I consider the endless strategy slide decks I have seen in board meetings I cannot say that strategy tools are very helpful, because they do not help you to do the job.

Reference 4

take away the hierarchy and the fear that you might say something wrong, just because a manager is in the room, and give everyone a certain amount of time to run through the process

Executive – E2 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

So, and what is the key challenge there? It is not the tools, and it is not the process itself, it is the people! You are working with people that have an operating role in the business, which means they have their day-to-day business with day-to-day priorities. But strategy is nothing that you can do in a day-to-day manner. When you review or develop strategy it takes time if done in a proper way, and there the operating people need guidance through this process, e.g. with the help of tools or by just having the right questions for them, so that they are able to start their own thinking process.

Reference 2

used from the bottom up to the portfolio level

Reference 3

the acceptance of these tools is highly driven by who is doing the work with them, because if they are not accepted I would recommend: Do not use them!

Reference 4

Now it is accepted and implemented, and we are also working with it with respect to our resource allocation.

Reference 5

The performance of a tool depends on the users and the acceptance.

Reference 6

if tools, methods, frameworks or structured processes are not adding value, then I would recommend do not use them. We had such a phase, because the template-based approach was not accepted by the operating guys. In that case, strategy work would be completely useless and only time consuming.

Reference 7

Meanwhile we managed to have a real accepted strategy process, and with this process also the tools, as people have realized what you can do with these tools and understood that they really add new perspectives that they never had before.

Reference 8

You have to be very clear about what to expect from the tools and what their boundaries are, and which answers cannot be delivered. Therefore, I recommend that you should always do the loop or the reality check!

Reference 9

But when your organization has reached a stage where everyone sees the added value of using the tools, then you can enhance the overall process itself.

Reference 10

you need to have the acceptance of the process and the tools within the organization. If you do not have that you better close the strategy department and save the money.

Reference 11

I fear that a lot of strategy processes are not accepted throughout the corporate world, as people think it is just about presenting a template and in the next year it is already a different one.

Reference 12

If the tool is too time consuming and too complex that you even have to be a strategy expert to understand it, then the implementation of the tool will not be possible as nobody would accept it.

Executive – E3 – 5 Reference coded

Reference 1

I continuously need to adapt my plans, my thinking, and align the organization behind that.

Reference 2

In that case the methodology becomes very powerful, as people have bought into the concept as they were voicing their concerns and if you then try to work with them and guide them to the actual opportunity, then you have established a powerful decision-making process.

Reference 3

Sometimes tools that are used in practice are not guided by someone who really knows how to fill out the templates, as they are rather being sent around to people where it does not even make sense.

Reference 4

If you want to generate the perfect conditions for the successful application of the tools you should try to have separate sessions with all the board members with exactly the same tools that have been applied during the process, maybe even individually, and then you as a strategist have to moderate and glue all the perspectives together in another board meeting.

Reference 5

Here the guys from the organization come on stage and present what the medium level managers think. At this point all participants will realize the acceptance for the tools and as a result of that some potentially clashing perspectives come apart, which is great soil for a fruitful discussion.

Executive – E4 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

Imagine a workshop with guys from research, these are guys that really know what they do, and then you say: we have a lot of research projects – let us put them into a matrix. You will probably have an interesting discussion, because these are mostly very complex questions that they are aiming to solve. When you come with a very simplistic strategy tool the research department will probably freak out, as you are wasting their time.

Reference 2

There are probably 100 or more different portfolio matrix approaches out there and maybe someone is using something similar to what we are using, but this is the way we like to do it and this matrix is accepted throughout the organization.

Reference 3

people need to understand what a tool is able to do and what it cannot do. People need to be aware that it will never reflect all aspects of the reality. If you stick to these rules the tools can be really powerful, but you need to have the right people with the right mindset.

Reference 4

Maybe acceptance is also something that has to be there. There are normally two ways to get acceptance. First, you have to make clear that there is a value in it, and second you have to make clear what the tools can and cannot achieve - so as I already said the expectation management is important.

Reference 5

However, your expectation management cannot be: Look this tool is a nice exercise and nice visualization, but it does not have any value beyond that. In that case most people would probably say: I have to prepare a product launch and that takes me 10 hours a day, and now the strategy department comes along and says I should fill in my data into a certain tool that you use for visualization? Are you kidding me? So there has to be a value connected to the use of a tool, because otherwise it not helpful and will for sure not be accepted.

Reference 6

People work 50-60 hours a week, so the hurdle for tool to provide a significant value is quite high.

Executive – E5 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

To create belief the concepts you are using should be very simple. The more simple a concept is, the easier it is to create belief using this concept.

Reference 2

I normally stick with easy to understand concepts e.g. the SWOT, PESTLE - it is always a mixture of complexity and the popularity or rather the acceptance of a tool.

Reference 3

The more accepted it is, the easier it is to create belief. The “simplicity” and the “image” of a tool - if you want to find two specific attributes.

Reference 4

In such a case I often added some complexity to give people a feeling that more than a single variable was used to come to an advice.

Content*Academic – A2 – 2 References coded*

Reference 1

You want to foresee the future of your organization for next couple of years and therefore you need a lot of information to do that.

Reference 2

They should maybe be more open to very different types of content, and I think the content that you can currently implement into these tools is very limited.

Consultant – C1 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

It clearly depends on the topic you are working on, and I think efficiency if you look at the process of developing a strategy in order to create content is truly not about efficiency it is about the quality of the strategists that are working with them.

Reference 2

It is about content, and if you make the wrong decisions at a high level, then the entire system will react in the wrong way.

Reference 3

Creating the content for a business strategy is a lot about knowing what is happening, but also about creating these wonderful ideas.

Consultant – C2 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

What we do when we adapt these tools is not really a true adaption of the tools or the method itself, it is more often a kind of content management. We decide which content truly fits for our purpose.

Reference 2

In the future there will be a story behind the tools, which I call content.

Reference 3

Within the strategic process you of course need the right tools, but you also need the right content like best practices, figures, and documented experiences, and that is the gap we have to fill in future, which is the gap between the tools and the real effective work in the strategy process.

Reference 4

It is not only about the methods. Content and experience will play the same or even a much more interesting role in the future.

Reference 5

Content will play a huge role and the tools we will use in the future will have to answer questions about how our digital way of living will change in a complex network, which is already a complex system of dependencies.

Consultant – C3 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

SWOT, Value Chain or the Five Forces, these are things that can help you, but only to the extent that you fill them with great content, and that is something that no framework or strategy tool in the world can help you to do.

Reference 2

the content is not coming from the tool itself!

Reference 3

the unique content is basically the output at the end of the day. It is not something that is produced by the tool but rather by the people that apply the tool.

Reference 4

The questions we ask should still be framed through strategy tools but including the right data will definitely help you to speed up the process to come to meaningful answers and to stop the gut feeling competition.

Executive – E2 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

more important for tool users to employ them better and to fill them with data that we already have, because this is what is mostly problematic.

Reference 2

Strategists should invest the time in existing ones and take all the data they have and put it into the appropriate tools.

Executive – E3 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

I think, if you have an established tool you should not change the meaning of it, but when I think about the content that we fill into the tools it can sometimes change the initial purpose of a tool.

Reference 2

The fact that they are simply used does not mean that it is simple to fill them up with valuable content.

Reference 3

Some people think that all answers lie in all the data that is currently around, but you will certainly know that data is not information, that information is not knowledge, that knowledge is neither insight nor understanding.

Reference 4

If it helps to do some sort of datamining in order to generate some hypotheses, then this is fine with me. I am not a digital native, but from a strategist's point of view available data is often times over interpreted.

Executive – E5 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

I think it would also be helpful for many companies to have more information about their strategic position, with respect to the different dimensions that come along with certain tools.

Context-Situation*Academic – A2 – 8 References coded*

Reference 1

The decision to follow a certain path probably depends more on your specific situation or context, it may also depend on power distribution within your organization - who to involve in this process and at which stage should we involve the suitable people?

Reference 2

At the end of the day how you use such tools will be dependent on your specific problem, on your specific context, and your specific environment.

Reference 3

These tools are helpful in a situation when the future is a bit foggy, when you are unsure about the different possibilities in a situation where most of the information is particularly unstructured.

Reference 4

not applicable for every industry

Reference 5

You have to think about your strategy tool kit and you should use the tools in the specific situation and context where it works best.

Reference 6

they are adapted to the specific organizational context

Reference 7

some of them need to be changed in order to fit to your specific context

Reference 8

Organizations should always keep in mind what the underlying intentions and assumptions of these tools are, but nevertheless the practitioners should use them to conduct a specific analysis that is applicable to their specific problem.

Academic – A3 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

It is not about the question - in what situation should organizations use these - the answer is simple - they should use these!

Reference 2

What most academics think is, but also of course practitioners, I have to use to use a strategy tool because I am in "a situation".

Reference 3

The reality is - it is not about the question in what situation should strategists or organizations use strategy tools. It should be rather clear that organizations should use strategy tools to conduct their strategy work in any case or let us say situation.

Academic – A4 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

A significant situation is hard to find, I think they should be used in every situation.

Reference 2

You have to adjust them to the specific context you are facing and if you are not able to do this you are not the right person to apply them.

Reference 3

overall most of these tools can be applied in different contexts and have a significant contribution

Academic – A5 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

I think there is no actual situation where you should plan with or definitely have to use a certain tool

Reference 2

Is this tool in line with our strategic goals and objectives? Does it help us to solve a problem? Do we have to adapt the tools we are using?

Reference 3

It has to fit to our overall strategy!

Reference 4

difficult to nail down one particular situation or event for applying them

Consultant – C1 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

It clearly depends on the topic you are working on

Reference 2

They are context dependent! For example, I have not been working in the area of products so far and here the BCG matrix is probably most useful.

Reference 3

The good thing about the traditional tools is that they are general models and you can use them in many different situations.

Reference 4

It is a combination of both, as managers always have some ideas about how things are working and where they should go. However, they do not always understand the context of why they think that.

Reference 5

strategy and using strategy frameworks, developing a strategy, or communicating a strategy is really about knowing the area of strategy, and many managers have heard about the frameworks but do not have the depth in knowledge on how to use them or to use them in their specific situation

Reference 6

It is much more the context, in which you need to apply them, and sometimes organizations do too many things, and as a strategist you have to decide when we should do fewer actions. There are a lot of different activities within an organization and then it sometimes becomes very unclear what the core business is about, and then a first step should be: where should we put our focus on and what are the success factors that really need to be in place to become effective in order to be able to develop a strategy. Maybe after that tools should be applied, but this depends on the situation.

Consultant – C2 – 8 References coded

Reference 1

strategy tools help you to understand the actual situation and to find a way to at least clarify the next steps

Reference 2

Not every tool fits to every situation, but in all projects there is a least one you can apply.

Reference 3

It depends on the project type.

Reference 4

The context has to be well thought of and using them is also risky, because you spend a lot of time to produce a significant output.

Reference 5

It is necessary to know the right situation to reach the set target, but who tells you that you have chosen the wrong tool?

Reference 6

there is an impact, but it is highly dependent on the context you are facing

Reference 7

you need a proper level of maturity while using them, because you need to know how to use the tools and for which situation the tool is the right one

Reference 8

Using the wrong tool in the wrong moment can lead to more chaos than success. You have to get a good idea where a tool is helpful and where it can be harmful.

Consultant – C3 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

depends on the exact problem you are trying to solve

Reference 2

They can be applied to various situations

Consultant – C4 – 7 References coded

Reference 1

we used parts of the framework of Porter and we also used the SWOT as a starting point to think and analyze the current strategic situation of our client and the industry

Reference 2

Overall, this is really client specific and some of them even highly value it if we do not use those strict frameworks, as they rather expect us to adapt our knowledge/advice on their specific situation or issue.

Reference 3

So, the very good or the perfect tools are really efficient, when they are easy to apply and easy to adapt to a specific situation.

Reference 4

We change variables, segments, meanings, etc., but always with regard to the particular client.

Reference 5

traditional tools will always have a meaning when the users are able to adapt them to the specific situation.

Reference 6

In my view it always depends on the type of project you are on, and it depends on the problem you have to solve for your client, but if you think about strategic problems then they usually have a huge impact.

Reference 7

Another condition is the situation itself, as tools do not always fit into every situation. So, it really depends on the difficulty and the strategic dimension of the questions or the problem that you are facing.

Consultant – C5 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

all tools should be adapted to their specific situation

Executive – E1 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

Various situations just pop in my head: do we want to buy a business? Do we want to sell a business? Do we want to reorganize a business? Do we want to start a new area of competence? So, these are typical situations, and I think you cannot go there without using any tools.

Reference 2

It clearly depends on the situation and the context you are facing. In some situations, it is extremely useful to use one or the other internal or external tool, but in other situations they will rather be a waste of time or they can even be misleading.

Reference 3

This is just a different way to look at different contexts in order to figure out where I want to go, and am I using it to figure out which business I want to sell.

Reference 4

Not all tools are helpful in any situation

Reference 5

You need to use the right tools for the right situation, and also the right people working on the right types of strategy at the right time.

Reference 6

Of course, you will make mistakes and waste time, but that is why you always have to carry your tool box around, because at some point there will be "the situation" for the tools that came to your mind first.

Executive – E2 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

We look at the tools and decide to use one based on the situation or problem we are facing - does it make sense or rather not?

Reference 2

We absolutely adapt the tools to our context, but maybe we do not adapt them, we rather apply them in a different/our way.

Executive – E3 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

When are they truly needed? I think it is the situation when you need to structure a problem and when you need help to moderate a discussion, or maybe sometimes you even need them to stimulate brainstorming.

Reference 2

Ideally you use these tools when you are facing an unknown situation, or when you feel something is happening or changing, or commoditizing so that you really need to change your entire company.

Reference 3

you can adapt them to various situations.

Reference 4

The best strategy tool is to personally expose yourself into a different situation.

Executive – E4 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

So, you should always keep in mind that the choice of a tool is strongly dependent on the case.

Reference 2

So, if there is a consolidation in the US prescription medicine providers market, then there would not be matrix or tool that would help us to find this exact problem, and if we fail here, then our strategy discussion is simply useless. From my point of view there is no tool that can help us with that, because it is simply work you have to do.

Executive – E5 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

I frequently alter basic tools, like Porter's Value chain. I take it and make use of single parts of the value chain but in another context.

Practitioner*Academic – A1 – 3 References coded*

Reference 1

Tools users often lack to achieve clear outcomes

Reference 2

People have to be willing to use them and have to be familiar with them

Reference 3

Tools are most efficient for people that are very open minded. They quickly learn how to use tools and what specific benefits they are able to generate.

Academic – A2 – 10 References coded

Reference 1

People have a bounded rationality and only limited cognitive capacities to capture all these influences, all these possibilities, and all these interrelated aspects that may actually influence the path of your organization.

Reference 2

depend on power distribution within your organization - who to involve in this process and at which stage should we involve the suitable people?

Reference 3

The tools are probably something that is highly dependent on each practitioner's interpretation.

Reference 4

What is the function for me as someone who wants to understand what the best strategy will be for my organization?

Reference 5

the interpretation of such strategy tools, and their ability to help me to come up with a decent strategy, most likely differs from person to person

Reference 6

People have their favorite tools, and this cannot be changed.

Reference 7

As a decision maker you have to weigh the results of the tools

Reference 8

dependent on the respective decision makers. If you did your studies in certain universities that emphasize the use of strategy tools, if you have a business school background as a decision maker, if you are familiar with these kinds of tools, then you will probably be more open to use these approaches.

Reference 9

The impact extremely depends on your experience, on your background, and your general openness towards such tools, and of course this is also highly dependent on the acceptance within the organization itself. Without this, the impact will rather be limited.

Reference 10

I think the tools work quite well as they are, but it is rather depending on the people and the decision-making processes.

Academic – A3 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

But interestingly, if I work with many of my clients who have never been near a business school, I am introducing them to the classic models of Porter or Mintzberg etc. They might be old hats for academics, but when you go through them with people running their own businesses they find them hugely useful.

Reference 2

Solving strategic problems should start with the idea of getting "them", e.g. clients, board members, CXOs, to discover - what are the issues and what they should do about them.

Reference 3

I have become the sort of educator and the conductor.

Reference 4

What most academics think is, but also of course practitioners, I have to use to use a strategy tool because I am in "a situation".

Reference 5

if you are a fantastically entrepreneurial manager or business you might be able to get through without all these things

Reference 6

You need the people to understand the tools, you need them to buy into the use of the tools, and in many cases you need them to have a facilitator who understands the concept behind the tools and the practice behind applying them.

Academic – A4 – 9 References coded

Reference 1

You have to adjust them to the specific context you are facing and if you are not able to do this you are not the right person to apply them.

Reference 2

managers resist in getting involved in such a process as they consider it as rather not useful

Reference 3

a lot of managers resist against the use of strategy tools, because they simply belief that developing a strategic plan can grow up to be a liability

Reference 4

managers do not have an understanding of what strategy is and how strategy tools could be useful for an organization, or how they should try to involve them in the process.

Reference 5

to involve more people that are relevant, so that we can create better insights on the implications of all the information we collect from applying the tools.

Reference 6

The people involved in strategy work are by all means responsible for the successful utilization of strategy tools.

Reference 7

What I learned from practice is that you have to make sure that all people involved in your strategy process, even though technicians or engineers, need to accept the tools and frameworks you want to use for solving strategic tasks. Especially these people do not see that much value in the tools, but you need these people and you need their creative contribution to bring the insights to life. Mostly, this was not happening.

Reference 8

the divergent group of managers should participate in the decision-making process even in cases they are not aware of the topics that are addressed at the point in time

Reference 9

In most of the cases they will be the ones that are going to be asked to implement strategy, without knowing every technical detail.

Academic – A5 – 9 References coded

Reference 1

Who is executing strategy? You have the people that plan strategy, who often sit in ivory towers, but someone needs to execute the strategic approach and go to the customer to establish the relationship.

Reference 2

Their success also depends on the people that are using them.

Reference 3

the people who did strategy and marketing were max. 5%

Reference 4

Some people in companies do not know what strategy is about and therefore the tools can help to execute this work.

Reference 5

all strategists will still have their strategy toolkit ready as it enables them to understand the macro, micro and meta factors of the environments they are working in.

Reference 6

The tools you mentioned are part of managers' daily toolkits, which consist of both simple and complex tools.

Reference 7

It is important that strategy people think in these structures.

Reference 8

Although you may not formally use the tools you should at least try to think in these either simple or more complex structures.

Reference 9

strategists should not forget the corporate culture as the application of tools has to be accepted throughout the entire organization.

Consultant – C1 – 13 References coded

Reference 1

One of the main things I always encountered was that most managers do not know anything about the difference between business strategy and corporate strategy.

Reference 2

As a consultant you really have to see if we are really talking about strategy or is it something else.

Reference 3

It clearly depends on the topic you are working on, and I think efficiency if you look at the process of developing a strategy in order to create content is truly not about efficiency it is about the quality of the strategists that are working with them.

Reference 4

The bigger problem is that changes or errors happen when people do not know how to use these tools, and that is what I see quite often.

Reference 5

It is a combination of both, as managers always have some ideas about how things are working and where they should go. However, they do not always understand the context of why they think that.

Reference 6

I often experience that strategy and using strategy frameworks, developing a strategy, or communicating a strategy is really about knowing the area of strategy, and many managers have heard about the frameworks but do not have the depth in knowledge on how to use them or to use them in their specific situation. This is a knowledge gap and therefore strange things can happen.

Reference 7

You cannot do everything, because in some cases they simply will not work, as the people in an organization are unable to work with them.

Reference 8

You have a theory, why do you not explain that your customer first and then present your results?

Reference 9

It is all about the competencies of the people you are working with, which is absolutely important. Do they know how to develop a strategy? Or is it some grey area for them and they have no clue how to start such a process.

Reference 10

when it comes to strategy work I always have to start from scratch, because if you are working with multiple people the chances that all these people have strategic capabilities is about zero.

Reference 11

What I do is; I use some parts of the theory, like 5-6 slides, and start a meeting with the question: what is strategy? What is it about? That is how you get people into place in order to work on the process. They need to understand what they are working on and also what strategy is not about. Here you have to use some theory to get people at the same level.

Reference 12

You have to explain their surplus to the average people, middle managers, but also engineers, etc. If you are asking me the question: What are the conditions for the successful utilization of strategy tools? It is really about the understanding what strategy is! The engineer example is perfect, as they always say: oh, the managers do not understand this; and that is probably true, but they do not understand the managers either.

Reference 13

If you have that communication gap and they do not understand each other, then you first have to solve that.

Consultant – C2 – 11 References coded

Reference 1

the people we work with are able to recap these tools as we provide them with the same background information for the method like an actual practice book would do it

Reference 2

If you do not explain your changes you will probably get different problems on the customer side, as they are mostly unable to catch up with your findings.

Reference 3

Somebody who is capable of using a tool to reach a rational answer is a true strategist.

Reference 4

A fool using a tool is still a fool.

Reference 5

You need to have the proper experience to apply them; otherwise you will not be able to reach a rational answer at all.

Reference 6

Also, the customer needs to have the knowledge of how to interpret the results, because at some point he will be left alone.

Reference 7

Maybe one last comment: original tools have their boundaries and finding a way to circumvent them is sometimes the biggest part of the work, because in many cases they simply will not fit as they are. Here the strategist has to be very experienced and creative to think of an alternative way.

Reference 8

you need a proper level of maturity while using them, because you need to know how to use the tools and for which situation the tool is the right one

Reference 9

If you do not have some sort of knowledge management, and at the next stage it is called experience management, you will not be able to successfully use strategy tools in practice.

Reference 10

On the one hand side it is a question of the method or the tool, and the other hand side you need to have the experience.

Reference 11

The successful use of tools strongly relies on the experience of the applicant and here we need to put our focus on. Why do you think consultants are needed all over the world? This is probably one point for that.

Consultant – C3 – 12 References coded

Reference 1

Another huge part of the process has been the senior consultants as they guide the thinking process.

Reference 2

They a) point you to the right people or b) point you to the right documents you should look at.

Reference 3

There is a minimum time in thinking about how you are going to do it, and much more focus lies on the actual talk to the experts and clients.

Reference 4

highly dependent on the people that are involved in this process

Reference 5

Experience in strategy work plays the #1 violin, as it is sometimes not efficient to work with the biggest talents that just graduated from university.

Reference 6

you sit together with 5 guys and you are trying to find the best-practice way for your specific problem.

Reference 7

most of the McKinsey consultants rather come from non-business backgrounds we might not be aware of all proper textbook names of such tools, but to some extent we include all of them in our work.

Reference 8

two or three people who used it a lot, who have quite influential positions, and that is why everyone was suddenly using it.

Reference 9

a lot of people do a strategic project once or two times in their life, and then they are moving on and they are probably not involved next time - so there is not a lot of organizational and institutional knowledge that these people have.

Reference 10

the unique content is basically the output at the end of the day. It is not something that is produced by the tool but rather by the people that apply the tool.

Reference 11

An important condition is, to have a least one person that has seen this strategy tool applied by someone who knows what he has been doing.

Reference 12

can be helpful, but for really successful implementation you always need someone that can guide you through the process.

Consultant – C4 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

to be the leading advisor or referee

Reference 2

the most common frameworks that I use, or we use, are the simple ones, because those are the ones that are most thought through. Everyone knows them, and almost everybody has used them ones or twice, which makes it much easier to start the analytical thinking process.

Reference 3

I have seen a lot of mistakes in the projects where I have been part of, but at this point you need someone that really knows what he is doing. This person should be the one that can guide you through a process that is based on the tools. He has probably already adapted one or the other and maybe this is the key to this question.

Reference 4

You need to have strategists in place that know what they are doing and then you can work with your people, otherwise no one will even think about using them.

Reference 5

Well, in my job environment all of our clients are more or less at the senior level, so they are usually familiar with the development of a strategy and mostly they are also familiar with the usage of strategic frameworks or tools.

Reference 6

Of course, we have those tools written down in our knowledge documents and we also have templates that are usually ready to present, and I think everyone is familiar with them, but of course there are always specialists for one or the other task.

Consultant – C5 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

So in general, you need to have somebody who guides the debate with an open mind when it is necessary, especially when people tend to say: we cannot do that, we cannot do this, and that is not possible either.

Reference 2

Maybe first do more listening and be more humble about your own role, and listen carefully to the different perspectives in the room and to what exactly is on the table.

Reference 3

It depends on the mindset within the company and it is the question of how to approach and engage stakeholders, and outside parties.

Reference 4

If the room is full of experienced people, with a good intuition, and with good knowledge of the market, then it is very difficult to conclude with catastrophic decisions on a daily basis.

Reference 5

If you look at larger organizations, then you will see the marketing department where people only work on these tools. These people tend to be bureaucrats and not very active in true strategy work. So, they do a lot of desk research and want to feed the strategic process as well.

Reference 6

If you are unable to apply the tools in real life and you do not see the results they can produce, you should rather stop using them.

Executive – E1 – 8 References coded

Reference 1

it is the responsibility of the strategists to make the tools they have chosen usable.

Reference 2

So, they will be around us and we need them, and I believe with your own personal input you can make them last for a very long time.

Reference 3

Every strategist has its strategy tool kit and he is responsible for picking the right one.

Reference 4

the KODAK example. I could have shown you tools saying we should go here, because this is where our profitability looks most promising, and all of them trusted me and thought: oh, he is probably right. Unfortunately, I think the managers must have chosen the wrong tools. Based on that example, you can see how strategists were overcomplicating things, which were actually very simple, and even gave the wrong recommendation, because they believed they could survive everything.

Reference 5

People should use them to see the full picture, and only with the right set of questions your strategy process can be enhanced.

Reference 6

People that are involved in strategy work need to understand the problem first and then certain tools will help you to come up with a solution.

Reference 7

You need to use the right tools for the right situation, and also the right people working on the right types of strategy at the right time.

Reference 8

How can you decide on which tool is the right tool? This comes with experience.

Executive – E2 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

but if you have people that are not experienced in working with these tools they oftentimes can be rather useless

Reference 2

the acceptance of these tools is highly driven by who is doing the work with them, because if they are not accepted I would recommend: Do not use them!

Reference 3

The performance of a tool depends on the users and the acceptance.

Reference 4

You have to have someone in the board who is a supporter of structured and analytical thinking; someone that has an understanding of this approach. If you do not have that it is going to be difficult.

Executive – E3 – 12 References coded

Reference 1

I continuously need to adapt my plans, my thinking, and align the organization behind that.

Reference 2

Unfortunately, SWOT and core competences analysis are mostly prefilled by some self-announced experts in the company and then they are being presented and nobody really cares.

Reference 3

anchored and very much biased to the knowledge and experience of “highly” experienced colleagues

Reference 4

From my experience almost everything in the company is linked to an individual. If you have a charismatic strategist doing the exercises with you, that is probably enough, and then you barely need a strategy tool that guides you.

Reference 5

when it is there you probably use it, but it is not because of the strategy tool that you get to certain results; it is because people want to work on the topic, which is similar to school - if you like your teacher and his class you usually score high.

Reference 6

Sometimes tools that are used in practice are not guided by someone who really knows how to fill out the templates, as they are rather being sent around to people where it does not even make sense.

Reference 7

You have to give them to the right people, strategists, and leaders, and make sure they are used correctly.

Reference 8

You have to hire somebody as your head of strategy who does not only have a strategic consulting background, but rather somebody that has also seen something valuable for the company or the industry, that can either be a component of the value chain or something that makes him/her extremely valuable when looking at his/her previous experiences. If you found that one person then you basically have to bring in the best talent from your company and also from an external source, which should be people that are extremely charismatic and intrinsically motivated; and you have to make sure that those people get high positions after about three years, and then you will probably have the right talent catalyst. This is how you can enhance proper tool use and the efficiency of your company's strategy process, but for this you need credibility and you usually do not get this if you hire a former partner from one of the big consulting companies being the group head of strategy and then after three years you realize - oh my god the guy knows all the tools and his team is maybe capable of doing strategy work, but we do not really understand how the industry is moving, because people do not have that gut feeling of proper work experience.

Reference 9

Such a person enhances the structure of your strategy work, but has he/she really helped you to make the entire process more sufficient? No, I do not think so.

Reference 10

I would recommend to use the tools with medium level managers within the company, because they are close to the knowledge and close to what is actually happening, and then this is presented to the board somehow, and in the ideal situation at least your CEO has some kind of strategic intent and wants to validate the work that has been done in the strategic planning process.

Reference 11

If you want to generate the perfect conditions for the successful application of the tools you should try to have separate sessions with all the board members with exactly the same tools that have been applied during the process, maybe even individually, and then you as a strategist have to moderate and glue all the perspectives together in another board meeting.

Reference 12

It is about the brains that make best use of the data and the hypotheses and in the end that helps you to structure what kind of information or data you need to collect.

Executive – E4 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

people need to understand what a tool is able to do and what it cannot do. People need to be aware that it will never reflect all aspects of the reality. If you stick to these rules the tools can be really powerful, but you need to have the right people with the right mindset.

M Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Adaptation

Academic – A1 – 7 References coded

Reference 1

With adapted categories on the axis they are used

Reference 2

Every organization is very special. For example, when you are part of a global industry it does not make sense to define a market in the Ansoff Matrix as a regional market. You need to define customer groups by their size, by OEM vs. supplier, etc. Or another example, which I was confronted with: We did a portfolio matrix, more or less, on an internal basis, because in most industries it is nearly impossible to get all industry data. It might be possible in the automotive industry or consumer electronics to a certain extent, but in many other industries, in particular in Germany where you do not have all that company data publicly available, it is not possible. But doing it with internal values e.g. how much the turnover changed over the recent years/past, how long are these products existing, how much do they contribute, how many customers, how about customer retention?! In that case an adapted tool can be really helpful. It clearly depends on the situation.

Reference 3

If you do not adapt the tools to a particular situation, then there is a huge risk of feeling save, because of using tools but neglecting important aspects

Reference 4

using tools in a regular interval can be really helpful to recognize and manage changes in order to become aware of the adaption of necessities or changed needs

Reference 5

Having a standardized approach and also the willingness and the ability to adapt to specific circumstances

Reference 6

It only needs some modifications to get a little bit further

Reference 7

using the standardized tools regularly and trying to emphasize that they can be adapted (albeit they do not have to)

Academic – A2 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

most of them are adapted once in a while

Reference 2

they are adapted to the specific organizational context

Reference 3

Today, we are already looking at Industry 4.0 where nothing is the same anymore, and here I think using such static frameworks without adaptation or an update will not lead you anywhere.

Reference 4

some of them need to be changed in order to fit to your specific context

Reference 5

The most important part is the interpretation and when you think that adaptation is needed - then please adapt.

Reference 6

But you should be careful, since most tools were developed to solve a certain strategic problem, and here you can make tremendous mistakes.

Academic – A3 – 8 References coded

Reference 1

you have to adapt the one or the other

Reference 2

For example, I might be working with a client on the Five Forces and I ask them is there a big deal about suppliers here? They probably say: no, not really. Do you think there is going to be a threat of substitution? And then the might also say: no. If we feel that is reasonable we might turn the Five Forces into three forces.

Reference 3

VRIO for instance, which I have often used with my clients, for sure needs some sort of adaptation. What we quite often do is to amalgamate it with the core competences analysis.

Reference 4

So, it is more about amalgamating models together.

Reference 5

For example, if I am teaching or working with clients on marketing strategy I will not use the ILC, but I use the product life cycle to create different marketing mixes for each stage of the life cycle. That is what I meant with amalgamating tools.

Reference 6

It is not so much adapting the tools, but actually saying these tools really work much better if we have two or three running together.

Reference 7

What you got to do is to add to them. You build on these, you adapt them, maybe you delete some of them, but I think where we have to be very careful is that they are not deleted by people to benefit their own research priorities. That is truly the danger.

Reference 8

So, we need to be able to understand how fast things change. Therefore, I think the tools need to be adaptable and bring competition up to 2015, which means you cannot simply apply them in the old-fashioned way without thinking about the turbulent movements of our industries we are working in.

Academic – A4 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

It is not a document that you devise and then you say: “I now have a strategic plan and follow it!”, because apparently you need to be able to adapt to all the changes in the environment.

Reference 2

You have to adjust them to the specific context you are facing and if you are not able to do this you are not the right person to apply them.

Reference 3

occasionally you can see an adaptation, but I have to say most of the times we have not used a significant adaptation.

Reference 4

I do not think they going to become redundant. Most of them will be around, but maybe they are going to be adapted.

Reference 5

look at the Five Forces, it is been here for more than 30+ years. Of course, Porter rewrote his article, but taking into account some developments and trying to adjust it to make it more relevant is a common process in all disciplines.

Academic – A5 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

Of course, all these tools were somehow adjusted to the company, but this is what you normally do.

Reference 2

Each industry is different, each company is different as they all have different resources and competences available, which is why you have to adjust the tools at some point.

Reference 3

There is no way around of adapting the tools and sometimes to even extent them.

Reference 4

Tools applied in practice should be “unique” for every company.

Consultant – C1 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

Yes, we are adapting the tools, because their original idea is sometimes not enough for our cases.

Reference 2

When you are planning to use a tool, you need to think about the question that is being asked first, and then you decide whether the normal application is enough or if you have to adapt

Reference 3

During my research in my MBA I have been able to really dig into the Five Forces and I finally realized what it is really about. I do think that sometimes some forces do not really matter and therefore you do not have to focus on them, but in most cases, you should look at all the specific factors. Leaving out or adding things can be quite helpful, but we usually do not do that. We rather put more emphasis on the content and here we make adaptations or try to find connections.

Reference 4

yes, you can adapt the tools, but do not change the entire idea, because this can be really harmful

Consultant – C2 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

We adapt some tools, because we think it is sometimes not very valuable to use the tools in the defined way.

Reference 2

When adapting tools everyone involved should have the same understanding.

Reference 3

What we do when we adapt these tools is not really a true adaption of the tools or the method itself, it is more often a kind of content management. We decide which content truly fits for our purpose.

Reference 4

In our consultancy we have a clear guideline. We check the experience documentation of previous projects and then we decide which variables we should have a closer look on. This knowledge database includes most methods we have already applied with significant cases. This metopedia includes content e.g. best practice examples, benchmarks, or focus themes. So, it is not an adaption it is more a content management system, which provides us with alternative application possibilities.

Reference 5

Maybe one last comment: original tools have their boundaries and finding a way to circumvent them is sometimes the biggest part of the work, because in many cases they simply will not fit as they are. Here the strategist has to be very experienced and creative to think of alternative ways.

Reference 6

consultants can change the tools between projects

Consultant – C3 – 8 References coded

Reference 1

There are probably a lot of tools we have used at McKinsey, but probably under a different name.

Reference 2

mixed approaches - taking one part from framework A and leverage it with some parts of another model B

Reference 3

at McKinsey there is a strategy practice and these guys have a lot of documents on how to do scenario planning, and that can be pretty fancy I think

Reference 4

we do much more than what the textbook solution says

Reference 5

most people do not care about the proper definition of it, but I am sure there is an overlap between the practice and the theoretical view

Reference 6

Adaptation of them for me is inevitable, as you are always facing different situations while applying them

Reference 7

Overall, the amount of adaptation is very high.

Reference 8

if you tailor them to certain situations it is probably a little bit different, but I would say they will still be useful to develop structure and to make sense of difficult strategy tasks even in the far future.

Consultant – C4 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

So, the very good or the perfect tools are really efficient, when they are easy to apply and easy to adapt to a specific situation.

Reference 2

we adapt our tools-in-use

Reference 3

Some of them we use as they are e.g. the Value Chain, but others like the Key Success Factors or the Core Competencies we use to pick the main issues or questions from those tools or frameworks, but of course not the complete set of questions. We basically extract the questions that apply best to the particular case of our clients.

Reference 4

Our portfolio matrix is an easy and very good way to visualize the situation within one or more competitive markets, but in some cases, we adapt the axes as there is no one size fits all solution for such a rather complex picture.

Reference 5

We change variables, segments, meanings, etc., but always with regard to the particular client.

Reference 6

Of course, the markets are moving really fast due to things like digitalization, and we will probably see more lean or agile approaches in the next years, but the traditional tools will always have a meaning when the users are able to adapt them to the specific situation.

Consultant – C5 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

organizations need a customized or individual process that should be connected to strategy work.

Reference 2

all tools should be adapted to their specific situation.

Reference 3

PESTLE, SWOT - we just took these tools for debates. There was no need to adapt them for our specific case.

Reference 4

we will need other tools to come to better decisions that are more adapted to the actual environment we are working in

Executive – E1 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

For example, the strategic group analysis, I adapt it and we for sure add more dimensions to our tools, or we connect 2-3 variables to make them more meaningful, e.g. growth vs. profitability; risk vs. investment, or risk and investment vs. growth and profitability.

Reference 2

It depends on what your question is, and here the need for adaptation usually comes apart.

Reference 3

The only situation where I would not adapt them is when tools force you to do something that you do not want to do, but I know I need to do it. At this point, I sometimes leave them "blondly" as is. Sometimes you have a group meeting and you have to say: okay, let us really try to answer it in the way we are supposed to.

Reference 4

tools will be changed or adapted, but the theory will last.

Executive – E2 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

We absolutely adapt the tools to our context, but maybe we do not adapt them, we rather apply them in a different or let us say our way.

Reference 2

There are a lot of portfolio matrices and each and every consultancy firm claims their one is the right one. That is okay for me, but what we tried is a bit different. If we look at the BCG model I like the idea of relative market share although it is not all about market share, but what I do not like is that they only plotted market growth on the other axis, as market growth does not describe market attractiveness. I can give you an example: in solar industry you have very high growth rates, but the market is highly unattractive. So, BCG would claim to invest in it. That is why we had a closer look at the McKinsey approach and decided that we need more than one criterion for market attractiveness. Therefore, we now have five criteria to define what market attractiveness is truly about. We are basically combining two tools. If you use the McKinsey approach for competitive position it is always skewed, and that would mean that all businesses are way too good. So that is why we only took their market share approach - of course this also depends on market definition etc.

Reference 3

When you have done it once you probably come to a more review-based approach, which allows you to make adjustments at each and every stage of the process

Reference 4

What we often do is the development of own tools like e.g. two-times-two matrices and then we just plot success factors on the axis in order to develop a new matrix.

Executive – E3 – 3 Reference coded

Reference 1

I continuously need to adapt my plans, my thinking, and align the organization behind that.

Reference 2

I think, if you apply an already established tool you should not change its entire meaning, because when I think about the content that we fill into the tools it can sometimes change the initial purpose of a tool. But I would rather say no, no tremendous changes.

Reference 3

From a mathematical perspective you work on something and then you suddenly realize you can universalize a certain pattern, and this will always be prevalent, and that is the power of those tools; that you can adapt them to various situations.

Executive – E4 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

Do we adapt the tools? Yes.

Reference 2

For example, our portfolio matrix looks into market attractiveness vs. relative performance of the businesses, and relative financial attractiveness vs. relative financial risk. That is something that we find pretty useful by looking into the portfolio of businesses. It is a portfolio matrix, but it is neither McKinsey nor BCG.

Reference 3

There are probably 100 or more different portfolio matrix approaches out there and maybe someone is using something similar to what we are using, but this is the way we like to do it and this matrix is accepted throughout the organization.

Reference 4

the SWOT we do not really adapt, as it would make no sense.

Executive – E5 – 7 References coded

Reference 1

You have the instruments at hand and you have to use them with a lot of creativity to find a customized strategic solution for one of your strategic projects.

Reference 2

For me it is not like using a scheme and using it in the very same way it is presented to me in the books. I am not only able to alter it; I am required to alter it in order to customize it to the specific need of the organization.

Reference 3

I evaluate this tool as suitable for my goals within in the strategic planning process, in this respective company I am working at, and then I can creatively alter this scheme to the needs of the company - like changing scales or changing dimensions of portfolio matrices for example.

Reference 4

You have to specify, for example the dimension of a BCG or McKinsey matrix towards a direction so that it makes sense for a specific company or industry.

Reference 5

In the BCG you have the dimension market attractiveness - so how to come to the measure for market attractiveness, which is an implication of the matrix itself. Normally I create a balanced scorecard to assign the numbers to the certain levels of market attractiveness. It is not only market size - it is mixture of market size, market growth, volatility and market development etc. You can create a scale to derive it for a certain coordinate of the numbers.

Reference 6

In such a case I often added some complexity to give people a feeling that more than a single variable was used to come to an advice.

Reference 7

I frequently alter basic tools, like Porter's Value chain. I take it and make use of single parts of the value chain but in another context. For example, I often mixed Porter's Value Chain with BCG matrices in order to come to the differences of certain departments or business units within the company, in different areas of the value chain, and to show how different the strategic situation can be, even if I adapt the same measure like in the BCG matrix.

N Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Role

Academic – A1 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

We all know that the basic strategic tools and instruments are more or less overdone, but they actually help us a lot not to forget certain aspects

Reference 2

tools are not a game changer

Academic – A2 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

most of them in isolation are not that helpful

Reference 2

The simple tools like the SWOT are inevitable.

Reference 3

At a certain point, information will get too complex and decision makers cannot handle all these different ideas anymore.

Reference 4

The answers you will grasp are supportive - not more, not less.

Reference 5

The impact extremely depends on your experience, on your background, and your general openness towards such tools, and of course this is also highly dependent on the acceptance within the organization itself. Without this, the impact will rather be limited.

Reference 6

Also, a realistic view of what the true function of such tools is, if you are too naive in using such tools, if you believe that these tools will do the work for you, it will not probably work out that well.

Academic – A3 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

On their own they have no impact at all. As tools to help managers to make decisions they might have an impact in terms of their facilitation skills, but they do not change things. Strategy tools do not change things!

Academic – A4 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

There is not necessarily a direct correlation between the use of strategic tools and outcomes

Reference 2

successful use of strategy tools will certainly contribute to better outcomes and attainment of the strategic objectives.

Reference 3

look at the Five Forces, it is been here for more than 30+ years.

Academic – A5 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

it is worth taking the time to use them, because their outcome usually has a meaning.

Reference 2

Regarding success: what makes a tool successful is its outcome. Their success also depends on the people that are using them.

Reference 3

a great impact when applied correctly

Consultant – C1 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

if they are able to clearly communicate what you want to say, then they always have an impact

Consultant – C2 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

there is an impact, but it is highly dependent on the context you are facing

Reference 2

If you have a standard toolset ready you can be very effective, because you have an immediate starting point for your project work.

Consultant – C3 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

Based on the tools that I actually used, I can say they all can be very helpful.

Consultant – C4 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

The structure of them should be clear and not complex, and it should be obvious what results they can deliver.

Reference 2

The workload - we try to limit the time of using a tool, because we rather want to focus on the true problems and after that you can still use one or the other tool to present your results. So our workload is rather small compared to the success that we achieve with the frameworks.

Reference 3

When I am saying they have a huge impact, that does not mean I can simply use a tool and have immediate success.

Consultant – C5 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

They cannot solve everything or completely enlighten the strategy process, that is for sure.

Reference 2

If you are unable to apply the tools in real life and you do not see the results they can produce, you should rather stop using them.

Executive – E1 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

Companies can be very successful when they use tools, but they need to have the knowledge, they need to have the resources, and they need to adjust time to it.

Reference 2

Most strategists have to realize that the tools were developed to help you to ask the right questions and that is it.

Reference 3

they have an impact, but sometimes for the better and the worse.

Reference 4

The answer to your question is: tools have a huge impact and usually very positively, but the danger is that you rely on everything that they tell you. Let me make this clear, I think that is why post-rationalization can be so dangerous, because people trust you as they all think: oh great, when I look at this picture I truly get it.

Executive – E2 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

if tools, methods, frameworks or structured processes are not adding value, then I would recommend do not use them

Reference 2

the tools we have used were highly successful, and it was always worth it to spend time applying them.

Reference 3

if you employ them properly the impact can be very high.

Reference 4

applied in a very proper way the impact is quite high.

Executive – E3 – 3 Reference coded

Reference 1

You always implicitly use at least elements of those tools, otherwise there would be none of them in actual use.

Reference 2

Tools are effective, and this can either be implicitly or explicitly.

Reference 3

You have to give them to the right people, strategists, and leaders, and make sure they are used correctly.

Executive – E4 – 1 Reference coded

Reference 1

I would not overestimate the impact of strategy tools.

Executive – E5 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

To create belief the concepts you are using should be very simple. The more simple a concept is, the easier it is to create belief using this concept.

Reference 2

The bigger the company is, the more important strategic tools are, because they standardize information, analysis and communication.

Reference 3

The smaller the company is, the less I would evaluate the impact of the strategy tools that you have listed.

Reference 4

If tools become less time consuming their role would be much more important.

O Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Efficiency – Effectiveness

Academic – A1 – 7 References coded

Reference 1

It absolutely depends on the tool. We cannot overgeneralize that.

Reference 2

When you want to do it properly the outcome will not be worth it, because you will have the right feeling anyway before you are ready to hand it in

Reference 3

simpler approaches like the five forces or the strategic group analysis do not require that much work and they are much more worth it

Reference 4

If you have the right people in the organization they know what to do, then you need a simple tool that works efficiently

Reference 5

tools are not a game changer

Reference 6

when you manage to use tools efficiently, you will be able to identify and react to risks earlier

Reference 7

Tools are most efficient for people that are very open minded

Academic – A2 – 8 References coded

Reference 1

It is always a trade-off of the quality of information and your costs of searching.

Reference 2

You will not or will never come up with a perfect informatory basis to an identified problem, but this highly depends on your expectation level as well as your available resources.

Reference 3

At a certain point, information will get too complex and decision makers cannot handle all these different ideas anymore.

Reference 4

Of course, workload plays a huge role and here the simple tools usually take much less time, but this does not say that they are more efficient.

Reference 5

This has clearly something to do with your expectation management.

Reference 6

Overall, I would say that organizations should on the one hand search broadly to get all lot of information to improve their decision making, and on the other hand they of course need to be a little bit pragmatic. Do not over search! At some point it is simply enough.

Reference 7

If everyone has a common understanding of the tools you might have raised the efficiency of your strategy process already.

Reference 8

Also, a realistic view of what the true function of such tools is would be needed. If you are too naive in using such tools, if you belief that these tools will do the work for you, it will not probably work out that well.

Academic – A3 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

Most of them are pretty useful and their workload is usually worthwhile.

Reference 2

For me all of them have been highly efficient. Of course, this also depends on the project you are facing.

Reference 3

without these tools it is unlikely that you will have an efficient strategy process, because you will not really know where to look or how to think.

Academic – A4 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

A critical element for enhancing their efficiency is definitely the proper application.

Reference 2

Allocate adequate time

Reference 3

to involve more people that are relevant, so that we can create better insights on the implications of all the information we collect from applying the tools.

Academic – A5 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

Surprisingly, the SWOT analysis was always quite effective, even though too simple in most cases.

Reference 2

It [the tool] has to fit to our overall strategy!

Reference 3

This is hard to compare, as some tools are rather simple and others tend to be highly complex.

Reference 4

there is truly a need on the side of the micro environment to include dynamic components in order to make these tools more efficient.

Reference 5

they are central for the efficiency of the strategy process.

Reference 6

Companies definitely want to and have to act in an efficient way, and strategic tools, some of them, are definitely helpful in order to be more efficient, as they concentrate on certain formally agreed subjects that are most relevant in the strategy making process.

Consultant – C1 – 10 References coded

Reference 1

I would not say that one or the other is more or less efficient.

Reference 2

I think all frameworks that I use are efficiently used to communicate things, but this does not say that there are some that are less efficient.

Reference 3

It clearly depends on the topic you are working on, and I think efficiency if you look at the process of developing a strategy in order to create content is truly not about efficiency it is about the quality of the strategists that are working with them.

Reference 4

I would not evaluate the efficiency of the frameworks, as I do not think that is leading you somewhere. Maybe this holds true for some frameworks like the Blue Ocean, because you can really work with it. That is some tool that can be efficient.

Reference 5

Actually, is it not more about the effectiveness of these frameworks? If I have used a certain tool, was I really able to develop a strategy out of it? If that is the case I would rather speak about effectiveness.

Reference 6

I understand why you ask about efficiency, because most practitioners rather use these tools as support and not to develop something, and this why you probably ask about efficiency.

Reference 7

Is it worth spending time on filling in a template? Normally yes, but I would be more interested in the effectiveness. If efficiency is the driver for using or not using a strategy tool, then I guess your results will be problematic, because time constraints in strategy work lead you to crap.

Reference 8

use the terms efficiency and effectiveness together, because I think this goes hand in hand with each other. Efficiency is not everything. Companies need effective strategies and after that you can think about efficiency.

Reference 9

I absolutely think that tools enhance the efficiency of the process, because you have already some means of communication in place.

Reference 10

Explain what you really mean with efficiency: is it about the development of a strategy or is it about the goal of getting a good strategy into place?

Consultant – C2 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

That highly depends on the tool you are working with.

Reference 2

when I compare success and workload I can for sure say that they are something I would always use to solve a customer's strategic problem

Reference 3

having tools and the experience ready will definitely enhance the efficiency of an organization's strategy process, but you need a proper level of maturity while using them, because you need to know how to use the tools and for which situation the tool is the right one

Reference 4

You need to document the working experience with these tools, you also need available templates for using these tools, and you need examples out of practical project situations from different customers with different target structures. If you do not have this you will not be efficient in using these tools.

Consultant – C3 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

how efficient they are or how much they can really help you depends on - if you have a good discussion around them.

Reference 2

tools definitely have the ability to enhance the efficiency of an organization's strategy process

Reference 3

Your chosen tool does not have to be the right one for every case, but at least for 90% of the cases. So yes, they can help companies to be more efficient.

Consultant – C4 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

If you can put a complex problem in a very easy and transparent framework in order to structure it, and I think that is the biggest advantage of using a tool, then this is the most efficient approach to conduct strategy work.

Reference 2

So, the very good or the perfect tools are really efficient, when they are easy to apply and easy to adapt to a specific situation.

Reference 3

The workload - we try to limit the time of using a tool, because we rather want to focus on the true problems and afterwards you can still use one or the other tool to present your results. So our workload is rather small compared to the success that we achieve with the frameworks.

Reference 4

One thing for sure drives efficiency: the proper use of them.

Consultant – C5 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

Tools are highly efficient, if they are directly integrated in the daily business

Reference 2

I do not think that those academic tools, we have discussed in the list, enhance the efficiency very much.

Reference 3

I think that it is not very efficient to create a lot of distractions just to come to a high quality SWOT, PESTLE, or BCG analysis. If you are unable to apply the tools in real life and you do not see the results they can produce, you should rather stop using them.

Executive – E1 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

It is worth to do it, and I even dare to say if you do not do it you are a dead duck in the water.

Reference 2

In general, you need to use these tools even if it takes more time than expected.

Reference 3

I can only recommend that you take the time that is needed to find a valuable solution, and then workload does not play a role anymore.

Reference 4

When looking at the organizational levels again I can for sure say it is worth while using them on the highest level, but if you go down to like brand level stuff there are a few that simply make no sense, and therefore are not worth while the workload.

Executive – E2 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

the efficiency or the success is very high, however you really have to take care that you do not overload the organization with the entire process. That also means that not each and every analysis and tool has to be applied in a new way each year. That is why we do the Delta analysis to keep our process efficient and to just focus on what has really changed.

Reference 2

if you do not have a good process it is rather not increasing efficiency, it is decreasing efficiency.

Reference 3

In the beginning using tools is not efficient, as it is just something where you have to invest a lot of time.

Reference 4

When you have done it once you probably come to a more review-based approach, which allows you to make adjustments at each and every stage of the process. Exactly this makes your strategy process more efficient and tools work as a great support.

Reference 5

by avoiding work, it is also a way to increase efficiency, but in the beginning you have to invest time and resources to develop this tool supported strategy process.

Executive – E3 – 4 Reference coded

Reference 1

Tools are effective and this can either be implicitly or explicitly.

Reference 2

You have to give them to the right people, strategists, and leaders, and make sure they are used correctly.

Reference 3

You have to hire somebody as your head of strategy who does not only have a strategic consulting background, but rather somebody that has also seen something valuable for the company or the industry, that can either be a component of the value chain or something that makes him/her extremely valuable when looking at his/her previous experiences. If you found that one person then you basically have to bring in the best talent from your company and also from an external source, which should be people that are extremely charismatic and intrinsically motivated; and you have to make sure that those people get high positions after about three years, and then you will probably have the right talent catalyst. This is how you can enhance proper tool use and the efficiency of your company's strategy process, but for this you need credibility and you usually do not get this if you hire a former partner from one of the big consulting companies being the group head of strategy and then after three years you realize - oh my god the guy knows all the tools and his team is maybe capable of doing strategy work, but we do not really understand how the industry is moving, because people do not have that gut feeling of proper work experience.

Reference 4

Such a person enhances the structure of your strategy work, but has he/she really helped you to make the entire process more sufficient? No, I do not think so.

Executive – E4 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

Here the much blamed and very simple SWOT analysis can become a very efficient tool, as it requires not only strengths but also weaknesses, and not only opportunities but also threats. You can have a pretty lengthy discussion and a SWOT of a certain business in order to force people to stop hiding certain issues, that people might perceive as jeopardy to either their reputation or positioning of their area of responsibility, which they usually do not like.

Reference 2

the outcome of a tool should by all means be in relation to the time invested, otherwise I recon it would not be sufficient at all.

Reference 3

If the workload would exceed to outcome I would not apply the tool.

Reference 4

In terms of efficiency it is hard to tell, because from one situation the other it can highly fluctuate.

Reference 5

But all this has something to do with expectation management - what do you expect from a tool or a framework?

Reference 6

Yes, some tools raise efficiency, but the main aspect of efficiency is of course the ability to manage the entire process in the best possible way.

Executive – E5 – 2 References coded

Reference 1

The easier the tool, the more efficient it is. Less input and high outcome. This is what makes tools efficient.

Reference 2

it is not about the strategy tools so much, it is rather the strategy process that is able to enhance a company's efficiency.

P Matrix Coding Query – Perspectives vs. Future Development

Academic – A1 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

We all know that the basic strategic tools and instruments are more or less overdone, but they actually help us a lot not to forget certain aspects

Reference 2

Not all the emergent strategy approaches are used by older players but by younger companies

Reference 3

importance is decreasing, but I would actually say that the opposite is true

Academic – A2 – 3 References coded

Reference 1

I prefer tools that are not overly deterministic in their recommendations, which would already be a limitation.

Reference 2

How can you make them more dynamic? How could they be improved? They should maybe be more open to very different types of content, and I think the content that you can currently implement into these tools is very limited.

Reference 3

In a way they should be more open for wider interpretation like the newest approaches, e.g. Lean Start-Up, Business Model Canvas, etc.

Academic – A3 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

they will absolutely have a value in the future.

Reference 2

So, the nature of competition changes and that does not mean that the models need to be thrown out.

Reference 3

I think they need to be faster

Reference 4

they certainly need to understand the dynamism within markets, and instead of new entrants we might be replacing it with disruptive innovators.

Reference 5

So, we need to be able to understand how fast things change. Therefore, I think the tools need to be adaptable and bring competition up to 2015, which means you cannot simply apply them in the old-fashioned way without thinking about the turbulent movements of our industries we are working in.

Academic – A4 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

I do not think they going to become redundant. Most of them will be around, but maybe they are going to be adapted.

Reference 2

look at the Five Forces, it is been here for more than 30+ years.

Reference 3

all of them will still have their supporters and they will definitely be around.

Reference 4

research in the future: why do not we use particular tools for implementation and evaluation & control, and which tools could be useful within these two stages?

Academic – A5 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

A point that will determine whether we still use these tools in the future strongly relies on the development of the existing tools

Reference 2

Are they able to become more dynamic or will they get more and more static? The worldwide competition has a very fast pace and there have to be dynamic components connected to the frameworks.

Reference 3

there is truly a need on the side of the micro environment to include dynamic components in order to make these tools more efficient.

Reference 4

they should include more dynamic components in order to respond to an increasingly complex and dynamic industry environments.

Reference 5

more informal institutions should be included in strategy making processes. Especially in the simple tools the informal industry environment should be an integral aspect within the future.

Consultant – C1 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

I do not think the tools themselves are bad. If you are in a market where things are changing a lot, then you need to use the tools more often.

Reference 2

It is quite difficult to say whether one of them or which one will become old or redundant, because it is theory and you always have to base your work on something, and why should it not be the tools?

Reference 3

create some kind of place for really radical ideas

Reference 4

they should provide a room for radical ideas, and I mean that they should really stimulate more creativity. This could be translated to more openness.

Consultant – C2 – 7 References coded

Reference 1

we will need more and more strategy tools, and in the consulting environment they will become much more of an USP

Reference 2

In the future there will be a story behind the tools, which I call content.

Reference 3

Within the strategic process you of course need the right tools, but you also need the right content e.g. best practices, figures, and documented experiences, and that is the gap we have to fill in future, which is the gap between the tools and the real effective work in the strategy process.

Reference 4

It is not only about the methods. Content and experience will play the same or even a much more interesting role in the future.

Reference 5

Content will play a huge role and the tools we will use in the future will have to answer questions about how our digital way of living will change in a complex network, which is already a complex system of dependencies.

Reference 6

we will still need tools that reduce the complexity of such networks and tools that tell you the main milestone to make your decision.

Reference 7

it has to be a mix of tools and experience e.g. the very modern simulation and experimenting approaches

Consultant – C3 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

They will still be around in the future.

Reference 2

I do not think the theory around these tools has to change significantly, but rather the application of them has to change.

Reference 3

From a practical point of view the application should connect the tools to the rich data that is available nowadays. Connecting strategy to large datasets and then trying to identify what are the actual data pools you need to access and what are the things we need to look at.

Reference 4

The results of these tools should not only lead to another discussion, but rather creating a direct access to the related numbers.

Reference 5

The questions we ask should still be framed through strategy tools but including the right data will definitely help you to speed up the process to come to meaningful answers and to stop the gut feeling competition.

Reference 6

If there would be some sort of system that enables you to include much more data I think that would make tools much more powerful within the future. In a way the theoretical concepts should be closer connected to the real life.

Consultant – C4 – 5 References coded

Reference 1

If I look back, then I have seen that a lot of new strategy tools are evolving, and old tools are adapted and upgraded, and of course researchers are always looking for ways to develop new frameworks. A lot of the frameworks like the Five forces, the Ansoff matrix, or the SWOT are pretty old-fashioned, and some people even say they are already outdated, but the sense of them or the way they approach problems is and will always be the same.

Reference 2

Maybe they will have other names, or they are upgraded, but I think the core ideas will last.

Reference 3

Of course, the markets are moving really fast due to things like digitalization, and we will probably see more lean or agile approaches in the next years, but the traditional tools will always have a meaning when the users are able to adapt them to the specific situation.

Reference 4

tools should be more dynamic, agile or lean so to say, because we are currently facing a lot of rapid changes in all markets, and one of them is the digitalization, which has rather a disruptive impact on the major part of the industries.

Reference 5

a good strategic framework should, from now on, also deal with disruptive technologies or disruptive business environments in order to overcome this huge threat. Starting with the task: what is disruptive within our industry?

Consultant – C5 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

If we stay in such a dynamic environment, and there is no real evidence that this will change so quickly, I think many of those tools will just be forgotten, because it takes too much time and effort to come to conclusions, and I think we will need other tools to come to better decisions that are more adapted to the actual environment we are working in.

Reference 2

Tools like experimentation and scenario planning will be the tools of the future, because they are highly flexible to use. They are the only ones that have a real impact!

Reference 3

The tools of the future need to be adjusted to a very dynamic feedback-driven approach.

Reference 4

A future strategy tool should be flexible enough, that I can apply it to my organization without making too many compromises

Reference 5

A tool should be flexible enough that I can apply it to my circumstances or environment, and flexible enough to come to different types of insights, and it should not be too difficult to create the settings for it.

Reference 6

A future tool should be able to force direct feedback-loops, either within or outside the organization, which would be optimal to the dynamic markets. Meaning - getting direct feedback from the customers or your other direct stakeholders.

Executive – E1 – 8 References coded

Reference 1

They will stay, and it is like a religion. As long as we do not know the answers to all our questions we will need something to create the world around us.

Reference 2

Our environment and especially industry environments are too complex and therefore we have tools right now and we will have tools in the future.

Reference 3

tools will be changed or adapted, but the theory will last.

Reference 4

So, they will be around us and we need them, and I belief with your own personal input you can make them last for a very long time.

Reference 5

They should allow and force me to challenge myself, visualize what I know and what I do not know, and they should force me to classify the value of the results.

Reference 6

I do not think that future strategy tools will be very different, as they will mostly be adaptations of the original frameworks, but the problems they should be able to solve in the future are the connections between all stages of the strategy process.

Reference 7

Future tools should be capable of going through the entire process.

Reference 8

Future strategy tools should solve the issue of disconnecting strategy from business, or business from tactics, or tactics from strategy.

Executive – E2 – 7 References coded

Reference 1

I do not think the value of the tools will further increase, but I would rather say that it is even more important for tool users to employ them better and to fill them with data that we already have, because this is what is mostly problematic.

Reference 2

Tools will always be around and there are a lot available, but I do not think we need more.

Reference 3

Strategists should rather invest time in the existing tools and take all the data they have and put it into the appropriate ones. This is the more crucial work for the future, which could be done in an even more structured and efficient way.

Reference 4

More tools? I do not think so.

Reference 5

Future strategy tools have to be designed in a way that they are really easy to use, should not lead to misleading results, and they should also be applicable for people that are not really experienced.

Reference 6

tools should be more flexible and allow their users to further develop them or showing people how tools could be used in a more flexible manner.

Reference 7

A concept that already includes more flexibility would be highly appreciated.

Executive – E3 – 5 Reference coded

Reference 1

tools will be around for decades to come

Reference 2

Maybe there will be further elements in the future like disruptive strategy situations or something else.

Reference 3

Compare your tool results to others. Make a case for a different industry. Go outside your usual ecosystem and try stimulating new ideas. These new ideas will suddenly generate different answers/input for your tools.

Reference 4

Some people think that all answers lie in all the data that is currently around, but you will certainly know that data is not information, that information is not knowledge, that knowledge is neither insight nor understanding. It is similar to the tools: It is about the brains that make best use of the data and the hypotheses and in the end that helps you to structure what kind of information or data you need to collect.

Reference 5

If it helps to do some sort of datamining in order to generate some hypotheses, then this is fine with me. I am not a digital native, but from a strategist's point of view available data is often times over interpreted.

Executive – E4 – 4 References coded

Reference 1

Maybe we get new frameworks that will be more dynamic and more helpful but predicting the future of the very static tools is quite hard.

Reference 2

Considering the changes in corporate landscapes one could recon that some of them will be gone, but honestly, I think most of them will still be used by tremendous amounts of business people.

Reference 3

If tools could better reflect the complexity of a business problem, then they would be much more valuable. However, in my view that is something you will never be perfectly able to achieve.

Reference 4

Tools should support, but they do not do your homework.

Executive – E5 – 6 References coded

Reference 1

To create belief the concepts you are using should be very simple. The more simple a concept is, the easier it is to create belief using this concept.

Reference 2

Along with the declining influence of corporates in the techworld the importance of strategy tools as we know them today, which are very appealing, but also very time consuming, will decline in the years to come.

Reference 3

They become more and more obsolete and replaced through agile decision-making, which is still measured against some strategic analysis, but it is not a result of the actual tools anymore.

Reference 4

for smaller companies it would be of great help if there were standardized strategy tools available, which already have implemented basic information or data on for example market growth of different sectors/industries or competitive information for certain industries, which would greatly reduce the time required to undertake a proper e.g. a SWOT or BCG portfolio analysis.

Reference 5

I think it would also be helpful for many companies to have more information about their strategic position, with respect to the different dimensions that come along with certain tools. If tools become less time consuming their role would be much more important.

Reference 6

a more dynamic - lean strategic planning process.

Q Exemplary Interview Transcript – Consultant 1 – C1**Question 1*****Interviewer***

What is your current position and area of responsibility within the organization?

Consultant 1

I have been working as a strategy consultant for imports and exports within the real estate and infrastructure sector, and I am responsible for development of strategies with the management of all kinds of organizations e.g. SMEs, governments, commercial organizations, basically all kind.

Question 2***Interviewer***

What is your current role in strategy work?

Consultant 1

Well, at this moment I am working within the technology department of Company X, and that is where I need to make the connection between the strategy and what type of infrastructure Airport X needs. That is usually what I do in consulting; I really try to create the connection between the corporate strategy and what kind of business strategy, in terms of real estate infrastructure, is needed to support the corporate strategy.

Question 3***Interviewer***

What experiences do you have with strategy work?

Consultant 1

I think there are three big projects, which were really strategy work. The first one was for a real estate fund (an investment fund). I was asked to explore how it is possible to shape their business. They had been in a red ocean and I had to figure out how they could reposition themselves. Another project was for a University, which was also about repositioning. The question was: how do you create a campus that makes you stand out from all the other Universities. The last true strategic project I've been working on was for the Dutch Railroad Company. Here we were asked to develop strategies for the retail areas at train stations, which was absolutely focused on creating a new commercial strategy.

Question 4***Interviewer***

What are in your view typical strategic problems? Please try to describe various typical problems that come to your mind.

Consultant 1

It always has to do with how the company wants to position itself in the future. It either wants to expand, it wants to increase its quality, it wants to reduce its costs, it wants to search for synergies, it wants to consolidate, or it wants to find new collaborative agreements. All these are strategic problems that usually need to be solved.

Question 5***Interviewer***

How would you/your organization attempt to solve such strategic projects? And do you follow a significant process that guides the strategy work?

Consultant 1

We always start with an analysis phase, and sometimes you had to sell that phase first, because people thought that we were just putting our ideas in place and tell everyone: here we go, this your new strategy. I always started with the question: what is the corporate strategy of the client and what are they talking about? I also explained all this to the management. Most of the time, when we are looking at real estate strategies, I was rather facing a business strategy area and that is why I usually had to interpret the corporate strategy first. One of the main things I always encountered was that most managers do not know anything about the difference between business strategy and corporate strategy. So, corporate strategy mainly focuses on the domains and then you have to look at; what are we going to do within our domain? That is the first step we always took and then we analyzed the environments and here we used tools like the PESTLE framework, Porter's frameworks, and the SWOT analysis. One sentence to clarify all this: you have to make sure that the client knows what strategy is, and after that you go forward and explain the difference between corporate and business strategies.

Question 6***Interviewer***

How would you describe strategy tools?

Consultant 1

I think the last part of the sentence explains everything. They are simply tools! They are used to communicate and that is really what strategy tools should be about; and also, in many cases I explain why we should use one or another tool, as it is all about communication and using a framework in order to get from A to B. Tools work as some sort of guideline or audit.

Question 7***Interviewer***

Which of the following strategy tools do you know?

Consultant 1

SWOT - yes; KSF - yes; Core Competencies - yes; Scenario Planning - yes; Value Chain - yes; Five Forces - yes; VRIO - yes; ILC - no; PESTLE - yes; Portfolio Matrices - yes; Generic Strategies - yes; Strategic Groups - no; Ansoff - yes; Bowman - yes; Ashridge - no; Blue Ocean - yes;

No, I think you covered the things that I know and actually use in practice.

Question 8***Interviewer***

Are you familiar with the terms 'strategizing' or 'strategy-as-practice'? What meaning do you associate to them?

Consultant 1

I am familiar with strategizing, but not with strategy-as-practice. Strategizing means: putting a strategy into place. For strategy-as-practice I can only think very simple. I think the term already states it; it means practicing strategy. I think both terms stand pretty much for the same. But I have to be honest, I do not know these terms and the definition is not really clear for me.

Question 9**Interviewer**

In what situation do you/does your organization use strategy tools to conduct your/its strategy work? – Please also explain how.

Consultant 1

As I mentioned before, you need to recognize what kind of question your client is asking. As a consultant you really have to see if we are really talking about strategy or is it something else. Sometimes the client is thinking that he needs to put a policy in place or a tactic, but in some cases, you really need to step back and say: what is the strategy behind the policy you want to develop? And if it is not in place then maybe we should first look at: what is the strategic part of where we want to go to? So, it is really about the listening as well. If you hear things like: we want to reposition ourselves, become unique, do something with quality, make cost reductions, develop a new business (not in terms of more sales, rather in terms of creating a new service or product), then I think strategy work becomes truly important. So, listen to the questions and the issues of your clients and then decide on the strategic path you want approach this problem with.

Question 10a**Interviewer**

The strategic management process is oftentimes divided into four stages – analysis, formulation, implementation, and evaluation and control. In what phase do you/does your organization most frequently use strategy tools?

Consultant 1

We normally use them for analysis, formulation, and in some cases also for implementation. Maybe also sometimes in evaluation and control, but honestly, we rather use them to guide this process.

Question 10b**Interviewer**

When looking at the list again, during what phase would you typically use the following tools?

Consultant 1

SWOT - A, F; KSF - A; Core Competencies - no; Scenario Planning - F; Value Chain - A, F; Five Forces - A; VRIO - A, F; ILC - no; PESTLE - A; Portfolio Matrices - A, F; Generic Strategies - F; Strategic Groups - no; Ansoff - A, F; Bowman - F; Ashridge - no; Blue Ocean - A, F, I (really good communication tool);

Question 11***Interviewer***

Referring to a specific strategic problem, which strategy tool has particularly supported you/your organization the most/least?

Consultant 1

MOST - Well, I think the combination of Porter's Five Forces and the PESTLE analysis is really strong, and the Blue Ocean Four Action Framework was just perfect. The SWOT and KSFs are also really strong, but I would put them on a secondary degree. The VRIO framework is also very important for getting insights and creating an overview of the capabilities. LEAST - No not really. I think the ones that I did not use weren't helpful (haha), otherwise I would have probably used them or least know something about them. Maybe the generic strategy model is sometimes really too theoretical, because it is really black and white, as you cannot find a spot in between. Sometimes the work is simply not done when you say: alright now I am the cost leader and that is it. I think there should be a lot of more options, and that is maybe the purpose for Bowman's strategy clock even though it is also too theoretical. With these kinds of tools, it is really not useful to communicate.

Question 12***Interviewer***

How do you appraise the success and workload of the strategy tools outlined below, and how would you rate their efficiency?

Consultant 1

That is really a difficult question, because the framework is just a framework. The work is done by filling in the framework. So, I would not say that one or the other is more or less efficient. It is really about; does it communicate what you want to communicate? And I think all frameworks that I use are efficiently used to communicate things, but this does not say that there are some that are less efficient. It clearly depends on the topic you are working on, and I think efficiency if you look at the process of developing a strategy in order to create content is truly not about efficiency it is about the quality of the strategists that are working with them. Sometimes it just takes time to get the right data in place. So, I would not evaluate the efficiency of the frameworks, as I do not think that is leading you somewhere. Maybe this holds true for some frameworks like the Blue Ocean, because you can really work with it. That is some tool that can be efficient.

Consultant 1

SWOT - 4; KSF - 4; Core Competencies - 0; Scenario Planning - 3; Value Chain - 3; Five Forces - 5; VRIO - 4; ILC - 0; PESTLE - 5; Portfolio Matrices - 3; Generic Strategies - 1; Strategic Groups - 0; Ansoff - 2; Bowman - 1; Ashridge - 0; Blue Ocean - 5;

If I would choose, and if you really want to know what I have used a lot, then most of the times it has been the Porter's Five Forces, the PESTLE analysis, and the Blue Ocean Framework. Those three together have been quite useful and also efficient when I consider the time invested and the success of the outcomes. That is why I have to rate them really high, but for the others it is really difficult to say, because in terms of the process only the blue ocean strategy framework is highly useful to communicate. The other ones are more the higher-level analysis instruments to make clear how the environment is working. Actually, is it not more about the effectiveness of these frameworks? If I have used a certain tool, was I really able to develop a strategy out of it? If that is the case I would rather speak about effectiveness. In my view these tools are used to develop a strategy and therefore it should be about effectiveness. But I understand why you ask about efficiency, because most practitioners rather use these tools as support and not to develop something, and this why you probably ask about efficiency. Is it worth spending time on filling in a template? Normally yes, but I would be more interested in the effectiveness. If efficiency is the driver for using or not using a strategy tool, then I guess your results will be problematic, because time constraints in strategy work lead you to crap. It is about content, and if you make the wrong decisions at a high level, then the entire system will react in the wrong way. I recommend that you use the terms efficiency and effectiveness together, because I think this goes hand in hand with each other. Efficiency is not everything. Companies need effective strategies and after that you can think about efficiency.

Question 13

Interviewer

Do you/does your organization adapt the tools-in-use to the specific organizational context? Please provide examples.

Consultant 1

Yes, we are adapting the tools, because their original idea is sometimes not enough for our cases. They are context dependent! For example, I haven't been working in the area of products so far and here the BCG matrix is probably most useful. When you are planning to use a tool, you need to think about the question that is being asked first, and then you decide whether the normal application is enough or if you have to adapt. The good thing about the traditional tools is that they are general models and you can use them in many different situations. The tools have a meaning. During my research in my MBA I have been able to really dig into the Five Forces and I finally realized what it is really about. I do think that sometimes some forces do not really matter and therefore you do not have to focus on them, but in most cases, you should look at all the specific factors. Leaving out or adding things can be quite helpful, but we usually do not do that. We rather put more emphasis on the content and here we make adaptations or try to find connections. To conclude here, yes you can adapt the tools, but do not change the entire idea, because this can be really harmful. The bigger problem is that changes or errors happen when people do not know how to use these tools, and that is what I see quite often.

Question 14

Interviewer

To what extent are strategy tools used to reach a rational answer rather than post-rationalizing decisions that are already made?

Consultant 1

For me, I think it is always a combination of things. It is a combination of both, as managers always have some ideas about how things are working and where they should go. However, they do not always understand the context of why they think that. The tools should be used to reach rational answers, but in practice the limited knowledge on strategy and its tools is the core problem. I often experience that strategy and using strategy frameworks, developing a strategy, or communicating a strategy is really about knowing the area of strategy, and many managers have heard about the frameworks but do not have the depth in knowledge on how to use them or to use them in their specific situation. This is a knowledge gap and therefore strange things can happen. I would say, start to explain what strategy is about and if somebody asks you to post-rationalize I would recommend to decline on this wish. Sometimes marketing people need these tools to post-rationalize, that is for sure. If a slide deck looks good and well-structured the board sometimes buys the crap.

Question 15**Interviewer**

What are the advantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Consultant 1

The main advantage is communication! One very important other thing is that they force you not to forget any significant areas. Tools make your analysis more structured and more solid. The quality of your strategy improves by looking into all the things and issues that pop up during e.g. discussions with the client. Maybe another advantage is that these tools are creating creativity, because they raise questions like: how is this working? They make people think about a situation or possibilities.

Question 16**Interviewer**

What are the disadvantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Consultant 1

If you are only looking into the things that are mentioned in the tools you will probably develop a misleading strategy, because not every tool can be generalized for any situation. There are always other indicators that you might not see while using these tools. I said that they trigger the thinking process, but on the other side they also limit your thinking, as people base their entire work on them. So, we always have to look at them from a distance and ask ourselves if there are other factors that we need to consider here. Tools can also be static, if we think about the rapidly changing markets we are currently facing, but this also has to do with how often you update your strategy and how broad your basic analyses are. I think the really big changes within the world are always developing rapidly and at the same time slow, as you usually know what direction they are taking. I do not think the tools themselves are bad. If you are in a market where things are changing a lot, then you need to use the tools more often.

Question 17**Interviewer**

When looking at current strategy tools used in your organization, how do you assess their value in the future?

Consultant 1

All of these tools have very basic underlying theories and especially when you are connecting resources and capabilities to the market environment. So, how to create value for what we see in the market? I think that those tools will always be handy to apply. It is quite difficult to say whether one of them or which one will become old or redundant, because it is theory and you always have to base your work on something, and why should not it be the tools? When you are looking at the world it may sometimes happen that an organization is not able to use a tool anymore, which happens when nobody in the organization has a full overview and then a tool would lose its power, as this would not be something that will solve the issue for you. It is much more the context, in which you need to apply them, and sometimes organizations do too many things, and as a strategist you have to decide when we should do fewer actions. There are a lot of different activities within an organization and then it sometimes becomes very unclear what the core business is about, and then a first step should be: where should we put our focus on and what are the success factors that really need to be in place to become effective in order to develop a strategy. Maybe after that tools should be applied, but this depends on the situation. You cannot do everything, because in some cases tools simply will not work, as the people in an organization are unable to work with them.

Question 18***Interviewer***

How would you evaluate the impact of strategy tools?

Consultant 1

I would rate it really high, because if they are able to clearly communicate what you want to say, then they always have an impact.

Question 19***Interviewer***

How can strategy tools enhance the efficiency of your organization's strategy process?

Consultant 1

Yes, I absolutely think that tools enhance the efficiency of the process, because you have already some means of communication in place. But the client also has to be part of this communication and he should have an idea of what you are doing. You have a theory, why do you not explain that your customer first and then present your results? The tools make things easier, because you always have a dialog starting point or let us say a common ground for your discussion.

Question 20***Interviewer***

What are the conditions for the successful utilization of strategy tools?

Consultant 1

It is all about the competencies of the people you are working with, which is absolutely important. Do they know how to develop a strategy? Or is it some grey area for them and they have no clue how to start such a process. To be honest, when it comes to strategy work I always have to start from scratch, because if you are working with multiple people the chances that all these people have strategic capabilities is about zero. What I do is; I use some parts of the theory, like 5-6 slides, and start a meeting with the question: what is strategy? What is it about? That is how you get people into place in order to work on the process. They need to understand what they are working on and also what strategy is not about. Here you have to use some theory to get people at the same level. Of course, acceptance plays a role, but this is your responsibility. You are there to explain what these things can do and with that you create the commitment for using the tools. You have to explain their surplus to the average people, middle managers, but also engineers, etc. If you are asking me the question: What are the conditions for the successful utilization of strategy tools? It is really about the understanding what strategy is! The engineer example is perfect, as they always say: oh, the managers do not understand this; and that is probably true, but they do not understand the managers either. If you have that communication gap and they do not understand each other, then you first have to solve that. Here you can use explanations of how these tools connect market demand to technology solutions, and if you are able to do that, then they both understand each other.

Question 21**Interviewer**

What problems should future strategy tools aim to solve?

Consultant 1

The first thing that comes to my mind is to create some kind of place for really radical ideas. Creating the content for a business strategy is a lot about knowing what is happening, but also about creating these wonderful ideas. Strategy itself or the analysis is only mapping out what is happening, but what are you going to do about it? How are you going to deal with this environment? And at this point I always have the feeling that the power or the reach of the frameworks stops. The frameworks are about the analysis and a little bit about the formulation, but the real formulation is more about being creative. When I say that, I mean that they should provide a room for radical ideas, and I mean that they should really stimulate more creativity. This could be translated to more openness. I believe, that the creative side of strategy development is something that is not really covered within the frameworks. Maybe something about the timing aspect: of course, you want to have fast tools, but it is always difficult to do a quick shot when it comes to strategy work, because being fast leads to mistakes.

Question 22**Interviewer**

Do you have any more questions or is there something you would like to add?

Consultant 1

I think you cover a lot and it is a really interesting interview. Do me favor and think about the efficiency and effectiveness discussion, maybe this is something you should bare in my mind for your next steps.

R Focus Group Transcript**Question 1*****Moderator***

Considering the research topic, what interests you the most regarding strategy tools-in-use?

Academic 1

What requirements are needed in a company that they can use strategy tools effectively? Is it more about the people, the history, or the characteristics of the company?

Consultant 3

I think tools always give you a good indicator whether you are going to the right direction. Why are we still using most of these old models?

Academic 2

Something that interests me is the reduction of complexity. Meaning, we are facing a complex situation or environment with a lot of influencing factors, and then we try to reduce the complexity with strategy tools to an extent that we can put everything on a few PowerPoint slides. Why is this the common approach of managerial work, or why is strategy work based on these tools?

Consultant 1

Are they really addressing the most pressing business issues today? Or are do they rather hinder strategy when applied for the topics of the 21st century?

Executive 1

For me it is also the question if you should really use these kind of tools in practice? Should you sometimes use a greater variety of the tools available? Or should you rather use one tool and never even change it while using it?

Consultant 2

For me it is the same questions that you had. Which tools do practitioners use during strategy work? How are they modified? And are all employees able to work with them and interpret their results?

Question 2***Moderator***

Thinking about the past year, have you applied any strategy tools during your practical work? If not, did you apply any other conceptual techniques or approaches that were not necessarily strategic in the first place?

Consultant 2

For eight years now I have been doing a lot of training with Google. I trained approx. 2500-3000 people over the years. What they are really interested in is what they call: business acumen. Meaning, they have salespeople and technical specialists, who know the online world, but they tend to speak just from their own perspective. So, the whole purpose of the training was to help the sales people to understand what strategy is about. We are then taking all these tools, e.g. PESTLE, Strategic Group Maps, Five Forces, but also tools for the internal analysis to come with a systematic way how they can analyze their customers so that they can strategically position the Google solutions to the pressing hot buttons that their customers have. What is sort of missing in your research are the other conceptual approaches like digital strategy, digital business modelling, and financial analyses like ratio analysis, which are used to understand what the pressing internal drivers are.

Executive 1

We are using strategic tools on a regular basis, especially for our forecasting processes. I can say that we are mainly using the common tools like SWOT, Key Success Factors, and also Stakeholder Analysis. Do we apply any other conceptual approaches? There are some other things that we are using for our decision making, e.g. the devil's advocate or other communication instruments. This happens during our workshops, but we do not really apply on paper. However, we use these approaches to document strategic things, since they really help us to understand in which way we are heading to.

Consultant 1

In my last year as consultant I have applied two popular strategy tools. One was the 7-S framework that we cut to 5-S, and the other one was scenario planning. Scenario planning was a very elaborate effort where we engaged with a lot of people that rather had a technical background. It included data modeling or for example a Monte Carlo simulation. Indeed, it was a really big effort and it took almost a month to apply it. The 7-S framework, however, was done within two days. What other frameworks did I use? In the last two years, I used the *10 timeless tests of strategy* in two occasions, which is a proprietary framework of McKinsey. It is basically a list of questions you should ask in order to challenge your strategic thinking. I would regard as a strategy tool, although there is not a fancy visual framework for it. It is rather a list of questions you should ask yourself. Nonetheless, it is a paper based approach to get everyone on the same page.

Academic 2

I have to argue from two different worlds here. One is where I work as a consultant. Me and my colleagues do a lot of consulting for Universities and research institutes. We almost use the SWOT analysis in every single case, but also the Stakeholder Analysis, or the BCG matrix. Sometimes we also apply the 80/20 rule, if you consider this as a tool. As an academic, are rather approach strategy with creativity techniques, such as design thinking. I work with it during workshops where we apply completely different tools. In this world the tools are rather called empathy map or personas, which are probably not on your list, since they aim to structure or steer communication. However, it can be helpful to apply them next to the traditional strategy frameworks.

Consultant 3

During the last 5-6 years I have been working as an IT-consultant, which is why strategy tools are not a key part of my daily life. However, we of course use the SWOT or the product life cycle. Last year we indeed did a strategic group analysis to figure out where our different units can work together. During my studies, I got to know and applied various tools; beginning from PESTLE and Five Forces and ending at more sophisticated internally focused ones. Other conceptual frameworks? We do use a lot, but they are rather coming from project management and software development. Everything that is agile is important to us. But you have live it!

Academic 1

During my time as consultant I never actually used a SWOT analysis. But in my first job I was engaged with a few of these tools. I used PEST, the five forces, and we also used the Ansoff Matrix a lot. This was the tool that got most attention when I brought it to my next employer. They did not know it before and I was the one that brought it in with a few other tools. They were quite happy with that and everyone referred to Ansoff all the time. Now as an academic I teach a lot of these tools and in my research I use them as well. Here I mainly use them because I need a framework and not to forget things. Further, in all thesis that I supervise, but also in my personal research, I modify or try to update these tools.

Question 4***Moderator***

Based on the previous results the top three strategy tools-in-use are the SWOT/TOWS, Portfolio Matrices, and Key Success Factors. Were you expecting this result or is it rather surprising?

Academic 2

Especially the first two, the SWOT and Portfolio Matrices, do not surprise me at all, because even I use or have used them in the past. The SWOT is not really surprising to me because it is somehow easy to understand and easy to follow. You have this simple two times two matrix, which is easy to capture, easy to visualize, and it is quite perfect to use it as a basis for a broader discussion. Nonetheless, it is probably often used in an absolutely wrong way. It is understandable that it is heavily used, but practitioners should not forget that these tools are mostly a simplification of the reality that can primarily be used to structure certain aspects.

Consultant 1

I think that the SWOT is on top is not surprising. There are several factors that contribute to this. First and foremost, their age. For a long time, they have been taught in business schools, reinforced by executives using them, and used during trainings in companies. You can also see that the more recent tools like the blue ocean for action framework are just lesser known, correct? So, I think it is not surprising that those three are among the top five. I was a little bit surprised that Porter's Five Forces is not ranked within the top three. This could of course be blamed on your sample size, but at the end of day I think these are highly popular tools being taught for decades. However, with Porter's Five Forces it truly depends. In practice, this tool is usually adapted in a way that reflects what a specific consultancy specializes in. I would also say that I am a little surprised that the SWOT is used that extensively by consultants, because at least as a sophisticated consultant coming into the room and saying: Hey I have a great idea; we are going to do a SWOT! That is not something that makes you stand out. Of course, the value-add, for a company hiring a consultancy, is bringing in new knowledge. However, in such a situation the SWOT is regarded by the client as: well, we know that, but what is the added value that you deliver? Summing up, when comparing consultants and executives directly, it is really surprising that such a big amount of consultants is using the simple SWOT.

Consultant 3

In reality, we mostly use the SWOT for internal processes in order to get a first indicator. We, for example, used the SWOT just to figure out if the performance management processes are sufficient or not, and where the leaks are and how we could improve. All this is mostly internal, because you cannot go to the client and say this is all the stuff you should change based on one of these simple instruments.

Consultant 1

Of course, sometimes it could make sense to start with a SWOT. If you want to make sure that everyone understands quickly what you are doing, then it does make a lot of sense, because if you use a more sophisticated tool then again you have to explain what the framework is actually about.

Academic 1

I would like to add a point. When we had consultants in our house it was just because our supervisory board wanted to have the stamp of McKinsey or somebody else. In our case, that supervisory board was very traditional and conservative. So, they wanted to have a SWOT analysis and McKinsey had to do one.

Question 3**Moderator**

There are certain strategic problems and objectives that initiate the use of strategy tools. Referring to the preliminary research results, 'positioning' most likely triggers tool application. Why is it necessary to approach this issue with tools?

Executive 1

When it comes to positioning, tools help you to have an objective view on where you are right now; what are the external factors to consider; and maybe on how the external environment changes. Here you usually have to look at all your stakeholders but you also look internally. In strategic positioning you probably do it more often, but also in local positioning, where you are much more concerned about your daily business, you start using tools when it comes to a problem. However, you do not do daily checks with these tools to find out whether you are still on the right way. But there are situations, like regular reviews, during which you use many of them. Certainly, these reviews are located in our corporate function, as they mostly do the strategy work. Anyway, during positioning we mainly use tools to gather external information, and we for sure do not use them for all our daily business activities. In smaller companies, however, they simply start with certain tools when they are confronted with a problem, e.g. when they try to reposition themselves, because they do not have the capacity to apply these things on a regular basis.

Consultant 2

This might still be a holdover from Porter's days, because he was all about positioning. The executives but also consultants probably just remember his claim of how do we get to a unique position. But what I find interesting is to look at the responses from consultants versus the internal view of executives. The executives seem to be focusing on internal factors. Meaning, the starting point is the company, whereas consultants rather look at the external drivers, sort of the market based view. This again then finds an explanation in the positioning item, where I would say: Given the years in the environment; how do we compare to the other guys and how can we position ourselves.

Executive 2

For me, it is very much dependent on the project. I am going back to the projects I have been doing lately or that we will actually present this week. As part of a market entry strategy it is mostly about not knowing where you are going into. Meaning, when you have no idea, then you use a tool to look upon certain issues and use it as a structure to make sure that I am not forgetting things. In some cases, I have such an amount of information that you just need to put it somewhere. When you then look into your different brands, you use tools for positioning to make sure that you go through everything. At this point, you more or less know where you want to go into: you know your segment, your patient group, or whatever. With a tool it is then just a very structured way of looking upon all issues. On top of that, it enables you to divide your work in many different pieces. What we are doing right now is a portfolio strategy for a corporation. So here the questions are: Are we in the right place? Should we do more or less of it? Should we change our focus within it or should we completely go out? When you look upon tools being in the pharma industry, you cannot just switch from left to right. Meaning, you have to have a pipeline of tools ready. In such a process, you are going to use tools that best capture what you have, what your capabilities are, and then you need some external input as well. Afterwards, you then just bring all of these insights together. What all three have in common is that you sit back and ask what is it that I am trying to do, and where do I not know where I want to go? At this point, you then decide which tools could help me. Usually, you grab some of the ones that you know and then you bring people around you that know other tools. Suddenly, you will get to a point where people say: Oh, I have never seen that before! As alternative to that you could also create one. You start with 2x2 matrix and then you just say: this is what makes sense for me and later this discussion is used for the visualization. If done successfully, you will then be able to see what your true question or problem is.

Consultant 3

So, it is always an active not reactive search for tools, right?

Executive 2

As I just said, for me it is the question that is on the table. I have three things in mind: a market entry strategy, a new brand position, and certain elements in the portfolio that need to be looked at. For all that you need to find and apply some of the frameworks. What all these issues have in common is that they are so complex that you use a tool to structure, to ensure that you are not forgetting things, to visualize, and to help you drive the process. And sometimes when you are going through this process, then you realize we have gone through all of that, and now we realize what the real question is.

Academic 1

I think that tools are more used in situations where there is an inconvenient truth expected, because then you can use it as a communication tool and then it has some kind of objectiveness.

Question 5**Moderator**

The main advantage of using strategy tools in practice seems to be that they 'provide structure'. Why is structure so important for strategy work?

Consultant 1

I think structure is always important to understand and communicate your results. So, at first make sure that you really are MECE (mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive). Meaning, you need to cover the whole topic completely. If you did that, then a tool can help you to split up work, to create work packages, and at the end you are able to synthesize. In other words, to make sure that you have an answer that you can communicate quickly to the executives or the stakeholders. I think these are the main points why structure is so important.

Academic 1

During strategy projects there are a lot of people involved and if you have a structure you can guarantee that everybody is on the same path.

Consultant 3

From my perspective, I do not know if structure would be the first one. As consultant, I go to a client when there is an issue or some kind of problem. Sometimes it is our duty to use these tools to structure things or to get things clear, but mostly we would apply them to support the decision making. And if you look into the results then providing structure is just slightly ahead of supporting decision making. This aspect would probably be the number one advantage for me, as clients occasionally need someone to blame for a decision, especially if you have to make incremental changes in their organization.

Academic 2

Maybe just a short comment from my side. I believe that many of the advantages here can be reconnected to structure. Structure reduces complexity, eases up visualization, and makes it easier to move towards a certain direction. That is probably why structure is so interesting.

Executive 2

I hundred percent agree. I think the interrelatedness is here for me, too. The structure is a synonym for structuring. Hence, the other five advantages are results of the structure that tools provide. With a clear structure I can do all your five things. But structure per se is not my goal, but rather the tool I am applying. So my advice; put structure in the front, which should be your tools, and the other advantages will follow as a result.

Question 6**Moderator**

The greatest disadvantage of using strategy tools in practice seems to be that they 'oversimplify issues'. Can you describe a practical example for this issue?

Consultant 2

Any matrix with only two dimensions is an oversimplification. Strategy is, however, a little bit more complex. Let us think about the BCG matrix. Not all dogs are poor dogs. Many of them are happy puppies, right? The simplification issue is inherent in all of the tools, which is why they cannot do justice to all different situations companies are facing. Hence, depending on the type of company they may be applicable, but for others maybe not.

Executive 1

I think the question is why are you using the tools? If I am using a SWOT analysis, I want to show my stakeholders on a very easy topline result overview what we are looking at. But then you have your experts, which are really concentrating on the topic and I guess it is always the question how you present it. So, if you have a tool to showcase where your strategic starting point is, then you need to have a simple tool that everyone in the room can read, understand, and interpret the presented outcomes. After this point, you usually have to rely on your stakeholders and senior management who hopefully ask the right questions and tell you how to continue. A tool is never the result, but probably a starting point to look into the strategy. All this means, oversimplification can be a curse but also blessing. If you believe in their results without thinking any further, you might get lost in a decision that is simply not functioning.

Moderator

Another disadvantage has been that tools are sometimes too static. Why is that?

Academic 1

Yet again, the different aspects are somehow interrelated. If something is oversimplifying, then that might lead to misleading results; if something is very complex in application, then it needs to be sort of static because you cannot run it all the time. The problem of tools be static could be due to the simplification that you are trying to achieve, but also due to the complexity of the entire data collection or the information gathering. Again, if you want to do it properly, if you want to involve the entire company, all different stakeholders, and even external consultants, then you need some kind of a steady character within these tools. So, from an academic perspective I would say that their rigidity is not necessarily a bad thing, but it can be.

Consultant 1

I am not so sure that it is okay to blame the tools here, but rather to blame the people using these tools. The oversimplification happens a lot during the application, because the tool users are not aware of the underlying theoretical concepts. For example, if you look at Porter's five forces and his work on it, you will see that he is very detailed on which data sources you can use. However, it never works without effort. Unfortunately, a lot of people use it in a one-hour effort which results in oversimplification. In such a case, it is not the guns that kill people, but the people that pull the trigger. This is probably the same with all the instruments. In some cases, it is the people that are not really paying attention to how strategy tools should be used.

Consultant 3

We mentioned the SWOT - same here, it seems so easy that people just think everyone can use it without really making sure they understand how to apply it and how to also synthesize the result. Well, and just using one or two tools is not sufficient because they look at one aspect, but you need to complement that with the information of several others.

Question 7**Moderator**

In an organization's strategic management process most strategy tools are used during the analysis and formulation phase (i.e. before the strategic decision). What could be the reasons for that?

Consultant 1

It always depends on the question you want to solve and after the strategic decision you have at least answered the strategic questions. Of course, that is the nature of a strategic decision. There is a question lying in front of you and in order to answer that question you have a tool to prepare possible answers or evaluate answers. That could be one thing that it is just natural in the process. The other is probably that strategy execution is still regarded as something that does not deserve as much attention as drafting strategy. If you look at executives, at least from my experience, there is a tendency in a lot of companies to look at what is going to happen in the future and what are the decisions to make, but they do not pay as much attention to the execution. This is then delegated down to the line managers, since they are responsible for it. However, making strategic decisions is the core of the executive job, and that is why the strategy tools are probably rather applied before there is a decision. If you talk about other tools to process or for project management, it would probably be different.

Academic 2

I agree with the previous answer. By their nature strategy tools are rather used during strategic planning, as you are trying to invent something new. In terms of the execution it is different. Here you would find other tools, that are not typically strategic. However, this is absolutely dependent on the task, I think. During current developments, like digitalization, companies have to focus much more on the execution, but here they have to use tools that rather focus on projects and their effective implementation.

Executive 2

Let me go back to the different perspectives, as I have been on both sides. I think often consultants are brought in when we are having a real strategic project. And I think that many executives mistake strategy adaptation or implementation for real strategy development. In my experience as part of an executive environment, we spend an enormous amount of time with tools and efforts on the following up on the implementation of a strategy – meaning in the monitoring stage. When I ask what a strategy is then there is usually silence. But, now when we are really trying to rebuild the core strategy, we realize that there are not so many tools that could really help us, other than structure some things, because there are simply things that you cannot grasp. If you are going into an area where you have no idea; it is new. Actually when you really ask the executives, for them it is more a monitoring of a strategy and even monitoring of business results, and they think that is strategic, because we used the word strategy. However, I am rather believing what the consultants say, because when they come in they are obviously hired to develop the strategy from scratch and not on the basis of a process. Let me summarize here, the advantage of a tool is that it is a tool and the disadvantage of a tool is that it is a tool. A tool has its limitations, but as long as you know what you use it for, the stages in the process do not play the most important role. I have to be honest, I do not really recognize this. However, there is a process, but are we using the tools next to it? I do not know. During the last two years only one project was truly strategic. The others were just strategic initiatives. But for me these are important at a much lower level. Meaning, it is depending on where you sit; meaning if your work is rather tactical or strategic.

Academic 1

I think this is interesting. If I am correct, the 'No' means that they do not follow the entire process and that they just participate in parts of it. And yes, in the first two steps consultants are more involved. And by the way, we never had consultants involved in execution.

Executive 2

With analysis and formulation, meaning before the strategy decision, you really go into strategy. That is the stage when you stand with your team and literally say to each other: we have no idea. However, does strategy work stop after the first two? I rather do not think so. Strategy without tactics is a dream that never stops, and tactics without strategy is a nightmare that never ends. For me, strategy has two things - the development and the monitoring.

Academic 1

But it is done, right? It is being done, because to formulate something without having any clue how to implement it and how to evaluate it is much easier.

Executive 2

Correct, and that is why you need to make sure that the group that is creating your strategy know in advance that is also forced to help executing.

Consultant 1

Let me just go back to the point where you said that you think that the people at the board look more at execution than the formulation. My experience would be the other way around. There is the disruption between drafting a strategy; where you say: well, in 2030 we are going to be top notch in our business; and then of course the people who drafted the strategy are probably not around in two or three years to be accountable for this. However, they basically delegate the execution down the line. That is why I think that, at least in a top management consultancy, you rather talk to the people on the corporate level, and they normally focus on formulation, and they want to understand cool analysis, and they have a lot of tools, and then for the execution there is just a different group of people.

Executive 2

Agreed. But what I said is; when executives do what you have just described, that is happening when external consultants come in. These consultants will then realize: oh, they have no clue what they are talking about. So, I agree with that. But if I just look upon the last two years in which I have seen different things, the amount of time that you actually spend on the other things, meaning execution, is much bigger than I thought it would be. But you are right, if you really want to have happy faces that is when you go to big stuff. Nonetheless, that is not the vast majority of the time spent.

Consultant 1

But this is why I think that this might depend on the industry. I have been at retail clients that extremely focus on execution. If you are working at Aldi it is all about execution. They do not have a lot of time to spend on strategy. If you are part of a rather digital business or the logistics industry where you think about mergers and acquisitions, it might also be different there. So, it sometimes also depends on history and sometimes on the culture that is driven by the executive. If you have a CEO that is just coming in from a company where he learned to focus on execution, then he can really turn around on what the board spends time on. So, I think both is possible but more fun for most executives is thinking about which company they could buy and all the other kind of things where you can really shake an entire industry.

Consultant 3

It probably depends on the business level you are looking at, but corporate executives really like big ideas. For me, tool-based strategy work is predominantly happening before the strategic decision. This will never really change, as everything else is not solely a strategic task.

Academic 1

At the end of the process executives come back for the evaluation, but in my eyes this happens without tools. I therefore claim that most executives just skip the execution, but come back when it is about evaluating and monitoring. Why? They need proof that their big ideas were the right ones.

Consultant 1

You mean, when the advisory boards ask them that they need some sort of hockey stick to proof they did something good? I agree, that happens a lot. But is this still strategy work? There are monitoring tools, but are there any strategy tools for that? I would rather say no.

Question 8**Moderator**

Many tools are also used as proof after the strategic decision has been made (i.e. post-rationalization), even though the majority of practitioners claimed that they are primarily used to reach a decision instead of proofing it. Why is post-rationalization still happening?

Academic 2

I was just thinking about a project that I am working on right now. We have a CEO of a smaller research institute who has the feeling that his organization has too many business units. Meaning, he does not want to sit in a room with five heads of departments as this process is simply not working for him. His personal goal is to reduce the number of five business units to three units. What we did is that we looked over all core competencies, the strategic value of that competencies, and we put that together to form different groups. Surprise, the number of these different groups is three and not five. In this case, the decision was already in his mind, but he somehow wanted justification for that. As you said the decision was already made, which is why we tried to understand his world in the way that his decision is coming out, which was certainly a bad thing. Yes, it happens but I think it can be problematic when you are using tools, as they rather aim to give you a path or at least guidance. In the end, it could even lead you in an absolute wrong direction.

Executive 1

We often use tools in the beginning of the process, which is indeed the point where the consultants are brought into the company to have an external voice on a decision that was already made. This is probably why you have these proofs of decisions, since you try to semi-objectivize your idea while relying on someone outside the company. Here, you use of these tools and even manipulate them that they fit for your purposes. In a SWOT, it is really easy to do by simply highlighting certain elements in it. Proving a decision happens when you have an idea, take a tool, and then create a world around it. At this point you involve different people, but of course you are seeking for the ones that could help to support your decisions. However, if you really want to objectivize these tools you need to talk to a lot of people, which reduces the matter of oversimplification, but at the same time it is not about applying a small tool anymore because you have now initiated a bigger project. During this process, you will learn that certain tools will not be helpful to reach your decision. So yes, post-rationalization with tools is normal, but at a certain point they will not help you to do the job, as people do not believe in everything they tell.

Moderator

Let me rephrase the question again. Is post-rationalization happening and is it necessarily a bad thing?

Consultant 2

When I worked at Company X in the States we did this all the time. When it got difficult to move on, we put the words unpopular or controversial in front of the decision. The answer was: We just spent 50 billion with McKinsey. They cannot be wrong! Here we go; that was our proof. Same as you described it: the decision was already made, but now we were there and got proof for it, since we applied highly sophisticated strategy tools.

Academic 1

Post-rationalization is a bad thing, if you are not willing to reshape your decision; or if you do not want to change it. Accordingly, I would have the hypothesis that it is sometimes even happening because of ownership or financing structures. If you are business owner doing your own stuff with your own money, why should you use a tool? Of course to proof that you are right. Maybe also to structure things or to be objective. However, in my experience tools have been used to communicate and rationalize something in front of the board or e.g. some venture capitalists.

Executive 2

Every decision is emotional. If you take the emotional center in mice away, then they can no longer make decisions. We put figures on the table and they tell you something, but in the end there is always an emotional aspect. There is not a bad thing about post-rationalization because we are all human beings, but it is bad when it happens for a bad reason, which I think is the case when you bring in consultants to proof something. Normally, you should rather bring in consultants when you either do not have the capacity or the capability. But if you bring in outside people to post-rationalize a decision in can become difficult. Why does it happen? Fear! It is either the fear of the top management to hire consultants that might lead you nowhere even though they told you it going to be fine. But then there is also the fear of making the decision by yourself. If it goes well, then we have done it! If it goes wrong, then they have done it! So, does it happen? Yes. Does it happen a lot? I do not know, but in my opinion too much. I think you will see it more if you do what I call real strategy development. It is absolutely convenient here to use tools as proof, as they cannot be wrong, right? In such a situation, you are sitting together with a group and you are trying to identify a new branch, a new market or a new area you want to go into. Everyone involved has no idea how to do it, but surprisingly everybody knows what they want.

Consultant 1

Let me share two ideas from the practice experience of a consultant. I think it is a thin red line between post-rationalization and putting constraints on a project. So if you are in a time constrained environment and you have to develop recommendations within two or three weeks, then it is helpful if someone tells you that he wants to reduce from five to three business units. In that case, your task reduces to the assurance that you pick the right three. Meaning, it is ok if we have three sectors or business units that we focus on. But, this is of course some sort of post-rationalization because now your tools proof that three is probably the right number. So, that is indeed one thing that you always have to consider. Especially, under time constraints you have to make sure that the solutions basin is somewhat limited, which is why you basically have an answer before you start working. Now to the second point. In a lot of consultancies, you start on your first day with something that is called day-zero hypothesis. So, before the project starts you write down what you think is the answer to the question. At the beginning of workshop, you normally try to really define what the question is that you are trying to solve. This probably takes half a day, as you try to make sure what the question is, what parts of the question you want to solve, and what are we not looking at. After that, you write down answers! All this happens on the first day. On this first day you need to ask yourself on what basis you can formulate the hypothesis. Either you have people with a lot of industry experience that have an informed outside view or you had a conversation with the CEO or the people that hired your consultancy. Of course, this also flows into this day-zero hypothesis. Especially these factors are extremely important for consultants coming from the outside, because the client is still the one paying your bills. Without a doubt, you are always trying to make your employer happy, which is why you are searching for his solution, even though this means that you have to post-rationalize. However, you have to deliver more than that, because otherwise your proof turns out to be absolutely wrong. How do you do more? You deliver alternatives!

Question 9**Moderator**

Referring to the surveyed participants again, the 'acceptance' of tools influences their effective application the most. Why does acceptance play such a big role?

Consultant 3

You are asking why acceptance plays such an important role, right? That is easy. You are creating acceptance by applying proven tools. Such tools are typically used for years and in many different cases. In that case, everyone thinks: if this tool is already in use for more than 20 years, then it must be the right one! Of course, it is sometimes problematic when we try to incorporate more modern approaches, as they have not received the 'approval stamp' yet. Yet again, this is still all depending on the topic and the client you work for.

Consultant 1

For me it depends on how much time you have. If someone thinks that the tool does not make any sense because it is not asking the right questions or it does not have the right structure, then it will not be accepted. Meaning, acceptance is obviously important. Nonetheless, I would not underestimate the role of the practitioner, because they are mostly responsible for the effective application of tools.

Academic 2

If everybody is familiar with a tool, which means if I accept something I am probably familiar with it, I do not have to spend much time into explaining how the method works. Meaning, if there is acceptance we can start right now and do for example a SWOT analysis, start a process, or get deeper into a topic.

Consultant 1

Just one last point. Acceptance is probably a prerequisite for applying tools, and if someone says the tool is not really the right one, then you cannot just discuss the results that come out of it.

Executive 2

I would turn this questions around. What drives non acceptance? What I usually see is: Why? How? What? Why are we doing something? That is the key question in any strategic project. Once you know that really well, then we go to: How are we going to do that? That is where proof comes in. However, if the why are we doing that is not clear it becomes difficult. Same for me. If I do not know what is expected from me, then I am accepting no tools at all, because I just do not understand it. What often happens is that we come to a meeting and everyone says: Today, we are going to do something strategic. We did seven tools and this is what I have found. In this situation I respond with: Okay, fine but that is the answer to the how. However, the why remains unanswered. Hence, for me the effective application is dependent on the communication. Therefore, the question should be: How can we improve communication to understand why we are doing what we are doing. If that is clear, then tools can be applied. At this point, it will be much easier to get acceptance. So, I think the acceptance is very much about explaining to the people why are we doing this. Once this is established you can freely choose your tools. Honestly, I have never seen an issue with acceptance. But I have seen huge issues with the communication of what we are actually doing. This holds true for the strategic planning but also for the monitoring.

Question 10**Moderator**

Another issue of effectively applying tools is their adaptation. During the interviews, a great majority of practitioners claimed to adapt tools-in-use to conduct strategy work. Why is their adaptation nowadays indispensable?

Consultant 2

I agree with the reason presented here. For sure the dynamic environments. When we apply tools, we need to look at their applicability to different types of economic or political situations, but also the type of the organization plays a role. Meaning, a Fortune 500 company or a small medium size business have totally different environments were some things simply will not work as they are. And as I said earlier; one tool by itself will not be effective, because strategy is way too complex to be captured by just one tool. So, you need to use them in combination, as Porter, for example, did overlook a lot of important things.

Consultant 1

One could say that adaptation changes the meaning of these theoretical frameworks. Well, this could be the case, but it could also be the other way around. Look at the BCG matrix and the assumptions on market share you need. It does not make a lot of sense in today's markets. In the past, industries cared most about scale, but that is not true for a lot of companies anymore. So, I think it is difficult if you are dealing with instruments that have four or five decades of lifetime, because then the question is: how much do they really address the current business environment? Anyway, adaptation could be a problem for the outcome of the tools, but it is certainly also a problem if you do not adapt them. If you do not adapt, you might get totally misleading results because you are looking at frameworks that have been developed during much less dynamic times.

Academic 1

If you do strategic projects, then you try to think outside the box, since you do not want to do what all the others are doing. Hence, it becomes necessary to adapt tools. If you use a tool how it is, then it will answer its underlying questions. The problem is, however, that all your competitors and all the other people are probably applying them as well. So, where is your advantage, especially from a strategic point of view. So yes, we adjust the tools to our needs, as we do not want to do the same like everyone else.

Consultant 3

Of course, we adapt and adjust the tools because no problem statement or situation is the same, which is why, I would even say, we always have to adapt these tools. Why is that? The world is just too complex and not every client, environment or industry works in the same way - so you have to adapt!

Academic 1

A practical point is missing in my opinion - data availability. We did adapt tools because we did not have access to the information needed. For example, there was no market share so we needed something different.

Academic 2

Maybe one last comment from an academic perspective. We as academics could probably reinforce the students to the adaptation of tools. So, I teach business planning. Today, most of the business ideas are about an online business or an app. At some point there has to be a business plan that includes something about marketing. Marketing has these four marketing P's, but they do not make any sense in a digital business. Nonetheless, the included marketing plan is still based on this approach, even though it is simply not correct. We should probably push the students towards another thinking, because tools are just tools and if they help you to do something and be creative then it is always worthwhile to apply them. However, people also need to critique them in order to develop solutions that are more suitable to their problem or questions.

Executive 2

Again, is adaptation bad? For me, a tool is a tool and if I need a hammer then I just grab one. If I want a hammer with heavier head, then I need to change it. So for me, and here I agree with the others, a tool is simply a tool. I adapt it, if it better fits to what I am trying to achieve. Interestingly, if you talk about dynamic environments then I have a different opinion. Especially in dynamic environments I sometimes actually go back to the old-fashioned tool. Alright, I come from pharma, a very old-fashioned industry with long time lines and all these kinds of things. The entry barriers are very high. Now we have digital health things coming in that could somewhere affect how we do certain things. The question is: should we go in there or not? I would rather apply an old-fashioned tool that forces me to look upon entry barriers etc. instead of missing things. This can happen when I have adjusted a tool to an extent that it suits all new things and trends. To sum up, for me a dynamic environment would actually be a reason to go back to the old tools, especially when looking at my industry. When I go into something new and I have never been there, then it could be that the existing tools do not deal with that issue. Even if this the case, it can be extremely useful to force yourself to solve your issue with an old-fashioned tool to see how these changes might affect you without being present.

Question 11**Moderator**

Most of the surveyed strategists were certain that strategy tools will have a value and further exist in the future. However, to further develop and adjust them, practitioners should mainly focus on increasing their flexibility. Why should tools be more flexible?

Consultant 3

Well, we are all confronted with very fast moving environments and they will probably even change faster in future. For me, this is the main reason why these tools have to be more flexible.

Consultant 2

The way to advance their flexibility is pretty clear to me, as you are just replacing old concepts in these tools with new concepts. I mean think of Porter's value chain and all its very static boxes. The digital world has blown those apart. And as you said, this is it sort of the same to what the notions say about the 5-forces. The dynamics of each of those forces has changed so much because of digital capabilities. The buyer power has increased so much because everyone is just a mobile device. So, I think that the tools constantly need to be modified and adjusted to the situation, which will result in more flexibility. Especially, when you rely on something that was developed in 1980 I take the liberty of adjusting it to 2020.

Academic 2

But the idea behind it stays the same, right? For me, it is mostly about separating the important things from the non-important things. Nowadays, we need to find tools where it is possible to incorporate as much of the available data as possible. Once you include more or different data than before, then you could say that you have probably developed a different or let us say an updated tool. Here I rather disagree because the core concept behind the initial instrument will remain the same. I would say, flexibility comes in with the desires of the applicant and his/her willingness to adjust the chosen tool in a reasonable way.

Moderator

Is it possible to change the entire meaning when we hardly adjust these tools?

Consultant 3

I do not think so, because from my perspective the market will work the same as 50 years ago. I mean, the main drivers will stay the same. However, without modification their results will be misleading.

Consultant 1

Who is allowed to modify a tool and to what extend? Let me say this. I think the five forces are probably an outlier when you look at the scientific foundation. The idea of Porter was to come up with scientific proof to make sure that if you really talk about profitability of an industry that you identify factors that matter and try to prove it with qualitative analyses or micro economics, and so on. For me, just adding a six dimension or force, because it makes sense in our project, is a bit difficult. Especially when you want to make sure that you use five forces because there is some sort of scientific foundation it was developed on. Simply adapting without doing all the legwork that is necessary to prove it can be very misleading. This is why I think it can be a bit dangerous to use tools that are modified. Think of a gun. If you modify it, then it is not safe anymore. Maybe you use it, but then it just blows into pieces and gives you the wrong answer. Now you blame the tool, but it is was you that was playing with the gun in the first place.

Executive 1

For me, the question is whether the tool needs to be more flexible or the people working on the results of it. If you have the tools and you have some ideas what to do with it, then you probably need to be more flexible and bring more people on the table that also look at new tools. Meaning, you need to have many different pieces to have more flexibility in a dynamic environment. Yes, you should modify the tools because it should answer your questions. But in the end if you modify them to an extent where you have concerns that they are still working or proving the concept you want to prove, then it is getting dangerous. So, when practitioners request more flexibility they probably mean that they want to combine more different ways of coming up with a strategy.

Consultant 1

Let me add something to your point. For me, flexibility can mean that you have more flexibility in choosing tools. And here it is more about the practitioner than the tool itself. I mean if you look at the list the top three are tools have been developed 34 years ago. So, flexibility is not only about the tool, but it is rather about; how as a practitioner are you able to have a broader selection, be aware of the tools and also be able to deploy them. But that probably means there need to be more tools, right?

Executive 2

I agree, it is the user that has to be flexible, because if I go into very new things and I want to measure something that did not exist 10 years ago, I may need a new tool or I may need to adapt one. This is perfectly fine. However, at the same time I would force myself to do exactly the same with another tool, an old-fashioned one. This is extremely difficult, especially with all these digital developments, but you need to force yourself to do that. Using an old-fashioned tool, that may not completely do what the new world wants me to do, forces me to look into certain things and gives me a picture. After that I can bring something new, which gives me picture as well. If both go more or less in the same direction I get a bit of a feeling that I might be on the right way, but if they are contradicting I have to look at them from a different angle. To be honest, I do not see an either/or. I would be very happy to use existing tools and adapt them. I would use existing tools and force myself to not adapt them. I would employ completely new things that I have never heard of. In the end, if we knew we could do it all with our brains we would not use any of these tools. So, we cannot, which is why we need to bring them in and have a look.

Consultant 1

It makes a lot of sense to have tools that are a little bit older, but have proven to be valuable, but on top to use new tools as well. But, it can also be dangerous. A tool gives you a certain view on the environment or industry, and if the dynamics of the way that industries work have changed, that can just lead you to the wrong direction. So, that is a challenge. You can use old and new tools, but you also have to make sure that you understand where the limits of the old tools are, which were built in by the developers' views of the world.

Academic 2

To be honest, you also have to know and understand the limitations of the newer tools, because every tool or systematic approach has its limitations.

Consultant 1

Yet again it is about the practitioner and his adjustment, right? It is not only about making a tool flexible, but making sure that everyone involved understands what the limitations and boundaries of these approaches are.

Question 11***Moderator***

When looking at the developed definition for strategy tools, would you consider it as sufficient? “A strategy tool is a standardized process, procedure or approach to analyze a company's environment, to initiate or organize debate and to solve complex strategic issues in structured and meaningful way.”

Consultant 2

I would add, an "to analyze certain 'aspects' of a company's environment...

Consultant 1

What about the execution? I am just wondering, since we had that discussion at the beginning. If you define strategy tool like this, it does not surprise me that there is no one that is applying strategy tools in the execution, because they are obviously not build for execution and monitoring.

Consultant 2

I would agree. If you look at the list of 16 tools that you are incorporating, I would sort of label them: internal analysis, external analysis, and strategy formulation. If I then look at the overall management process this is pretty similar. It also has strategic analysis, strategy formulation and then implementation, which is rather at the tactical level because it is day to day business. However, the tools cannot really be used for the controlling or the monitoring process.

Executive 2

I have few things. I would adapt ‘standardized process’, while you may also have flexible things. I would call that a 'structured process'. You have flexible tools, but it does not have to be standard tools. In addition, you talk about the company's environment, but you also need to know the company's capabilities.

Moderator

“...a company's environment...” aims to cover both internal as well as the external environment.

Executive 2

Ok, next. To solve complex strategic issues. I agree, but I would add solve/visualize/structure. Further, how does that lead to the implementation and how does that feed back into the strategy? Because in the end we know one thing for sure; the moment we have designed a strategy it is outdated. Thus, the definition should include that tools can be used throughout the entire strategy process.

Question 13***Moderator***

Due to my research you should now be aware what strategy-as-practice stands for. When looking at modern strategy work, what would you recommend to researchers in this field? Where should they focus on and how could better adjust to the practical world?

Academic 2

Yet again, I come back to my initial point of design thinking and the other approaches available. Obviously, there are many other tools to understand situations or to go different paths which do not necessarily come from a management environment. Meaning, the field should somehow open up and not only look at strategic management tools.

Consultant 2

Two things would be interesting. Number one; the difference between smaller, medium sized and large companies; to actually understand what kind of capabilities they have to even engage with such a structured strategic management process. Number two; why do some companies seem to have a good working strategy and other companies have problems with that? What is the process that you go through internally? Certainly, using a couple of tools as just one piece of that. Does every company what strategy truly is? Are we really talking about strategy? If you look at some of the Porter's videos online he also says what most companies do not have is a strategy, and therefore the question should be why? I would recommend that researchers in that field look at what is it that companies do well regarding strategy. How do they generate new ideas? Do they really involve a lot of other people to get input? Do they bring in outside people? So, what is a good strategic management process?

Executive 2

I have two things. One is; take a holistic approach. In general, why are we doing it? What are our capabilities? What is happening in the environment? And second; Why? How? What? Meaning, find out what is really painful and hard to grasp. This can only be done by clarifying the why to everyone involved. After that, you can use the tools to collect the missing pieces.

Consultant 1

How can you bring these tools, even though they have been developed in less turbulent times, into today's digital world? We have data available, so why not digitalize these tools? Is that even possible? In other words, how could the process of analyzing with these tools be automated? When you think about strategy tools and instruments and compare that to the way how managers work, it is odd that this is a field where you still work pen and paper based. Apart from strategy, almost any other managerial task is nowadays supported by software, everything but these strategy tools. Meaning, I would recommend looking at the process of how tools are used, which includes selection and application, and then draw conclusions and see how software could support it.

Question 14***Moderator***

Lastly, do you have any questions or is there something you would like to add?

None

S Full Set of Interview Transcripts**Interview – Academic 1 – A1****Question 1*****Interviewer***

What is your current position and area of responsibility within the organization?

Academic 1

Currently, I am Professor at the University X. I am giving lectures, and I am the group head/speaker of our group of strategic management professors.

Question 2***Interviewer***

How have you been involved in strategy work so far? What have been your roles?

Academic 1

As a project manager I have been involved in holding management projects, M&A projects, and the regular strategy review process, which have been the responsibilities of my first position. Basically, this holds also true for my second position, besides that I was not responsible for the holding management, but basically more the M&A topics. At the moment I am teaching strategy. I have actually not that much time to do research on it. This just happens occasionally.

Questions 3***Interviewer***

What experiences do you have with strategy work?

Academic 1

Most strategy work I conducted was actually project management. So, conducting a strategy process which happens regularly is lot of project management work. We have used the one or the other strategy tool or instrument in that case, but we, more or less, based our work on conducting interviews with responsible people and putting together all the information - we were basically preparing board decisions.

Questions 4***Interviewer***

What are in your view typical strategic problems? Please describe at least three typical problems.

Academic 1

Typical problems are securing the company's position for the future, since everyone knows the industry environments are changing, and sticking to an old-fashioned business model will not last forever. Another important problem, which is much more faced by the management team, is the assurance of constant growth. So, how to grow further from your core business into other businesses and dealing with targets which are proposed to you - so to say a passive M&A process. Maybe also to avoid becoming redundant, which is linked to the first step of securing the future position of a company and for sure this is also linked to cost efficiency and making processes and creating a more efficient organization.

Question 5**Interviewer**

How would you or should strategists/organizations attempt to solve such strategic projects? And do you or should they follow a significant process that guides the strategy work?

Academic 1

I would always say yes. I always find it very helpful. We all know that the basic strategic tools and instruments are more or less overdone, but they actually help us a lot not to forget certain aspects. This is why I think that every organization should follow a standardized process, for sure adapted to their specific environment. The standardized process will help them not to ignore, for example substitutes or potential entrants in their industry. For example, when securing future positions, it is very important to look at industry and technological changes. In that case, substitutes that might become more important than the original businesses or new entrants to the markets that are not actually active in the markets your company is in. Other firms can take over their process or products and services. Just coincidentally as a sad product, so to say.

Question 6**Interviewer**

How would you describe strategy tools?

Academic 1

For me a strategy tool is a standardized process, procedure or approach used to analyze a company's environment in order to draw major conclusions and describe business activities. There are many different fields in the strategic management process where we find tools. They are a framework of standardized processes, rules and procedures.

Question 7**Interviewer**

Which of the following strategy tools do you know?

Academic 1

SWOT - yes; KSFs - yes; Core Competencies - yes; Scenario Planning - yes; Value Chain - yes; Porter Five Forces - yes; VRIO - yes; ILC - yes; PESTLE - yes; Portfolio Matrices - yes; Generic Strategies - yes; Strategic Groups - yes; Ansoff - yes; Bowman - yes; Strategy Clock - yes; Corporate Parenting - yes; Blue Ocean - yes;

Additional tools I would add, the Delta Model and the Balanced Scorecard. Maybe also the more agile ones; the business model canvas and the lean startup approach.

Question 8**Interviewer**

Are you familiar with the terms 'strategizing' or 'strategy-as-practice'? What meaning do you associate to them?

Academic 1

Yes. Thanks to you I am familiar with the terms. Before I had a rough idea what the actual meaning is. Strategy-as-practice: Strategy is nice in theory but is it actually useful, is it used and how is it used in practice?

Question 9***Interviewer***

In what situation should strategists/organizations use strategy tools to conduct their strategy work? - Please also explain how.

Academic 1

First of all, I think they should have a regular strategic management process or a strategy process where they review their business model (what they are doing at the moment) and even question their mission and vision. In my opinion, this would avoid, what I have observed very often, that strategy becomes something very occasional and something that happens by coincident (e.g. a company offers to be bought). This usually leads to a form of a moment pop store, where you combine various activities and get very much away from your mission and vision statement. The regular strategy review or strategy process should then be added by typical processes, which you can follow when there is a specific target or if you want to reach a certain growth target (e.g. because of BOD recommendations). Then you could enter that process and follow certain rules and guidelines.

Question 10a***Interviewer***

The strategic management process is oftentimes divided into four stages - analysis, formulation, implementation, and evaluation and control. In what phase should strategists/organizations most frequently use strategy tools?

Academic 1

I think they should be used in the analysis, because otherwise the analysis or the strategy formulation is just based on a 'gut feeling'. I think they are most used in evaluation and control. For implementation, I actually think there are not so many tools, because implementation is just so particular for every single business. In formulation they might be helpful, albeit we have to question the traditional work of Porter for example. So most importantly strategists should focus on them in analysis, because when you have a profound analysis it is easier to become creative afterwards.

Question 10b***Interviewer***

When looking at the list again, during what phase would you typically use the following tools?

Academic 1

Maybe we should add another column: 'I would use and are they used?' SWOT - I do not like the SWOT but it is used. Key Success Factor Analysis - I would use and they are sometimes used. Core Competences Analysis - I would add them to the KSF - they are not really used. Scenario Planning - I like it and it is used. Value Chain Analysis - As standalone not helpful and not used. Five Forces - I would emphasize using it - it is sometimes used. VRIO - is never used. Industry Life Cycle - Is helpful, but not directly used in practice. It is the basis for gut feeling decisions (used intuitively). PESTLE - In a way it is helpful. In particular, it is used not to forget something. It is not so much used in companies, but indirectly used by the public affairs department: overall rather not used. Portfolio Matrices - Can be helpful but not in the original way. With

adapted categories on the axis they are used. Generic Strategy Model - Albeit there are newer theories and very helpful additions to that, I find it very helpful. Not used as a model in practice. Also, very indirectly, this means not explicitly. Strategic Group Analysis - I like it a lot. It is not used in practice, but as kind of substitute to it: competitive intelligence. Ansoff Matrix - is helpful to a certain extent. It is also used (if you force people to do it). Strategy Clock and Delta Model - same applies to what I said to Porters Generic Strategies. Corporate Parenting – is absolutely not used. Might be helpful to a certain extent, but I think it is a little bit overdone, even more than the McKinsey matrix. Blue Ocean - has become very popular over the past 10 years. Some ex-consultants do use it, but other companies just use it intuitively. As a standardized approach to question of what you should do/or not do it can be helpful. Newer businesses and the tech industry claim that they are in a blue ocean. Maybe they use it by accident. The customer centric approach and the KSFs are similar and closely linked to the blue ocean strategy. In a way it is used, but companies would not call it blue ocean framework (e.g. airline industry, leisure companies). Balanced Scorecard – unfortunately I have used it. Business Model Canvas/Lean Startup - Is used in a lot of young business firms. Existing and older companies do not use it. Not all the emergent strategy approaches are used by older players but by younger companies. Delta Model - also only implicitly (e.g. IKEA, Amazon, Apple they). They know how to build an ecosystem and they want to do it, and this is their target, but they do not call it the delta model, or they do not choose a position in the delta model.

Academic 1

SWOT – A; KSF – A, F, I, E; Core Competencies – A; Scenario Analysis – F, I; Value Chain – A; Five Forces – A; VRIO – A; Industry Life Cycle - A, E; PESTLE – A; Portfolio Matrices - A, F; Porters Generic Strategies – F; Strategic Group Analysis – A; Ansoff – F; Strategy Clock – F; Parenting Matrix – F, I; Blue Ocean – A, F; Delta – A, F; Balanced Scorecard – I; Business Model Canvas – A, F

Question 11

Interviewer

Referring to a specific strategic problem, which strategy tool has particularly supported you/your organization the most/least?

Academic 1

MOST - I think it was teaching the management team how to use the Ansoff Matrix, as it was in a company, which had a strategy process, but was not really using tools. How they acted in terms of growth and M&As was based on intuition or gut feeling. They were not actively searching for targets, but they were sometimes confronted with targets. In that case, the Ansoff Matrix really helped to tell what the new target is used for. When they found out that it is a new market and a new product, they were frightened. The model was particularly helpful. In my former job the five forces were also really helpful, because the company was large and confronted with substitutes, which they did not really face before. They had consultancies on board, which told them that a) they did not do any mistakes in the past and b) they have alternatives at the moment, so they do not do anything wrong. In the future, they probably have to look for a new business model. LEAST - We never used that many tools. We sometimes used scenario planning, which was also rather helpful. We did not use any tool, that wasn't helpful. The company had a rather reluctant approach to tools.

Question 12***Interviewer***

How do you appraise the success and workload of the strategy tools outlined below, and how would you rate their efficiency?

Academic 1

Sometimes it is not worth it. It absolutely depends on the tool. We cannot overgeneralize that. For example, the McKinsey matrix is a lot of work to do. When you want to do it properly the outcome will not be worth it, because you will have the right feeling anyway before you are ready to hand it in. I think simpler approaches like the five forces or the strategic group analysis do not require that much work and they are much more worth it. It depends on the tool! In general, it is not worth it if you have to do a lot of work. If you have the right people in the organization they know what to do, then you need a simple tool that works efficiently.

Academic 1

SWOT – 1, KSF – 4, Core Competences – 0, Scenario Planning – 5, Value Chain – 0, Porters Five Forces – 4, VRIO – 0, Industry Life Cycle – 0, PESTLE – 4, Portfolio Matrices -1, Porters Generic Strategies – 0, Strategic Group Map – 5, Ansoff – 5, Strategy Clock – 0, Corporate Parenting – 0, Blue Ocean – 4, Delta – 4, Balanced Scorecard – 2, Business Development Canvas – 4

Question 13***Interviewer***

Did you or should strategists/organizations adapt the tools-in-use to the specific organizational context? Please provide examples.

Academic 1

Yes, absolutely. Every organization is very special. For example, when you are part of a global industry it does not make sense to define a market in the Ansoff Matrix as a regional market. You need to define customer groups by their size, by OEM vs. supplier, etc. Or another example, which I was confronted with: We did a portfolio matrix, more or less, on an internal basis, because in most industries it is nearly impossible to get all industry data. It might be possible in the automotive industry or consumer electronics to a certain extent, but in many other industries, in particular in Germany where you do not have all that company data publicly available, it is not possible. But doing it with internal values e.g. how much the turnover changed over the recent years/past, how long are these products existing, how much do they contribute, how many customers, how about customer retention?! In that case an adapted tool can be really helpful. It clearly depends on the situation.

Question 14***Interviewer***

To what extent are strategy tools used to reach a rational answer rather than post-rationalizing decisions that are already made?

Academic 1

In practice, they are not really used to achieve a goal, but rather to post-rationalize a decision. In particular this is added by using one of the top consultancies, because they put their stamp below the findings and then the BOD will accept the decision.

Question 15**Interviewer**

What are the advantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Academic 1

As I have mentioned before, they are only helpful to conduct a systematic approach and not to forget important aspects. Basically, to gain additional insights besides the gut feeling and experiences that managers and employees do have. They can also help to get more people on board, so that they buy into a decision. They help to explain why a certain decision was made, why a new road is chosen. They help to communicate, to sell (more or less), and reduce uncertainties or risks (in my opinion).

Question 16**Interviewer**

What are the disadvantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Academic 1

I think it is mostly the risk of over-standardizing and feeling too safe. For example, companies that face strong political influences might have to put political issues in the five forces and not into the PESTLE analysis, which is always used in the background as some kind of basis. If you do not adapt the tools to a particular situation, then there is a huge risk of feeling safe, because of using tools but neglecting important aspects. On the other hand side, they always bare the risk that you prepare a decision by analyzing profoundly, by formulating too simple, etc. Moreover, forgetting to focus on the implementation and all the detailed work you have to do. Now I have done all the work and that is it! - Tools users often lack to achieve clear outcomes.

Question 17**Interviewer**

When looking at current strategy tools used in organizations, how would you assess their value in the future?

Academic 1

You could say that the importance is decreasing, but I would actually say that the opposite is true. As we all agree on the rapid industrial change in recent years, everything is more emergent and dynamic. But in particular or because of that, using tools in a regular interval can be really helpful to recognize and manage changes in order to become aware of the adaption of necessities or changed needs. So overall, I would say their value will increase.

Question 18**Interviewer**

How would you evaluate the impact of strategy tools?

Academic 1

Maybe tools are not a game changer, but when you manage to use tools efficiently, you will be able to identify and react to risks earlier. The tools might even bring a better solution than something that is just lying in front of you (e.g. annual reports, growth rates, etc.).

Question 19**Interviewer**

How can strategy tools enhance the efficiency of your organization's strategy process?

Academic 1

They can make a decision more systematic as well as the entire process/approach. They can help not to forget important aspects as I already said earlier. Tools can also show new routes, which an organization might have to go, and they might help to explain changes as well as impacts of changes in the organization by numbers. Those numbers are always helpful for people to understand, to prove and to improve.

Question 20**Interviewer**

What are the conditions for the successful utilization of strategy tools?

Academic 1

Having a standardized approach and also the willingness and the ability to adapt to specific circumstances; so not sticking too much to books and theories. Being able to interpret a difficult situation, in accordance with your particular organization, with all the circumstances, the influences of the industry and the market needs. People have to be willing to use them and have to be familiar with them. In my opinion this is the easiest part - maybe not for the older generations but for younger people. Tools are most efficient for people that are very open minded. They quickly learn how to use tools and what specific benefits they are able to generate.

Question 21**Interviewer**

What problems should future strategy tools aim to solve?

Academic 1

Implementation is the blind spot of strategy work, because researchers claim that it is not taught in business schools and therefore organizations lack to conduct it properly. I do not think so, as a lot of implementation is taught tool-wise in project management, etc. But maybe, it is the ability to systematize the strategy formulation and the breakdown of all strategic changes that need to be brought into action. It only needs some modifications to get a little bit further. The follow up after strategy formulation, a board decision, etc. - is the real hard work to do and there lies the blind spot for the future. Basically, all the dynamic problems and the turn rates in industries and markets have to be covered. That means: using the standardized tools regularly and trying to emphasize that they can be adapted (albeit they do not have to).

Question 22**Interviewer**

Do you have any more questions or is there something you would like to add?

Academic 1

It would be interesting to know, how to measure the impact of a strategy tool? Can you measure it besides asking people about their feeling and opinion, or could it be measured by asking how a company was able to grow before and after using a specific strategy tool? Tool-based decisions: Are they more efficient in terms of numbers and purchasing prices, or cost reductions? - Trying to get numbers in relation to their performance. What has been helpful about the tools you use? What were additional benefits and what did you find out after using a specific tool? What were the adaptations you made? - All in order to create a clear tool rating.

Interview – Academic 2 – A2**Question 1*****Interviewer***

What is your current position and area of responsibility within the organization?

Academic 2

I am a professor of management here at University X. Further, I am the chair of organization management and human resources. As a full time professor, I am on the one hand responsible for the teaching part, but on the other hand a large part of my job is to do research. Finally, I also have some administrative tasks as being the chair of this small department for example. In this specific department I am responsible for a couple of doctoral students and some programs that are related to the student exchange. Currently, we are planning to create a more powerful business chair and therefore we are trying to create a partnership with University Y.

Question 2***Interviewer***

How have you been involved in strategy work so far (role)?

Academic 2

Not really, even though I already worked on strategic topics. The main strategy experience comes from my teaching role at the University. Nevertheless, in my administrative function here at the University I can state that we rarely do true strategic work. I mean, before joining the University X I have been with the University Y. In this more business school type of University you have more strategic responsibilities in the sense that you are more involved in conceptualizing new programs for students, finding new ways for generating new revenues for the school, which is something you will rarely find in a public university world. Here, students will come to you regardless of whether your supply is really tailored to their needs. So, there is not really a big need for public universities to do actual strategy work. But, nevertheless, I guess that the university landscape is also changing in this regard and universities will be well advised to think more strategically in order to position themselves in the entire academic landscape. You can somehow feel the change when you listen to discussions among professors here, because there are already some ideas that are more strategically oriented e.g. how to position our school compared to our competitors (e.g. Universities with a high reputation like Frankfurt or Mannheim), how to sustain constant student income, or how to become more professional and up to date. When making our decisions it will be necessary to focus on our core competences, and we should not move towards fields where we might not be the right school or location for.

Questions 3***Interviewer***

What experiences do you have with strategy work?

Academic 2

I already participated in two smaller strategic projects. Both were focusing on digital transformation. How to implement a new digital infrastructure into a traditional industry organization? Currently, most projects focus on digitalization and this clearly makes sense, as everything is moving extremely fast. During the transformation I was located in a project team. I was more participating on the implementation side. The analysis and formulation or let us say the actual strategic planning process was done by higher tier executives, which was still interesting, as they gave us the guideline and we were the ones that had to make it happen. A lot of tools were applied, but me and my team did not really use strategy tools during the implementation phase. So hands-on, I have not really done much strategy work.

Questions 4**Interviewer**

What are in your view typical strategic problems? Please try to describe various typical problems that come to your mind.

Academic 2

Typical strategic problems...this is basically related to the question of how we would like to position ourselves against our competitors; what are our key resources; what are our areas of expertise? Let us adapt this to the university world. As already mentioned, when you look at universities then basic strategic questions are: what are our core competencies; in which areas can we attract students; in which areas can we attract research funds? These are highly strategic problems for a university, and this is also a big problem at our University, which is a very general university with the entire spectrum of different fields and subjects. So, do we want to play on all these fields or do we want focus our resources? We have some very successful clusters (business units) here in X e.g. in Physics we have a strong focus and a lot of resources are devoted to this faculty. But, this is a kind of tension that you face as a university on the one hand, and when you look at politics and the will of the government on the other you are expected to focus on education in various fields and to be more some kind of a generalist. Nevertheless, if you want to be good in research you are well advised to focus your resources on certain areas of expertise. This, for us, is a highly strategic question. Another example would be the positioning related to your competitors; who are your competitors? Are you really competing with private universities or rather public universities? What is the competition based on? Is it a competition where you want to get the best students possible or is it rather a competition related to the acquisition of research funds, or industry money for example. So, from my perspective the students will come anyway, which is probably not the biggest issue of a university, it is more about establishing a reputation, and from my understanding it is really difficult to position yourself based on teaching. I mean, how can you objectively evaluate the quality of teaching? At the end of the day the reputation of a university is based on its research excellence in the past and on its relations to the industry. Positioning is the key strategic problem of all types of organizations.

Questions 5**Interviewer**

How would you or should strategists/organizations attempt to solve such strategic projects? And do you or should they follow a significant process that guides the strategy work?

Academic 2

On paper the strategic management process is pretty straight forward - analyze your environment, analyze your strengths and weaknesses, formulate some goals, implement your strategy, etc. At least from my understanding strategy work and also implementing a strategy is far from straight forward. It is more like an iterative process; it is more like trying something where you have a lot of political processes involved. So, if you say: there is a bunch of people who are devoting some time and energy to formalize a nice strategy, and then the strategy will be implemented through middle managers. This is of course one way, but this view on strategy work might be too simplistic. So, from my understanding, if you look at the entire strategy process, the biggest issue is the correct implementation. In many cases you have a gap between what is intended and what is actually implemented. This puts more emphasis on middle managers who are expected to implement the strategic ideas that have been developed through a specialized unit or developed by the top management. I am not sure whether you can transfer all this to the university landscape, but there are probably some strategic ideas that the presidents of universities are looking at. Nowadays, the faculties stand for separate business units and each faculty has at least some ideas of how their strategy should look like without contradicting the overarching strategy of the entire university. From my perspective strategy is about coherence, it is about having a coherent plan, it is about trying to say what do we do and also what we do not do. Should organizations follow a specific process? This clearly depends on your problem. I mean we are living in a very complex world and strategy is obviously a very complex issue. You want to foresee the future of your organization for next couple of years and therefore you need a lot of information to do that. People have a bounded rationality and only limited cognitive capacities to capture all these influences, all these possibilities, and all these interrelated aspects that may actually influence the path of your organization. It is a very difficult process and the whole idea of using strategy tools, and I guess we will come back to this later, should at least try to simplify the strategy work for actual practitioners. The tools may help you to regulate uncertainty, but from my perspective I would not recommend to follow any pre-specified process. The decision to follow a certain path probably depends more on your specific situation or context, it may also depend on power distribution within your organization - who to involve in this process and at which stage should we involve the suitable people? To sum up, strategic issues are mostly too complex to have one best way to address this issue.

Questions 6*Interviewer*

How would you describe strategy tools?

Academic 2

As already mentioned, in my eyes strategy tools help you to make some very complex issues more manageable. These tools can be used to structure a problem, to structure your thinking, to structure the entire process so to say. They help you to solve your problem in a clear and visible way in order to improve your ability to come up with a solution or decision on a certain problem. Yes, it is about the structuring of very complex issues. They are an approach to help people to deal with bounded rationality, to deal with complexity, and this is probably the main function of strategy tools. All the tools you have listed are tools that you can easily criticize for being over-simplistic, but nevertheless they have a function and they are all usable. They are all used by practitioners because they are simplistic. In grasping such a complex problem, like a strategy, it can be very

difficult to overgeneralize in order to reach a solution in various different industry settings, or service settings, or even university settings. The tools are probably something that is highly dependent on each practitioner's interpretation. What is the function for me as someone who wants to understand what the best strategy will be for my organization? And probably the interpretation of such strategy tools, and their ability to help me to come up with a decent strategy, most likely differs from person to person. A tool is more something heuristic that helps you to have an idea that matters when you look at a problem, and it provides you with some potential avenues of how to proceed. At the end of the day how you use such tools will be dependent on your specific problem, on your specific context, and your specific environment.

Questions 7

Interviewer

Which of the following strategy tools do you know?

Academic 2

SWOT - yes; KSF - yes; Core Competencies - yes; Scenario Planning - yes; Value Chain - yes; Five Forces - yes; VRIO - yes; ILC - yes; PESTLE - no; Portfolio Matrices - yes; Generic Strategies - yes; Strategic Groups - no; Ansoff - yes; Bowman - no; Ashridge - no; Blue Ocean - yes

Questions 8

Interviewer

Are you familiar with the terms 'strategizing' or 'strategy-as-practice'? What meaning do you associate to them?

Academic 2

More or less, at least from my point of view, these terms are somewhat interchangeable. When I think of both terms, I probably think about - what are activities that managers carry out while formulating or implementing a strategy. It is more about a more basic level of doing strategy work, and not those fancy top management ideas on how to formulate a great strategy that is based on gut feeling. It is more about the activities that are related to the actual formulation and implementation processes that happens in organizations. From a research perspective, it is a very qualitative oriented field, as it is more about getting a better understanding of what people actually do, what they feel about strategy, and what their perceptions are related to strategy. It is, let us say, an opposite direction to the more mainstream American focused research on strategy, which is at a more abstract level, and the stream of strategy-as-practice is probably the European way of perceiving strategy.

Questions 9

Interviewer

In what situation should strategists/organizations use strategy tools to conduct their strategy work? – Please also explain how.

Academic 2

As already stated, these tools can help you to structure complex issues. It might be helpful if you start your environmental analysis based on tools, as it is always hard to find a starting point. But the main part for using

these tools is about gathering information, because the better your informatory basis, the better the decisions will be that are related to your strategy. But if you have gathered all the information, all the statistics, all the possible trends that may emerge, you will need to find a way to come up with one of the tools (e.g. scenario planning) to simplify the whole possibilities that may emerge in the future. So, I guess the tools are helpful to see some directions or scenarios where a market may develop into, which is also extremely nice to get people on the same page. When you sit with your colleagues from different functional areas, when you talk to people from the marketing department, when you talk with your engineers, when you talk to people from the sales department, in order to get a common understanding of the strategic issues you are facing. For this purpose, I believe that such instruments, again might be too over simplistic, but nevertheless help you to visualize your problem. In a way, they enable you to visualize future developments etc. For these matters, the tools are really perfect.

Questions 10a

Interviewer

The strategic management process is oftentimes divided into four stages – analysis, formulation, implementation, and evaluation and control. In what phase should strategists/organizations most frequently use strategy tools?

Academic 2

In my view, and this is related to my earlier answer, they are most helpful in the early phases. I mean, the time you spend formulating a strategy, the more information you have gathered, etc. and the further you are in this process the clearer the picture probably gets. These tools are helpful in a situation when the future is a bit foggy, when you are unsure about the different possibilities in a situation where most of the information is particularly unstructured. In these instances, the tools can be helpful to map the key problems, the key themes that have emerged during the strategy process. So, in early stages these tools might be very helpful to structure the problem, and in the later stages they may rather help to get people on board. Strategy implementation also requires the willingness of people! So, if you want to implement a strategy, you have to convince people. You have to convince your middle managers, you have to convince people with a closer contact to the actual problem, which are people at a lower level who are in contact with the customer. These are the people you have to involve in early stages to get their impression of a problem, but you also have to convince these people in later stages in order to show them that it is actually a good idea to follow a certain strategy.

Questions 10b

Interviewer

When looking at the list again, during what phase would you typically use the following tools?

Academic 2

SWOT - A, F; KSF - A, F; Core Competencies - A, F; Scenario Planning - A, F, I; Value Chain - A; Five Forces - A; VRIO - A; ILC - A, F; PESTLE - no; Portfolio Matrices - A, F, I, E; Generic Strategies - F; Strategic Groups - no; Ansoff - A, F; Bowman - no; Ashridge - no; Blue Ocean - F, I

Questions 11***Interviewer***

Referring to a specific strategic problem, which strategy tool has particularly supported you/your organization the most/least?

Academic 2

Alright, when I look at these tools from a teaching perspective I would say that most of them in isolation are not that helpful. For example, if you do Porter's Five Forces analysis it can be a very nice way of looking at your environment, of looking at competitors, of looking at new market entries, of looking at potential products/services or innovations that substitute your existing technologies, etc. Such a tool can be very helpful to get a better understanding of your environment, but I guess without looking or adopting a resource-based perspective by looking at your internal resources they can also be misleading. From my point of view, when you at look at the market-based view and resourced-based view you have more or less two complementing perspectives, and it is not about the question whether we should do one or not the other. It is something that is interrelated. So, when you look at these tools you can clearly state that they are helpful, but blindly relying on them while conducting strategy work will not lead you anywhere. MOST – I would say the SWOT, Scenario Planning, and the Portfolio Matrices, as they cover most of the topics that need to be considered while undertaking strategy work. LEAST - I do not have a practical example, but in a real industry environment I think Porter's tools are rather limited in their function. You apply these techniques anyway, even if you do not name them Porter's Five Forces or the Generic Strategy Model. Overall, one further function of these tools is to provide people with a certain sensitivity, which is important to come up with a decent strategy. The simple tools like the SWOT are inevitable. The more complex tools are sometimes problematic, as not all of them lead you to a vital answer or an answer you might be looking for. Other concepts, like the portfolio matrices are maybe not that fundamental, but they can be extremely helpful to visualize your different activities, your market position, and of course it can be nice to get an overview of your portfolio. But if you look at the underlying assumptions such as the learning curve, which is the foundation for the market share axis, you will immediately find out that it is not applicable for every industry. The basic idea is always to get or to gather information. The better your information, the more reliable your strategic decisions will be. You have to think about your strategy tool kit and you should use the tools in the specific situation and context where it works best. People have their favorite tools, and this cannot be changed. I prefer tools that are not overly deterministic in their recommendations, which would already be a limitation.

Questions 12***Interviewer***

How do you appraise the success and workload of the strategy tools outlined below, and how would you rate their efficiency?

Academic 2

I take the example of the SWOT analysis. It is always a trade-off between the quality of information and your costs of searching. Once you have gathered a certain amount of information about the environment, about competitors, etc. you may come to the conclusion where you say: okay, that is fine for me. You will not or will never come up with a perfect informatory basis to an identified problem, but this also highly depends on your expectation level as well as your available resources. If you have a special research department you can devote more energy in scanning the environment for example. So, I would say, and this is closely related to the idea of what is your aspiration level - how much information can we actually handle? At a certain point, information will get too complex and decision makers cannot handle all these different ideas anymore. I think the tools are already successful when they were able to structure some parts of information for you, and up to this point I think it is worth using them. Of course, workload plays a huge role and here the simple tools usually take much less time, but this does not say that they are more efficient. It should be a good mix of both. This has clearly something to do with your expectation management. Overall, I would say that organizations should on the one hand search broadly to get all lot of information to improve their decision making, and on the other hand they of course need to be a little bit pragmatic. Do not over search! At some point it is simply enough.

Academic 2

SWOT - 5; KSF - 3; Core Competencies - 2; Scenario Planning - 5; Value Chain - 3; Five Forces - 2; VRIO - 2; ILC - 3; PESTLE - 0; Portfolio Matrices - 4; Generic Strategies - 3; Strategic Groups - 0; Ansoff - 3; Bowman - 0; Ashridge - 0; Blue Ocean - 3

Questions 13*Interviewer*

Did you or should strategists/organizations adapt the tools-in-use to the specific organizational context? Please provide examples.

Academic 2

Most tools are very general frameworks and they are helpful to look at key influences that may affect your success in certain markets, but you are actually right that most of them are adapted once in a while. So, I would say "yes" they are adapted to the specific organizational context. Many tools have been developed in less dynamic times. Today, we are already looking at Industry 4.0 where nothing is the same anymore, and here I think using such static frameworks without adaptation or an update will not lead you anywhere. You have to raise the awareness that most of these tools are rather developed for static industry landscapes and not for the very disruptive innovation cycles we are facing today. As a decision maker you have to weigh the results of the tools, and of course some of them need to be changed in order to fit to your specific context. It is not the ambition of these tools to come up with some sort of validated solution, but rather with results that enforce intuitive and action-based decision making. The most important part is the interpretation and when you think that adaptation is needed - then please adapt. But you should be careful, since most tools were developed to solve a certain strategic problem, and here you can make tremendous mistakes. So, you have to understand the problem first and then these tools support you to shed light on them. They force you to make your own assumptions. Organizations should always keep in mind what the underlying intentions and assumptions of

these tools are, but nevertheless the practitioners should use them to conduct a specific analysis that is applicable to their specific problem.

Questions 14

Interviewer

To what extent are strategy tools used to reach a rational answer rather than post-rationalizing decisions that are already made?

Academic 2

It is probably a question that is related to the reality of strategy making. I guess when you look at organizations you can say, that their strategy is always guiding them on the question where to devote the resources (in which specific areas). This is always related to aspects of power. When you look at more service-oriented organizations, such as Beiersdorf or Nivea, you have obviously a lot power focus in the marketing department. When you look at more engineering focused organizations, they rather have their power focus on the research and development department. When you formulate your strategy, you have to make various decisions like: what will be my products in the future? how do we spend our R&D budget? etc. These are questions that are closely related to the power focus of organizations. So, if you change your strategy, or if you want to focus your resources on different markets or different technologies - all these types of decisions will always lead to resistance among employees or conflicts among departments, but here a lot of post-rationalization can happen in order to justify these decisions. But from my perspective, I would not necessarily say that the answers to strategic problems are already decided at the start of the process, but nevertheless I clearly state that using tools is not really about finding rational answers. The answers you will grasp are supportive - not more, not less. It is not about finding rational or optimal solutions, it is rather about finding solution that fit the aspiration level. Organizations do not search for perfect answers, they all have a certain aspiration level and this level helps them to balance the different interests between all stereotypes that are part of the entire process.

Questions 15

Interviewer

What are the advantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Academic 2

The tools help you to structure the initial problem that has been raised. You can use them to visualize complex problems, and they help people to deal with bounded rationality in order to deal with complexity. Most of them are simple to apply and they are a great starting point when you are trying to solve a strategic issue. Most, but not all of them, are easy to understand for any type of person that is confronted with them. They speed up decision making when applied properly.

Questions 16

Interviewer

What are the disadvantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Academic 2

Oversimplistic, sometimes too static, and not up to date. The results sometimes get too much attention, as people get the feeling that they have really achieved something. In many cases they raise another question, which is quite helpful, but people get highly frustrated as they were expecting something else. And lastly, it is hard to commit everyone in the organization to deliver the needed information. When have we reached a result? This question usually remains unanswered.

Questions 17**Interviewer**

When looking at current strategy tools used in your organization, how would you assess their value in the future?

Academic 2

When you look at markets nowadays, when you look at product life cycles, when you look at technological developments, then I guess the complexity of doing business is still increasing. So, when you keep this in mind, I guess the strategy tools that help you to get a better understanding and to structure complex issues will rather gain in importance instead of losing their influence.

Questions 18**Interviewer**

How would you evaluate the impact of strategy tools?

Academic 2

It is hard to answer this question for me, but I think it is highly dependent on the respective decision makers. If you did your studies in certain universities that emphasize the use of strategy tools, if you have a business school background as a decision maker, if you are familiar with these kinds of tools, then you will probably be more open to use these approaches. The impact extremely depends on your experience, on your background, and your general openness towards such tools, and of course this is also highly dependent on the acceptance within the organization itself. Without this, the impact will rather be limited.

Questions 19**Interviewer**

How can strategy tools enhance the efficiency of an organization's strategy process?

Academic 2

I have to guess. As tools help you to structure and to visualize complex problems with regard to your strategy I am sure that they also foster a sharp-mental model among all employees. You will have the same picture in mind when you think about or when you develop a vision in order to decide where you want to go with the entire organization. In this regard, these tools might be helpful to foster this shared understanding of certain issues. If everyone has a common understanding of the tools you might have raised the efficiency of your strategy process already.

Questions 20***Interviewer***

What are the conditions for the successful utilization of strategy tools?

Academic 2

Acceptance is important, which is strongly connected to your background, but if you apply tools everyone involved should be committed. Also, a realistic view of what the true function of such tools is would be needed. If you are too naive in using such tools, if you believe that these tools will do the work for you, it will probably not work out that well. Never believe in their results! Everything should be weighed, evaluated, and proven before you decide to go on. Again, a realistic perception of the applicability of these tools would be helpful in order to use them to structure your problem. Tools simplify issues and you have to be aware of that.

Questions 21***Interviewer***

What problems should future strategy tools aim to solve?

Academic 2

I think the tools work quite well as they are, but it is rather depending on the people and the decision-making processes. The reasons why strategy making takes that long are mostly political. You have to involve different people, you have to involve the workers council or whoever, and I think these are the main factors that may impede faster strategy making. But I think this issue is not related to the tools. You have to decide on your own as an organization, whether you have gathered a sufficient amount of information. For me, it is hard to formulate a wish of how they should change. How can you make them more dynamic? How could they be improved? They should maybe be more open to very different types of content, and I think the content that you can currently implement into these tools is very limited. In a way they should be more open for wider interpretation like the newest approaches, e.g. Lean Start-Up, Business Model Canvas, etc..

Questions 22***Interviewer***

Do you have any more questions or is there something you would like to add?

Academic 2

I hope my view as a rather inexperienced practitioner was still valuable, but I guess you can work with the results. Good luck for the rest of your work!

Interview – Academic 3 – A3**Question 1***Interviewer*

What is your current position and area of responsibility within the organization?

Academic 3

My career is a bit different to the usual career of an academic, because I am a practitioner who got into academia, not an academic who doubles in practice. So, the first twenty years of my working life did not really go anywhere near academia. In terms of that I might be a bit different. Currently, I am senior visiting fellow at University X and at University Y in the Netherlands I am rather senior lecturer. But basically, I represent both sides. So, in consulting, I am the CEO of a company called Consultancy X and in terms of academia I basically have the roles I already explained to you, but I also teach at other business schools in other countries. My taught modules are usually strategic management, marketing and international business.

Question 2*Interviewer*

How have you been involved in strategy work so far? What have been your roles?

Academic 3

Well I think about two things. When I think about consulting projects, strategy is part of what my business does. We do take people through a quite classical strategy process, which of course is based on the sort of work I do at the universities too. So, I do a lot classical strategy work with clients, and in terms strategy teaching I normally stand in front of various marketing post graduates and strategy post graduates, but the major thing I do is full-time and executive MBA strategy.

Questions 3*Interviewer*

What experiences do you have with strategy work?

Academic 3

If we go back to my beginnings, then strategy was all about being very sharp entrepreneurs. So basically, having developed a relatively small company into a big multinational company and launching it in Germany, Netherlands, as well as in the UK. Strategy in those times was all about having a gut feel for risk taking and opportunities. But strategy over the last ten years has very much developed from looking at where the business was and realizing it wasn't going anywhere very well, which is why clients asked me to become involved, and therefore using a sort of strategy process in order to try and develop the business. After that micro strategies came apart in order to develop more department-based strategies. Here I was rather concerned with the business unit as opposed to corporate units so to speak. But from that point on my strategy teaching was absolutely focused on people being able to appreciate theory and then find a home to practice it. I never hide behind the theory at all. What I do hear a lot at universities is: we are going to teach you theory, but we also going to teach you to apply the theory. And that for instance, I think, is very important and crucial for your topic as well. And

then finally, I also work with my clients. There we are very much looking at - what is your current situation, what are the challenges and opportunities, and where do you have to focus and concentrate. But interestingly, if I work with many of my clients who have never been near a business school, I am introducing them to the classic models of Porter or Mintzberg etc. They might be old hats for academics, but when you go through them with people running their own businesses they find them hugely useful. So, I am rather not at the smart school of strategy thinking, which says that everything that is more than ten years old must be stupid.

Questions 4

Interviewer

What are in your view typical strategic problems? Please describe at least three typical problems.

Academic 3

If I look at my company, we are quite a focused company; because it is all about companies focusing on their customers. So, if someone came to me and said, we really need you to help us on our strategy, but to be honest we do not care if our customers are not satisfied as we are just looking at how to make some money, which people often do, then I would not work with them. We are rather working with organization that want to be or are customer focused. But the sort of issues, that they face are very much different from each other. I've got an organization, which is in the oil and gas industry. It was doing fantastically, it is still doing okay, but it is suffering from the oil price and not because it has anything to do with mining oil. In that case the clients of the company are struggling, as they find themselves with 50% less revenue than they had two years ago. So, there my strategy is about thinking - what is it about your business that could be developed outside your core industry, which is oil and gas? Other clients basically come to me and say: we haven't had the chance to think strategically for years and when we do we sit around as a management team and get absolutely nowhere. So, in many cases the biggest issue is the question: can we go through a process? Because that process might really help us to get an understanding of some of our strategic issues that we are facing every day. What I often say to students, when I am teaching them strategy is: these models we are talking to you about are not going to solve your company's problems, but they might help you to identify them and then to identify what to do about them. Tools deliver a structure to your thinking. So, in many cases that is what clients come to. It is not necessarily some catastrophe that has befallen them, because then you are starting to look much more for some sort of turn around strategies. But really, in classical strategy making it is all about: we need to have a structure, because either we have grown too quickly, or we are not growing enough, or we are not quite sure what is going on out there, or even we are not sure what makes us different.

Question 5

Interviewer

How would you or should strategists/organizations attempt to solve such strategic projects? And do you or should they follow a significant process that guides the strategy work?

Academic 3

I take clients through a process, but what I try to do is getting them to solve the issues themselves. So, I had clients for whom I did classical consulting for. They came up with issues, but they did not know what they were actually concerned about. They did know that something went wrong but narrowing it down to one significant problem was mostly impossible. That is how most of my classical strategic consulting projects started, where my job was to make sense of everything, and then to give them pathways and recommendations. But with most of my clients, that was usually not the case. My job was/is rather to get them to discover where they need to go, and for them to do something about it, because otherwise I discovered the solution (which is what they paid me for) but it was none of their ideas that solved the problem. So, mostly these clients were right where they are in the beginning after I discovered the solution for them, but they were simply not able to execute it. Solving strategic problems should start with the idea of getting them, e.g. clients, board members, CXOs, to discover what the issues are and what they should do about them. I have become the sort of educator and the conductor.

Question 6**Interviewer**

How would you describe strategy tools?

Academic 3

Well, for me a strategy tool is a tool to help managers to identify issues and solutions, which is the simplest way looking at them.

Question 7**Interviewer**

Which of the following strategy tools do you know?

Academic 3

SWOT - yes; KSF - yes; Core Competences - yes; Scenario Planning - yes; Value Chain - yes; Porter's Five Forces - yes; VRIO - yes; ILC - yes; PESTLE - yes; Portfolio - yes; Generic Strategies - yes; Strategic Groups - yes; Ansoff - yes; Bowman - yes; Ashridge - yes; Blue Ocean - yes; Kotler Product Marketing Model - yes (but I used it for strategic work, even though it is coming from another discipline); Critical Success Factors Ranking btw. Competitors (competitive scoring model) - yes (you look at 5 CSFs, you score your company, and then your top two competitors, which was very useful in practice as most of my clients scored themselves much higher than their closest competitors, which was usually a bit overestimated)

Question 8**Interviewer**

Are you familiar with the terms 'strategizing' or 'strategy-as-practice'? What meaning do you associate to them?

Academic 3

Not really heard of the research related to them. Strategizing is not something I have really heard of, but for strategy-as-practice I can say, that I actually have used the term, but everything that I basically do is using strategy round about practice. The meaning of both terms at the end of the day is probably different in the two worlds you are looking at. Academics do not actually do that much strategizing as they mostly teach and research strategy from a theoretical point of view. For me strategy-as-practice is the initial idea strategy work in companies. Why do business schools teach strategy? They want to teach students how to solve a strategic problem in the practical world. Strategy should always be practice driven otherwise there is no point behind it.

Question 9**Interviewer**

In what situation should strategists/organizations use strategy tools to conduct their strategy work? - Please also explain how.

Academic 3

Probably the most basic thing to say is: It is not about the question - in what situation should organizations use these - the answer is simple - they should use these! What most academics think is, but also of course practitioners, I have to use to use a strategy tool because I am in a situation. The reality is - it is not about the question in what situation should strategists or organizations use strategy tools. It should be rather clear that organizations should use strategy tools to conduct their strategy work in any case or let us say situation.

Question 10a**Interviewer**

The strategic management process is oftentimes divided into four stages - analysis, formulation, implementation, and evaluation and control. In what phase should strategists/organizations most frequently use strategy tools?

Academic 3

First of all, I would like to add something. Between analysis and formulation, I would put reflection, because if I do a strategic analysis day with a client we'll actually maybe not go anywhere near formulation until a week or two later. So, I think the reflection becomes pretty important there. But I would probably most frequently use tools in analysis and formulation much more than in implementation, evaluation and control. If I got as far as strategy formulation with clients then I will spend a day with them to turn those pre-formulated strategies into actual proper objectives and action plans, but then I will typically leave them to get on with it.

Question 10b**Interviewer**

When looking at the list again, during what phase would you typically use the following tools?

Academic 3

SWOT - A, F; KSF - A, F, I; Core Competences - A; Scenario Planning - F; Value Chain - A, F, I; Five Forces - A, F; VRIO - A, F, I; ILC - A, F; PESTLE - A; Portfolio - A, F; Generic Strategies - F, I; Strategic Groups - A, F; Ansoff - F, I; Bowman - F, I; Ashridge - A, F, I, E; Blue Ocean - A, F, I; Kotler - A, F, I; CSF - A, F

In my view, you can hardly find tools for implementation, and evaluation and control or at least I do not know them, but evaluation should basically be connected to all of them because otherwise you cannot be sure whether you did it right or wrong. The only tool that comes to my mind might be the balanced scorecard, but whether this is a fit I am not so sure.

Question 11**Interviewer**

Referring to a specific strategic problem, which strategy tool has particularly supported you/your organization the most/least?

Academic 3

MOST- That is an interesting question, because the SWOT sits on the bridge between analysis and formulation. If you use this tool in a meaningful way it is for sure the most powerful or useful tool, because it becomes a discipline summary of the issues and is also the disciplined start-off point for the strategies. Whereas most of the other ones you can pigeonhole the meaning as you can put them in one box or another box, but SWOT analysis covers loads of boxes. LEAST - I am not sure whether I can describe any of the tools from your list as misleading or useless, but maybe the value chain. I have mixed views on the model. It is more difficult to use it with service organization than the typical manufacturing organizations, and people tend to get a bit tired when they have to apply it. It does not really inspire people, as it is too time consuming and you cannot see the sense behind it right from the start. I still use it, but I would say it is not exceptional.

Question 12**Interviewer**

How do you appraise the success and workload of the strategy tools outlined below, and how would you rate their efficiency?

Academic 3

Most of them are pretty useful and their workload is usually worthwhile doing. I like connecting success to workload or let us say time invested to achieve a value, but when it comes to rapid industries people rather see them as a distraction. Scoring them is quite interesting, because I never thought about their efficiency that much. For me all of them have been highly efficient. Of course, this also depends on the project you are facing.

SWOT - 5; KSF - 4; Core Competences - 3; Scenario Planning - 3; Value Chain - 2; Five Forces - 4; VRIO - 4; ILC - 3; PESTLE - 4; Portfolio - 3; Generic Strategies - 4; Strategic Groups - 3; Ansoff - 4; Bowman - 4; Ashridge - 3; Blue Ocean - 3; Kotler - 4; CSF - 4

Question 13**Interviewer**

Did you or should strategists/organizations adapt the tools-in-use to the specific organizational context? Please provide examples.

Academic 3

Yes, I absolutely think that you have to adapt the one or the other. For example, I might be working with a client on the Five Forces and I ask them is there a big deal about suppliers here? They probably say: no, not really. Do you think there is going to be a threat of substitution? And then the might also say: no. If we feel that is reasonable we might turn the Five Forces into three forces. VRIO for instance, which I have often used with my clients, for sure needs some sort of adaptation. What we quite often do is to amalgamate it with the core competences analysis. So, it is more about amalgamating models together. For example, if I am teaching or working with clients on marketing strategy I will not use the ILC, but I use the product life cycle to create different marketing mixes for each stage of the life cycle. That is what I meant with amalgamating tools. I also try to include this in my teaching as well. It is not so much adapting the tools, but actually saying these tools really work much better if we have two or three running together.

Question 14**Interviewer**

To what extent are strategy tools used to reach a rational answer rather than post-rationalizing decisions that are already made?

Academic 3

Yes, I have seen that. When we go down that route then you have to bring in some strategy models, which you haven't got down on your list at all. These are models like the cultural web and so on. There are for sure situations, where you get that sort of post-rationalizing decisions. If you are brought in to use a tool to support that, then actually a good strategist will sit down with the manager who is asking you to do this. That experienced strategist is the one that might say to the manager: could we have a talk about why you really want this to be done? Because ultimately using a significant tool is to justify a decision that they are probably not confident about. I am not a great fan of using tools to sort of post-rationalize something! I think they are much stronger in order to reach rational answers. What are you going to do? You are just going back and say here is the tool I have used, and you came up with a wrong strategy. The manager is going to say: no, we need this tool for our investors. A true strategist would say: Okay, then go and find somebody else to do it.

Question 15**Interviewer**

What are the advantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Academic 3

As I said before, they provide you with a pathway and a structure to reflect on what is going on outside and inside the business, and how can you bring these two together in terms of what the business should be doing in the future. So, it is very much a structure and a pathway.

Question 16***Interviewer***

What are the disadvantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Academic 3

Disadvantages are that they can be a bit cumbersome. Unless you are smart and reasonably flexible you can end up taking managers through this whole process, which sometimes leads to absolute nonsense, as they expect that the tools deliver true results instead of more questions. I think there is another disadvantage - they can be rather boring, and people might think that this is fine in theory but not in practice. But that is where you need to have the flexibility involved, so being able to pick and delete strategies even if you started down a pathway using them. Summarizing this, one could say that the tools are too static or the results they are delivering are too static.

Question 17***Interviewer***

When looking at current strategy tools used in organizations, how would you assess their value in the future?

Academic 3

I think that they will absolutely have a value in the future. If you think about these sorts of models, traditional ones, they are all ultimately based, like the Five Forces, on the competitive environment. So, the competitive environment might be changing. But if you look at what has happened to RIM and Nokia, for example, then I think it is pretty easy to use a tool like the Five Forces model, is not it? Such companies lost out by being out-innovated and out-technologized. What you have to do is - keep a clear understanding of how competition and how strategy is changing. In Porter's days you might be able to spend two years trying to develop a new strategy. Now it might be that you only spend two months doing that. So, the nature of competition changes and that does not mean that the models need to be thrown out. What you got to do is to add to them. You build on these, you adapt them, maybe you delete some of them, but I think where we have to be very careful is that they are not deleted by people to benefit their own research priorities. That is truly the danger.

Question 18***Interviewer***

How would you evaluate the impact of strategy tools?

Academic 3

On their own they have no impact at all. As tools to help managers to make decisions they might have an impact in terms of their facilitation skills, but they do not change things. Strategy tools do not change things! They help managers to look at what needs changing and what they can possibly do with an issue that has been identified.

Question 19**Interviewer**

How can strategy tools enhance the efficiency of your organization's strategy process?

Academic 3

I think the key is, that without these tools it is unlikely that you will have an efficient strategy process, because you will not really know where to look or how to think. That is not necessarily a bad thing. Let me give you an example. When I was developing my first company in the sort of late 1970s, 80s, and early 90s - it was fairly in the last two years that we actually understood these things called strategy tools, but we did okay. So, I think, if you are a fantastically entrepreneurial manager or business you might be able to get through without all these things. If you are an ordinary business or a business that has reached some sort of maturity, then you have to use these strategy tools, because otherwise you just do not know where to go. To translate all this, it is more or less the acceptance of the tools so to say. But the whole thing is, businesses or let us say managers must use something to structure their work and I think this what tools are able to deliver.

Question 20**Interviewer**

What are the conditions for the successful utilization of strategy tools?

Academic 3

You need the people to understand the tools, you need them to buy into the use of the tools, and in many cases, you need them to have a facilitator who understands the concept behind the tools and the practice behind applying them.

Question 21**Interviewer**

What problems should future strategy tools aim to solve?

Academic 3

I think they need to be faster, they certainly need to understand the dynamism within markets, and instead of new entrants we might be replacing it with disruptive innovators. So, we need to be able to understand how fast things change. Therefore, I think the tools need to be adaptable and bring competition up to 2015, which means you cannot simply apply them in the old-fashioned way without thinking about the turbulent movements of our industries we are working in.

Questions 22**Interviewer**

Do you have any more questions or is there something you would like to add?

Academic 3

The only thing I would add is culture. When I teach strategy, I talk a lot about culture and purpose. So, there is nothing in here about culture, purpose, vision, values - so at least from my perspective this should be included. If you think about it - an organization is only as good as its culture, and I do not think you got anything in there about that. I know you could probably look at it in terms of core competencies analysis and so on, but I think that is missing.

Interview – Academic 4 – A4**Question 1*****Interviewer***

What is your current position and area of responsibility within the organization?

Academic 4

I am a senior lecturer at University X. I teach strategic management for the past 15 years and I've also been involved in consulting, marketing and strategy within the corporate world. Of course, I also teach at University Y, for about 5 years now. At this University I also teach strategic management in the MSc program. I think that is about it.

Question 2***Interviewer***

How have you been involved in strategy work so far? What have been your roles?

Academic 4

In the past I served at high level management positions in different companies that come from the industry, where I spent around 15 years practicing. Thereon I started my academic career. While on this career I have started two companies of my own, one in the wholesale of fertilizers and chemicals, and the second one in operational training. Of course, now, as I said before, I am primarily involved in an academic role – teaching strategy.

Question 3***Interviewer***

What experiences do you have with strategy work?

Academic 4

Over the years I was involved in the development of the strategic plans of the companies I was working for and also the companies I have started. In the same context I contributed and developed action/project plans as part of my consulting job.

Question 4***Interviewer***

What are in your view typical strategic problems? Please describe at least three typical problems.

Academic 4

Strategic processes and strategic problems are two different things, but nevertheless they are also related. Every company needs to go through the strategic management process, because it creates the opportunity to develop a very good understanding of the positioning in an industry, and at the same time a very good understanding of what the opportunities for a company are. In this context, the process contributes to the development of strategy, which is quite important for a company's growth or let us say profitability that should come with it.

In terms of strategic problems, I can say, that every company is facing them on the macro and micro economic level. Today, most companies focus on an industry level, but strategic problems may also have to do with the company itself and of course also with what is happening in the external environment, looking at the industry context, looking at the value chain and so on.

Question 5

Interviewer

How would you or should strategists/organizations attempt to solve such strategic projects? And do you or should they follow a significant process that guides the strategy work?

Academic 4

I think it is a combination. From one side strategy is emergent, but from the other side you could say it is a planned process. It is not one or the other, but in real life it is definitely a combination. When you proceed to develop a strategic plan, it is a life-document, and at any point in time there are some elements that you have to abandon - primarily because of environmental changes. There are also some elements you have to add to your strategic initiatives and of course this give and take results in the final strategy that you will be implementing at the point in time. It is not a document that you devise and then you say: I now have a strategic plan and follow it, because apparently you need to be able to adapt to all the changes in the environment.

Question 6

Interviewer

How would you describe strategy tools?

Academic 4

A strategy tool is something that you use to contribute to the strategic management process. This usually is related to environmental analysis, whether it is at the macro or micro level, but certainly it may also have to do with the stage of strategy development or formulation. These tools can help you to build a framework and to discuss certain strategic problems/issues.

Question 7

Interviewer

Which of the following strategy tools do you know?

Academic 4

SWOT/TOWS - yes; KSF - yes; Core Competences - yes; Scenario Planning - yes; Value Chain - yes; Five Forces - yes; VRIO - yes; ILC - yes; PESTLE - yes; Portfolio Matrices - yes; Strategic Groups - yes; Ansoff - yes; Bowman - yes; Ashridge - yes; Blue Ocean - yes; Business Model Canvas - yes - We use it primarily for start-ups

Question 8

Interviewer

Are you familiar with the terms 'strategizing' or 'strategy-as-practice'? What meaning do you associate to them?

Academic 4

The generic definition of strategizing would be: I develop a plan to achieve some specific goals and, in that case, some strategic objectives. Strategy-as-practice means: taking the strategy elements and applying the theoretical concepts in a practical context. - Yes, I have heard of both terms.

Question 9**Interviewer**

In what situation should strategists/organizations use strategy tools to conduct their strategy work? - Please also explain how.

Academic 4

I think, using strategy tools, maybe with a few exceptions, is absolutely necessary. All of them are extremely useful for the strategic management process. Of course, you apply them at different stages of the process, but I think that each one can contribute differently in strategy development. A significant situation is hard to find, I think they should be used in every situation. Strategy work becomes more touchable and visualized when using these tools. In a way, I think their communicative power is outstanding. Maybe this would be the situation, when you need to build a discussion around a problem.

Question 10a**Interviewer**

The strategic management process is oftentimes divided into four stages - analysis, formulation, implementation, and evaluation and control. In what phase should strategists/organizations most frequently use strategy tools?

Academic 4

They are definitely used in all phases, but when you look back at the most common tools, I would say they are primarily used in strategy analysis and some of them are used in strategy development (or formulation). Interestingly enough, there are not so many tools available in the other two stages of the process.

Question 10b**Interviewer**

When looking at the list again, during what phase would you typically use the following tools?

Academic 4

SWOT - A; KSF - A; Core Competences - A; Scenario Planning - A; Value Chain - A; Five Forces - A; VRIO - A; ILC - A; PESTLE - A; Portfolio Matrices - F; Generic Strategies - F; Strategic Groups - A; Ansoff - F; Bowman - no; Corporate Parenting - F; Blue Ocean - F; Business Model Canvas - A, F

Question 11**Interviewer**

Referring to a specific strategic problem, which strategy tool has particularly supported you/your organization the most/least?

Academic 4

MOST - Frankly, I cannot tell you which tool has helped me the most, but I can tell you which ones have been extremely helpful. One tool was for sure the business model canvas. It has been extremely helpful in the formulation stage where the existing strategy was reevaluated, and continually based on this evaluation strategic decisions were taken. The Five Forces analysis, when performed properly, can be extremely insightful. Not so much in the context of going through the classical checklist that tells you something about industry attractiveness, but mostly in identifying the implications and basically the actions you could take based on the findings of the model. In a sense trying to reshape the industry and defining the rules of competitors that play in this entire game. These results become extremely interesting and you basically use the findings of the Five Forces analysis to step into strategy formulation - in a word the pre-stage. LEAST - I have to tell you that it depends on how you use these tools. From my practical experience I very often see companies that use these tools in a very static way. They for example perform the PESTLE analysis and they are simply happy to have a great checklist for figuring out what the trends and strategic implications are, while looking at the context of political, economic factors etc. But interestingly enough, what I see very often, that companies leave it there. Whereas the interesting strategic part of PESTLE analysis would be to develop scenarios. Sitting back and agree on which scenarios we think will happen, but at the top management level this very often is not happening. Based on the scenario we have agreed on, it will determine a lot of our future strategic decisions. Basically, I see a lot of failures happen when people apply these tools. Most managers only go half the way. Most of the time corporates do not want to have lengthy processes and reports that take away a lot of their resources. Overall, I can say there was no most or least useful tool. You have to adjust them to the specific context you are facing and if you are not able to do this you are not the right person to apply them.

Question 12**Interviewer**

How do you appraise the success and workload of the strategy tools outlined below, and how would you rate their efficiency?

Academic 4

There is not necessarily a direct correlation between the use of strategic tools and outcomes, because there are another +100 parameters that may affect the outcomes, but usually you could say that the successful use of strategy tools will certainly contribute to better outcomes and attainment of strategic objectives.

SWOT - 4; KSF - 5; Core Competences - 3; Scenario Planning - 4; Value Chain - 4; Five Forces - 5; VRIO - 5; ILC - 5; PESTLE - 5; Portfolio Matrices - 3; Generic Strategies - 4; Strategic Groups - 4; Ansoff - 5; Bowman - 0; Corporate Parenting - 4; Blue Ocean - 4; Business Model - 5

Question 13**Interviewer**

Did you or should strategists/organizations adapt the tools-in-use to the specific organizational context? Please provide examples.

Academic 4

Usually not! I would say that overall most of these tools can be applied in different contexts and have a significant contribution. Of course, occasionally you can see an adaptation, but I have to say most of the times we haven't used a significant adaptation.

Question 14**Interviewer**

To what extent are strategy tools used to reach a rational answer rather than post-rationalizing decisions that are already made?

Academic 4

Both! Of course, the idea is not to use them for post-rationalization, but the truth is that it happens quite frequently. At least I have seen it happen even though this should in reality not be the case. What happens pretty often is that decisions are taken and then strategists go into the aftermath with a tool to build a convincing case for the board of directors.

Question 15**Interviewer**

What are the advantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Academic 4

You develop a much better understanding of the situation. You are looking at tools that you use for the external environmental analysis, with them you develop a much better understanding of what is happening on e.g. the country level. If we are looking at the macro side - they rather guide ourselves to what is happening at the industry level. When applied properly, tools can also contribute to a better coordination among top management. Tools help to prioritize and then it becomes a matter of agreeing in order to pursue a strategy. You use the tools to agree on some specific elements that are critical for strategy development and at the same time you are agreeing on expected future scenarios. In a way tools can also help to raise questions in order to predict future outcomes, and to get closer to the desired results. Tools lead to communication and therefore to agreements.

Question 16**Interviewer**

What are the disadvantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Academic 4

Well, when used properly using strategy tools can be a very timely process. What is often seen is that managers resist in getting involved in such a process as they consider it as rather not useful. Therefore, it is quite important to convince them that tactics, where they may allocate much more time, are as important as the strategy development process which is basically the one that should determine the tactics. Sometimes this is simply not that easy to sell to managers. Generally, a lot of managers resist against the use of strategy tools, because they

simply belief that developing a strategic plan can grow up to be a liability in the context that it determines what the organization will do and how it should do it, and they cannot see the dynamic nature it should have. It takes a lot of time to develop the acceptance for the tools, as they only have limited outcomes for companies. What I see in training a lot, is that managers do not have an understanding of what strategy is and how strategy tools could be useful for an organization, or how they should try to involve them in the process.

Question 17***Interviewer***

When looking at current strategy tools used in organizations, how would you assess their value in the future?

Academic 4

I do not think they going to become redundant. Most of them will be around, but maybe they are going to be adapted. If you look at the Five Forces, it is been here for more than 30+ years. Of course, Porter rewrote his article, but (you know) taking into account some developments and trying to adjust it (the model) to make it more relevant is a common process in all disciplines. Generally, I think that all of them will still have their supporters and they will definitely be around.

Question 18***Interviewer***

How would you evaluate the impact of strategy tools?

Academic 4

I think the impact is great! The reason is that they basically provide the organization with the ability to see the whole picture or let us say to see a good part of the whole picture. Seeing this picture is critical in order to be able to take strategic decisions.

Question 19***Interviewer***

How can strategy tools enhance the efficiency of your organization's strategy process?

Academic 4

A critical element for enhancing their efficiency is definitely the proper application and to allocate adequate time, which very often does not happen, and trying to involve more people that are relevant, so that we can create better insights on the implications of all the information we collect from applying the tools.

Question 20***Interviewer***

What are the conditions for the successful utilization of strategy tools?

Academic 4

The people involved in strategy work are by all means responsible for the successful utilization of strategy tools. What I learned from practice is that you have to make sure that all people involved in your strategy process, even the technicians or engineers, accept the tools and frameworks you want to use to solve strategic

tasks. Especially these people do not see that much value in the tools, but you need these people and you need their creative contribution to bring the insights to life. Mostly, this was not happening. Having said that, I also think that the divergent group of managers should participate in the decision-making process even in cases they are not aware of the topics that are addressed at the point in time. In most of the cases they will be the ones that are going to be asked to implement strategy, without knowing every technical detail. Of course, strategic managers would rather like to focus on the formulation stage only, but they are also very critical factors for the successful implementation.

Question 21***Interviewer***

What problems should future strategy tools aim to solve?

Academic 4

I think it is quite interesting that most tools that are currently used are related to the analysis stage and that also only a few of them are directly related to the formulation stage. Interestingly we have two other stages where we do not see tools being used at all. This might be something interesting to research in the future: why do not we use particular tools for implementation and evaluation and control, and which tools could be useful within these two stages?

Question 22***Interviewer***

Do you have any more questions or is there something you would like to add?

Academic 4

Well, your questions are covering most of the information you need to capture and right now I cannot see any additional questions that could improve your insights. Once you have finished your work I would be more than happy to receive a copy of your findings.

Interview – Academic 5 – A5**Question 1*****Interviewer***

What is your current position and area of responsibility within the organization?

Academic 5

Currently, I am an assistant professor at University X and I basically teach three different courses here. This is mostly international management, international business and strategic management. Research wise I am more focusing on informal networks and informal institutions, which comes from the background of international business studies. The field is rather new, I would say. There would be Mike Peng, for example, who did lots of research in the field of informal institutions. In the first place, it is not a topic that is closely related to strategic management, but of course somehow it is. Informal institutions can be described as values, norms and culture differences etc. I actually come from the background of cross-cultural management, but this institutional view became a pillar in strategic management because of/or according to the research of Peng.

Question 2***Interviewer***

How have you been involved in strategy work so far? What have been your roles?

Academic 5

First of all, this is what I do here - I am teaching strategy. Before that, I was working for Company X for about 5 years - in Japan, Korea and finally in Stuttgart (Germany). In the first place this was a key account management job, but it also included strategic components like strategic sales planning and marketing for Asia-Pacific.

Question 3***Interviewer***

What experiences do you have with strategy work?

Academic 5

The biggest strategic experience I gained was a customer analysis for Company X. My task was basically to do the strategic sales planning, which involved the selection and analysis of appropriate customers, as well as the related competitors. Based on this information I had to decide on a strategy and priorities my department had to focus on. Basically, what types of customers would be potential partners for Company X for certain products!? When talking about the corporate background I was based in the business unit of automotive electronics - selling various parts related to car safety systems. Due to the limited resources of most customers we needed to prioritize in order to decide how to approach them.

Question 4***Interviewer***

What are in your view typical strategic problems? Please describe at least three typical problems.

Academic 5

I think the theoretical part of strategy work, as it is very streamlined to analyze customers and potential partners, as well as setting priorities – is normally the easy part. You know this is more or less textbook knowledge - so everybody can do this. You can do this based on information that is already available. You know what your customers do and what they plan but approaching them is greatest difficulty. I think here the social component of strategic management comes into play. How to establish relationships? This is actually quite fascinating, which was something that brought me back to academia. Although, you know that you would be the perfect partner for Hyundai or Toyota, and you also know that you are number 1 in quality, innovation and prices, the execution of your strategy does not really work. Therefore, you need to have established close relationships with your customers, which I think is the most difficult part in practice. This is due to informal institutions and in other words cultural differences.

Question 5**Interviewer**

How would you or should strategists/organizations attempt to solve such strategic projects? And do you or should they follow a significant process that guides the strategy work?

Academic 5

This is the problematic point. How to establish relationships? It is the so-called relationship management. Who is executing strategy? You have the people that plan strategy, who often sit in ivory towers, but someone needs to execute the strategic approach and go to the customer to establish the relationship. Then you can argue very rationally - we have these products, these are our quality levels, and these are our prices. Although you might be the best compared to other competitors - customers think or would give you the answer: Okay, I think we rather stay with our existing partners. So basically, you have difficulties to get into these relationships. To overcome this, you need to establish a process that enables your company to enter them. One key would be a cultural analysis that helps you to develop a long-term strategy for a specific region where you are struggling in. Once relationships are established the doors are actually open to get to another strategic management stage. So, for me strategy starts with the culture you are facing and after that you can decide, which concepts or instruments you would like to apply. From this stage on it depends on your strategic direction or the current situation the company is facing.

Question 6**Interviewer**

How would you describe strategy tool?

Academic 5

In short words I would say: strategy tools are frameworks that support the strategy making process in a structured way.

Question 7**Interviewer**

Which of the following strategy tools do you know?

Academic 5

SWOT - yes; KSFs - no; Core Competencies - yes; Scenario Planning - yes; Value Chain - yes; Porter Five Forces - yes; VRIO - yes; ILC - yes; PESTLE - yes; Portfolio Matrices - yes; Generic Strategies - yes; Strategic Groups - no; Ansoff - yes; Bowman - no; Strategy Clock - no; Corporate Parenting - no; Blue Ocean - yes;

In my former company we mostly used tools that were rather simple. Surprisingly, the SWOT analysis was always quite effective, even though too simple in most cases. What I also find important is the 5-forces model, and of course the value chain analysis. The VRIO framework is also a simple and nice tool that we have used. PEST analysis we have also used quite extensively. The generic strategy model - or let us say all of Porter's frameworks we used quite a frequently, even though they were already developed in the 80s. All were still highly useful. Blue Ocean we have rather used for discussion in order to find the right industries or markets for our existing and new products.

Question 8**Interviewer**

Are you familiar with the terms 'strategizing' or 'strategy-as-practice'? What meaning do you associate to them?

Academic 5

I recently read a paper on strategy-as-practice and there was one lady who has this website and who is very active within that field. I think she is called: Paula Jarzabkowski. This honestly happened quite recently, and I have to admit that all textbooks I usually use haven't included this stream yet, but I truly think it is highly important. I am not really an expert, but how I understand it the focus is more on the field strategy execution. Strategy-as-practice probably focuses on bringing strategy theory to life. The term strategizing, I truly do not know, but I am guessing that it describes the processes and routines of bringing the action into strategy work, but this is just based on an informal suggestion.

Question 9**Interviewer**

In what situation should strategists/organizations use strategy tools to conduct their strategy work? - Please also explain how.

Academic 5

Basically, I would recommend to use them when needed, or at stopping points in your strategy work in order to simplify a complex problem. Honestly, I would say you always use these tools to undertake a strategic task, as I think there is no actual situation where you should plan with or definitely have to use a certain tool. Strategy is the overarching umbrella over all corporate activities. The first questions you have to ask yourself: Is this tool in line with our strategic goals and objectives? Does it help us to solve a problem? Do we have to adapt the tools we are using? It has to fit to our overall strategy! In my opinion it is difficult to nail down one particular situation or event for applying them but using them should be connected to your corporate culture. If your company uses them for one or the other process, then try to use them when you are expected to do so. If applied properly, they will definitely help you to formulate or implement your new strategy. Sometimes it even helps

you to revise the old or former strategy. From my former job experience, I have to admit we mostly used them for typical strategic tasks like growing externally through the expansion to a new market, or if your product has reached saturation stage and you needed a new strategy to make it profitable again etc.

Question 10a

Interviewer

The strategic management process is oftentimes divided into four stages - analysis, formulation, implementation, and evaluation and control. In what phase should strategists/organizations most frequently use strategy tools?

Academic 5

For the analysis, of course, strategists and organizations should definitely use the tools. Formulation would rather be the result of the analysis. For all the others I do not really know, but I actually tend to think that in the first and in the last phase strategy tools are most important. For sure you use them in analysis, but evaluation and control would also be good, as you benchmark the results with the initial plan. For the formulation and implementation stage, I think, the available tools are not really convincing or even existent. The major portion is definitely applied in the analysis phase.

Question 10b

Interviewer

When looking at the list again, during what phase would you typically use the following tools?

Academic 5

SWOT - A, F; KSF - no use; Core Competencies - F; Scenario Planning - A, F, I; Value Chain - A, F; Porter Five Forces - A, F; VRIO - A; ILC - A; PESTLE - A; Portfolio Matrices - A, F; Generic Strategies - A, F; Strategic Group Map - no use; Ansoff - A; Bowman - no use; Corporate Parenting - no use; Blue Ocean - A

Question 11

Interviewer

Referring to a specific strategic problem, which strategy tool has particularly supported you/your organization the most/least?

Academic 5

In my previous workplace at Company X: Starting with the most - that was definitely the SWOT analysis. Interestingly, even at our University we use the SWOT analysis. Maybe for German Universities that is not really common, but my school actually uses this tool quite extensively. The Value Chain, VRIO, Porter's Five Forces were also used during my time in the industry, and maybe Porter's Generic strategies to some extent. Of course, all these tools were somehow adjusted to the company, but this is what you normally do. I also studied business administration, and I was absolutely surprised that in practice most of the 'standard' tools are actually applied. When you sit in a strategy courses you learn about all these tools, but you think that you can actually assume that a company like Company X should know each and every tool and work with them. At the end of the day it was just the most conventional ones that have been used. But in a way, they seemed to be

sufficient. The more complex ones are rather not used. The tool that was problematic or least useful - has been the value chain. It is quite complex when you use it for a huge company. We were using it for our business unit only, but still this consisted of 15000 people. It was difficult to get all the data together and if you have some data gaps you need to make estimations. Finally, we had a model based only on estimations and then we thought let us take a practical approach, because this absolutely makes no sense.

Question 12

Interviewer

How do you appraise the success and workload of the strategy tools outlined below, and how would you rate their efficiency?

Academic 5

This is hard to compare, as some tools are rather simple, and others tend to be highly complex. Overall, I think it is worth taking the time to use them, because their outcome usually has a meaning. Regarding success: what makes a tool successful is its outcome. Their success also depends on the people that are using them. From a practical point of view, I think that it is important to say, that using these tools is not only valuable for having a structured approach of how to do things and to understand your business and the environment. The other important fact of these tools is how they can convince others e.g. your colleagues. When it is getting too abstract their convincing power is quite low. At my old company, the people who did strategy and marketing were max. 5% and 95% were engineers, who only think in terms of: this is a very innovative product, this must sell! Why do we need strategy for this? When you use these tools you always need to take into account (and of course you need to understand the market), that you need to convince everyone that is involved in such a process. Also, engineers need to buy the idea of using tool to reach a rational answer.

SWOT - 5; KSF - no use; Core Competences Analysis - 1; Scenario Planning - 2; Value Chain - 2; Porters Five Forces - 4; VRIO - 5; ILC - 4; PESTLE - 5; Portfolio Matrices - 3; Generic Strategies - 4; Strategic Groups - no use; Ansoff - 1; Bowman - no use; Corporate Parenting - no use; Blue Ocean - 3

Question 13

Interviewer

Did you or should strategists/organizations adapt the tools-in-use to the specific organizational context? Please provide examples.

Academic 5

Definitely this is a must. Each industry is different, each company is different as they all have different resources and competences available, which is why you have to adjust the tools at some point. It also depends on your priorities. What kind of position do you want to occupy? It depends on what the targets are (e.g. increasing market share). There is no way around of adapting the tools and sometimes to even extent them. If you take the value chain, I think Porter himself said that this is a generic model and you need to adjust this to your firm. Tools applied in practice should be “unique” for every company.

Question 14***Interviewer***

To what extent are strategy tools used to reach a rational answer rather than post-rationalizing decisions that are already made?

Academic 5

Maybe to some extent it is both! There are many stakeholders involved, and some of them take a very close look at how you do your work and how your arguments (based on tools-in-use) make sense, and maybe they think that the tools are rather used to post-rationalize. I am more on the side of people who are using these tools in order to understand business problems and to simplify strategic decision making. Due to that, these tools are extremely important. It is a structured process that can also serve as a basis for discussion with others. Usually it is not only one person that makes the decision - it is a team. Then you need to get consensus from others. At some point you need to convince your entire organization. Tools do not only lead to discussion they also enable communication. For me personally, I think, due to their tremendous power tools are absolutely used to reach a "true" rational answer. Some people in companies do not know what strategy is about and therefore the tools can help to execute this work.

Question 15***Interviewer***

What are the advantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Academic 5

This is a connection to what I actually said before. Tools provide you with a clear and structured framework that should usually guide strategic decision making. The overarching goal is to set a long-term direction for your firm and nothing more. These tools enable you to think simple and encourage discussion.

Question 16***Interviewer***

What are the disadvantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Academic 5

Relying too much on tools will probably lead to a loss of flexibility. Various tools from your list have a rather static nature and nowadays things change quite fast (e.g. the theory of hypercompetition). Strategy is an ongoing process, but sometimes it can be too dynamic for the tools mentioned here. In that case it would rather be misleading or problematic to use them, because they are simply not flexible enough. Analyzing environments is not what it used to be anymore. Today, a lot more dimensions play a role.

Question 17***Interviewer***

When looking at current strategy tools used in organizations, how would you assess their value in the future?

Academic 5

I think that they are definitely going to be around in the future. Especially the trend of using the more simple tools - simple, effective and powerful to be more precise - is supporting my opinion. A point that will determine whether we still use these tools in the future strongly relies on the development of the existing tools. Are they able to become more dynamic or will they get more and more static? The worldwide competition has a very fast pace and there have to be dynamic components connected to the frameworks. Generally, I think that all strategists will still have their strategy toolkit (also consisting of static tools) ready as it enables them to understand the macro, micro and meta factors of the environments they are working in. I think there is truly a need on the side of the micro environment to include dynamic components in order to make these tools more efficient.

Question 18**Interviewer**

How would you evaluate the impact of strategy tools?

Academic 5

They usually had a great impact when applied correctly and I think they will always have it. The tools you mentioned are part of managers' daily toolkits, which consist of both simple and complex tools. It is important that strategy people think in these structures. Although you may not formally use the tools you should at least try to think in these either simple or more complex structures.

Question 19**Interviewer**

How can strategy tools enhance the efficiency of an organization's strategy process?

Academic 5

In my opinion they are central for the efficiency of the strategy process. A company is about efficiency! Companies definitely want to and have to act in an efficient way, and strategic tools, some of them, are definitely helpful in order to be more efficient, as they concentrate on certain formally agreed subjects that are most relevant in the strategy making process. I believe that they are central, but strategists should not forget the effect of corporate culture as the application of tools has to be accepted throughout the entire organization.

Question 20**Interviewer**

What are the conditions for the successful utilization of strategy tools?

Academic 5

I think that actually the front-end of the strategy process, the analysis and formulation, often causes tremendous complications in firms, as it is difficult to reach consensus throughout the entire organization. For most people, and this is the dangerous thing, strategy work is finished after the first two stages, but it is rather the implementation and evaluation that put strategy into action. Often times the implementation is problematic,

because you have to motivate your people to step up and execute the formulated plan. It is extremely difficult to find your starting point, but after you have reached it - a new strategy is able to generate great success.

Question 21***Interviewer***

What problems should future strategy tools aim to solve?

Academic 5

The first thing I have in mind is that they should include more dynamic components in order to respond to increasingly complex and dynamic industry environments. For now, I think the biggest amount of tools is just too static. As second statement, maybe more informal institutions should be included in strategy making processes. Especially in the simple tools the informal industry environment should be an integral aspect within the future.

Question 22***Interviewer***

Do you have any more questions or is there something you would like to add?

Academic 5

It is a good interview guide and it looks very structured, and I would be happy to be informed once you have finished your analysis in order to receive some insights on your findings.

Interview – Consultant 1 – C1**Question 1*****Interviewer***

What is your current position and area of responsibility within the organization?

Consultant 1

I have been working as a strategy consultant for imports and exports within the real estate and infrastructure sector, and I am responsible for development of strategies with the management of all kinds of organizations e.g. SMEs, governments, commercial organizations, basically all kind.

Question 2***Interviewer***

What is your current role in strategy work?

Consultant 1

Well, at this moment I am working within the technology department of Company X, and that is where I need to make the connection between the strategy and what type of infrastructure Airport X needs. That is usually what I do in consulting; I really try to create the connection between the corporate strategy and what kind of business strategy, in terms of real estate infrastructure, is needed to support the corporate strategy.

Question 3***Interviewer***

What experiences do you have with strategy work?

Consultant 1

I think there are three big projects, which were really strategy work. The first one was for a real estate fund (an investment fund). I was asked to explore how it is possible to shape their business. They had been in a red ocean and I had to figure out how they could reposition themselves. Another project was for a University, which was also about repositioning. The question was: how do you create a campus that makes you stand out from all the other Universities. The last true strategic project I've been working on was for the Dutch Railroad Company. Here we were asked to develop strategies for the retail areas at train stations, which was absolutely focused on creating a new commercial strategy.

Question 4***Interviewer***

What are in your view typical strategic problems? Please try to describe various typical problems that come to your mind.

Consultant 1

It always has to do with how the company wants to position itself in the future. It either wants to expand, it wants to increase its quality, it wants to reduce its costs, it wants to search for synergies, it wants to consolidate, or it wants to find new collaborative agreements. All these are strategic problems that usually need to be solved.

Question 5**Interviewer**

How would you/your organization attempt to solve such strategic projects? And do you follow a significant process that guides the strategy work?

Consultant 1

We always start with an analysis phase, and sometimes you had to sell that phase first, because people thought that we were just putting our ideas in place and tell everyone: here we go, this your new strategy. I always started with the question: what is the corporate strategy of the client and what are they talking about? I also explained all this to the management. Most of the time, when we are looking at real estate strategies, I was rather facing a business strategy area and that is why I usually had to interpret the corporate strategy first. One of the main things I always encountered was that most managers do not know anything about the difference between business strategy and corporate strategy. So, corporate strategy mainly focuses on the domains and then you have to look at; what are we going to do within our domain? That is the first step we always took and then we analyzed the environments and here we used tools like the PESTLE framework, Porter's frameworks, and the SWOT analysis. One sentence to clarify all this: you have to make sure that the client knows what strategy is, and after that you go forward and explain the difference between corporate and business strategies.

Question 6**Interviewer**

How would you describe strategy tools?

Consultant 1

I think the last part of the sentence explains everything. They are simply tools! They are used to communicate and that is really what strategy tools should be about; and also, in many cases I explain why we should use one or another tool, as it is all about communication and using a framework in order to get from A to B. Tools work as some sort of guideline or audit.

Question 7**Interviewer**

Which of the following strategy tools do you know?

Consultant 1

SWOT - yes; KSF - yes; Core Competencies - yes; Scenario Planning - yes; Value Chain - yes; Five Forces - yes; VRIO - yes; ILC - no; PESTLE - yes; Portfolio Matrices - yes; Generic Strategies - yes; Strategic Groups - no; Ansoff - yes; Bowman - yes; Ashridge - no; Blue Ocean - yes;

No, I think you covered the things that I know and actually use in practice.

Question 8***Interviewer***

Are you familiar with the terms ‘strategizing’ or ‘strategy-as-practice’? What meaning do you associate to them?

Consultant 1

I am familiar with strategizing, but not with strategy-as-practice. Strategizing means: putting a strategy into place. For strategy-as-practice I can only think very simple. I think the term already states it; it means practicing strategy. I think both terms stand pretty much for the same. But I have to be honest, I do not know these terms and the definition is not really clear for me.

Question 9***Interviewer***

In what situation do you/does your organization use strategy tools to conduct your/its strategy work? – Please also explain how.

Consultant 1

As I mentioned before, you need to recognize what kind of question your client is asking. As a consultant you really have to see if we are really talking about strategy or is it something else. Sometimes the client is thinking that he needs to put a policy in place or a tactic, but in some cases, you really need to step back and say: what is the strategy behind the policy you want to develop? And if it is not in place then maybe we should first look at: what is the strategic part of where we want to go to? So, it is really about the listening as well. If you hear things like: we want to reposition ourselves, become unique, do something with quality, make cost reductions, develop a new business (not in terms of more sales, rather in terms of creating a new service or product), then I think strategy work becomes truly important. So, listen to the questions and the issues of your clients and then decide on the strategic path you want approach this problem with.

Question 10a***Interviewer***

The strategic management process is oftentimes divided into four stages – analysis, formulation, implementation, and evaluation and control. In what phase do you/does your organization most frequently use strategy tools?

Consultant 1

We normally use them for analysis, formulation, and in some cases also for implementation. Maybe also sometimes in evaluation and control, but honestly, we rather use them to guide this process.

Question 10b***Interviewer***

When looking at the list again, during what phase would you typically use the following tools?

Consultant 1

SWOT - A, F; KSF - A; Core Competencies - no; Scenario Planning - F; Value Chain - A, F; Five Forces - A; VRIO - A, F; ILC - no; PESTLE - A; Portfolio Matrices - A, F; Generic Strategies - F; Strategic Groups - no; Ansoff - A, F; Bowman - F; Ashridge - no; Blue Ocean - A, F, I (really good communication tool);

Question 11**Interviewer**

Referring to a specific strategic problem, which strategy tool has particularly supported you/your organization the most/least?

Consultant 1

MOST - Well, I think the combination of Porter's Five Forces and the PESTLE analysis is really strong, and the Blue Ocean Four Action Framework was just perfect. The SWOT and KSFs are also really strong, but I would put them on a secondary degree. The VRIO framework is also very important for getting insights and creating an overview of the capabilities. LEAST - No not really. I think the ones that I did not use weren't helpful (haha), otherwise I would have probably used them or least know something about them. Maybe the generic strategy model is sometimes really too theoretical, because it is really black and white, as you cannot find a spot in between. Sometimes the work is simply not done when you say: alright now I am the cost leader and that is it. I think there should be a lot of more options, and that is maybe the purpose for Bowman's strategy clock even though it is also too theoretical. With these kinds of tools, it is really not useful to communicate.

Question 12**Interviewer**

How do you appraise the success and workload of the strategy tools outlined below, and how would you rate their efficiency?

Consultant 1

That is really a difficult question, because the framework is just a framework. The work is done by filling in the framework. So, I would not say that one or the other is more or less efficient. It is really about; does it communicate what you want to communicate? And I think all frameworks that I use are efficiently used to communicate things, but this does not say that there are some that are less efficient. It clearly depends on the topic you are working on, and I think efficiency if you look at the process of developing a strategy in order to create content is truly not about efficiency it is about the quality of the strategists that are working with them. Sometimes it just takes time to get the right data in place. So, I would not evaluate the efficiency of the frameworks, as I do not think that is leading you somewhere. Maybe this holds true for some frameworks like the Blue Ocean, because you can really work with it. That is some tool that can be efficient.

Consultant 1

SWOT - 4; KSF - 4; Core Competencies - 0; Scenario Planning - 3; Value Chain - 3; Five Forces - 5; VRIO - 4; ILC - 0; PESTLE - 5; Portfolio Matrices - 3; Generic Strategies - 1; Strategic Groups - 0; Ansoff - 2; Bowman - 1; Ashridge - 0; Blue Ocean - 5;

If I would choose, and if you really want to know what I have used a lot, then most of the times it has been the Porter's Five Forces, the PESTLE analysis, and the Blue Ocean Framework. Those three together have been quite useful and also efficient when I consider the time invested and the success of the outcomes. That is why I have to rate them really high, but for the others it is really difficult to say, because in terms of the process only the blue ocean strategy framework is highly useful to communicate. The other ones are more the higher-level analysis instruments to make clear how the environment is working. Actually, is it not more about the effectiveness of these frameworks? If I have used a certain tool, was I really able to develop a strategy out of it? If that is the case I would rather speak about effectiveness. In my view these tools are used to develop a strategy and therefore it should be about effectiveness. But I understand why you ask about efficiency, because most practitioners rather use these tools as support and not to develop something, and this why you probably ask about efficiency. Is it worth spending time on filling in a template? Normally yes, but I would be more interested in the effectiveness. If efficiency is the driver for using or not using a strategy tool, then I guess your results will be problematic, because time constraints in strategy work lead you to crap. It is about content, and if you make the wrong decisions at a high level, then the entire system will react in the wrong way. I recommend that you use the terms efficiency and effectiveness together, because I think this goes hand in hand with each other. Efficiency is not everything. Companies need effective strategies and after that you can think about efficiency.

Question 13***Interviewer***

Do you/does your organization adapt the tools-in-use to the specific organizational context? Please provide examples.

Consultant 1

Yes, we are adapting the tools, because their original idea is sometimes not enough for our cases. They are context dependent! For example, I haven't been working in the area of products so far and here the BCG matrix is probably most useful. When you are planning to use a tool, you need to think about the question that is being asked first, and then you decide whether the normal application is enough or if you have to adapt. The good thing about the traditional tools is that they are general models and you can use them in many different situations. The tools have a meaning. During my research in my MBA I have been able to really dig into the Five Forces and I finally realized what it is really about. I do think that sometimes some forces do not really matter and therefore you do not have to focus on them, but in most cases, you should look at all the specific factors. Leaving out or adding things can be quite helpful, but we usually do not do that. We rather put more emphasis on the content and here we make adaptations or try to find connections. To conclude here, yes you can adapt the tools, but do not change the entire idea, because this can be really harmful. The bigger problem is that changes or errors happen when people do not know how to use these tools, and that is what I see quite often.

Question 14**Interviewer**

To what extent are strategy tools used to reach a rational answer rather than post-rationalizing decisions that are already made?

Consultant 1

For me, I think it is always a combination of things. It is a combination of both, as managers always have some ideas about how things are working and where they should go. However, they do not always understand the context of why they think that. The tools should be used to reach rational answers, but in practice the limited knowledge on strategy and its tools is the core problem. I often experience that strategy and using strategy frameworks, developing a strategy, or communicating a strategy is really about knowing the area of strategy, and many managers have heard about the frameworks but do not have the depth in knowledge on how to use them or to use them in their specific situation. This is a knowledge gap and therefore strange things can happen. I would say, start to explain what strategy is about and if somebody asks you to post-rationalize I would recommend to decline on this wish. Sometimes marketing people need these tools to post-rationalize, that is for sure. If a slide deck looks good and well-structured the board sometimes buys the crap.

Question 15**Interviewer**

What are the advantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Consultant 1

The main advantage is communication! One very important other thing is that they force you not to forget any significant areas. Tools make your analysis more structured and more solid. The quality of your strategy improves by looking into all the things and issues that pop up during e.g. discussions with the client. Maybe another advantage is that these tools are creating creativity, because they raise questions like: how is this working? They make people think about a situation or possibilities.

Question 16**Interviewer**

What are the disadvantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Consultant 1

If you are only looking into the things that are mentioned in the tools you will probably develop a misleading strategy, because not every tool can be generalized for any situation. There are always other indicators that you might not see while using these tools. I said that they trigger the thinking process, but on the other side they also limit your thinking, as people base their entire work on them. So, we always have to look at them from a distance and ask ourselves if there are other factors that we need to consider here. Tools can also be static, if we think about the rapidly changing markets we are currently facing, but this also has to do with how often you update your strategy and how broad your basic analyses are. I think the really big changes within the world are always developing rapidly and at the same time slow, as you usually know what direction they are taking.

I do not think the tools themselves are bad. If you are in a market where things are changing a lot, then you need to use the tools more often.

Question 17***Interviewer***

When looking at current strategy tools used in your organization, how do you assess their value in the future?

Consultant 1

All of these tools have very basic underlying theories and especially when you are connecting resources and capabilities to the market environment. So, how to create value for what we see in the market? I think that those tools will always be handy to apply. It is quite difficult to say whether one of them or which one will become old or redundant, because it is theory and you always have to base your work on something, and why should not it be the tools? When you are looking at the world it may sometimes happen that an organization is not able to use a tool anymore, which happens when nobody in the organization has a full overview and then a tool would lose its power, as this would not be something that will solve the issue for you. It is much more the context, in which you need to apply them, and sometimes organizations do too many things, and as a strategist you have to decide when we should do fewer actions. There are a lot of different activities within an organization and then it sometimes becomes very unclear what the core business is about, and then a first step should be: where should we put our focus on and what are the success factors that really need to be in place to become effective in order to develop a strategy. Maybe after that tools should be applied, but this depends on the situation. You cannot do everything, because in some cases tools simply will not work, as the people in an organization are unable to work with them.

Question 18***Interviewer***

How would you evaluate the impact of strategy tools?

Consultant 1

I would rate it really high, because if they are able to clearly communicate what you want to say, then they always have an impact.

Question 19***Interviewer***

How can strategy tools enhance the efficiency of your organization's strategy process?

Consultant 1

Yes, I absolutely think that tools enhance the efficiency of the process, because you have already some means of communication in place. But the client also has to be part of this communication and he should have an idea of what you are doing. You have a theory, why do you not explain that your customer first and then present your results? The tools make things easier, because you always have a dialog starting point or let us say a common ground for your discussion.

Question 20***Interviewer***

What are the conditions for the successful utilization of strategy tools?

Consultant 1

It is all about the competencies of the people you are working with, which is absolutely important. Do they know how to develop a strategy? Or is it some grey area for them and they have no clue how to start such a process. To be honest, when it comes to strategy work I always have to start from scratch, because if you are working with multiple people the chances that all these people have strategic capabilities is about zero. What I do is; I use some parts of the theory, like 5-6 slides, and start a meeting with the question: what is strategy? What is it about? That is how you get people into place in order to work on the process. They need to understand what they are working on and also what strategy is not about. Here you have to use some theory to get people at the same level. Of course, acceptance plays a role, but this is your responsibility. You are there to explain what these things can do and with that you create the commitment for using the tools. You have to explain their surplus to the average people, middle managers, but also engineers, etc. If you are asking me the question: What are the conditions for the successful utilization of strategy tools? It is really about the understanding what strategy is! The engineer example is perfect, as they always say: oh, the managers do not understand this; and that is probably true, but they do not understand the managers either. If you have that communication gap and they do not understand each other, then you first have to solve that. Here you can use explanations of how these tools connect market demand to technology solutions, and if you are able to do that, then they both understand each other.

Question 21***Interviewer***

What problems should future strategy tools aim to solve?

Consultant 1

The first thing that comes to my mind is to create some kind of place for really radical ideas. Creating the content for a business strategy is a lot about knowing what is happening, but also about creating these wonderful ideas. Strategy itself or the analysis is only mapping out what is happening, but what are you going to do about it? How are you going to deal with this environment? And at this point I always have the feeling that the power or the reach of the frameworks stops. The frameworks are about the analysis and a little bit about the formulation, but the real formulation is more about being creative. When I say that, I mean that they should provide a room for radical ideas, and I mean that they should really stimulate more creativity. This could be translated to more openness. I believe, that the creative side of strategy development is something that is not really covered within the frameworks. Maybe something about the timing aspect: of course, you want to have fast tools, but it is always difficult to do a quick shot when it comes to strategy work, because being fast leads to mistakes.

Question 22

Interviewer

Do you have any more questions or is there something you would like to add?

Consultant 1

I think you cover a lot and it is a really interesting interview. Do me favor and think about the efficiency and effectiveness discussion, maybe this is something you should bare in my mind for your next steps.

Interview – Consultant 2 – C2**Question 1*****Interviewer***

What is your current position and area of responsibility within the organization?

Consultant 2

Well, at the moment I am especially in charge for the consulting business with governmental organizations, and I have a strong focus on social security, social services, and a small part of the healthcare market, as we have defined as rather German social law.

Question 2***Interviewer***

What is your current role in strategy work?

Consultant 2

In most of my projects I am working as an executive consultant for the C-level of the organization. Especially in my case, as I am rather coming from the focus of informatics, we are building digital strategies to optimize processes, and especially at the moment increasing the usage of IT for a better digital government. In my special case the governmental processes for the social security organizations are crucial.

Question 3***Interviewer***

What experiences do you have with strategy work?

Consultant 2

Well, I think that successful strategy work needs a vision across different dimensions. If we develop the organizational structures or optimize processes we need deep knowledge about citizens, governmental structures, and service providers. We have a complex political situation here in Germany, and I think the strategy work, which is the most important point for me, requires a good view about methods and tools in order to be an objective consultant to our customers. So, the strategy work often depends on our leadership to become a valuable partner for our customers, and that is the most important part of our project activities.

Question 4***Interviewer***

What are in your view typical strategic problems? Please try to describe various typical problems that come to your mind.

Consultant 2

I have a special position within my market, as we are working for public services companies and not for typical business companies etc. So, cost reduction is still one of the most common strategic questions consultancies usually have to work on, but it is not the most important one for us. We have more problems and challenges to

improve efficiency or capitalize benefits of digital potential. So, most often we have problems with the demographic challenges, either on the customer or on the political level, and therefore we have to find answers on how to work with the demographic changes that we will face within the next decades.

Question 5***Interviewer***

How would you/your organization attempt to solve such strategic projects? And do you follow a significant process that guides the strategy work?

Consultant 2

This is an interesting question, as we could probably talk about your entire list of tools here, but I am trying to give you an example of a framework that our consultancy uses for strategic projects. It is a framework for the discussion of a strategic process and we call it ASI (accelerated solution environment), which you can find on our website. ASI is a framework to find solutions in a collaborative and very customer-centric way. So, we build up a framework or method to work (together) with our customers to find their strategic questions and to create something that works like a scout that guides you through the process. We defined three steps: we start with the scanning process to get knowledge about the problem the customer is facing. Here we focus on his problem view, and then we try to connect real activities with a quick run situation, and the main goal is to work everything through a workshop of about 2-3 days, which usually consists of a larger number of stakeholders in order to prepare decisions and get a commitment to bring the ideas to real work. At the end of it we need to have a clear statement by the management to run this significant strategic process for them. It is very hands-on, as we try to involve the customer as much as possible.

Question 6***Interviewer***

How would you describe strategy tools?

Consultant 2

I think strategy tools work like scouts. You know where you have to start, and you always have a cloudy idea of your target with a great variety of different scenarios. At this point strategy tools help you to understand the actual situation and to find a way to at least clarify the next steps. That is one way how you can define them. Another point of view to strategy tools is: they are satisfying the need of being objective and moderate instruments to define targets and the way to reach these. So, these tools secure your own process of managing and making decisions and recommendations. That is, I think, only a small description of what strategy tools can be.

Question 7***Interviewer***

Which of the following strategy tools do you know?

Consultant 2

SWOT - yes; KSF - yes; Core Competencies - no; Scenario Planning - yes; Value Chain - yes; Five Forces - yes; VRIO - no; ILC - no; PESTLE - no; Portfolio Matrices - yes; Generic Strategies - no; Strategic Groups - no; Ansoff - yes; Bowman - yes; Ashridge - no; Blue Ocean - no; Cause and Effect Chain - yes; Transformation Map - yes;

Question 8**Interviewer**

Are you familiar with the terms 'strategizing' or 'strategy-as-practice'?

What meaning do you associate to them?

Consultant 2

I am not familiar with these terms. What could they possibly mean? I think the term strategy-as-practice describes a kind of meta-level. It tries to analyze how strategy work is done, how it is organized. The term does not stand for the concrete use of strategy tools or strategic frameworks; it is rather a way of how to define such a method. I think, it is defining the single steps from the point on you have first noticed them - what comes in must happen - towards the definition of a strategy for a specific problem scenario, not for a specific problem, but on a meta-level for a problem scenario. Strategy-as-practice tries to define the process and influences the frames or variables, which we are about to use for a concrete strategic approach. Strategizing, for me, is the definition of the real doing of strategy work - the true application of tools and frameworks - the daily routines that happen in a strategic environment. The touchable strategy work, if you want to call it like that. Strategizing is very much an action-based term. Something is happening.

Question 9**Interviewer**

In what situation do you/does your organization use strategy tools to conduct your/its strategy work? – Please also explain how.

Consultant 2

As a management and strategy consultant we use strategy tools or methods within our daily project work. So, we are strategizing the whole day. Practical strategy making is daily work, because whenever you get in a strategy project for the customers the first questions always are: what are we going to do? What are the steps? What are the tasks we have to fulfill? What is the method we are using? So here, you often have to define your tools and your project idea in the earliest phase of the proposal and if you start with the project you have to tell your customer how you want to work and what single steps he has to follow. I think in 70% or 80% of each project you have various tools that you are using. We approach every strategic problem very systematically, and we try to ease up the process by applying tools that are readily available. Not every tool fits to every situation, but in all projects there is a least one you can apply. Sometimes we even let our customer decide, which tool they want us to use.

Question 10a***Interviewer***

The strategic management process is oftentimes divided into four stages – analysis, formulation, implementation, and evaluation and control. In what phase do you/does your organization most frequently use strategy tools?

Consultant 2

It depends on the project type. If you start with your consulting business in an early phase you usually use these for analysis and formulation. In this case they often belong to one project phase, or target, or milestone. We often have projects where we stop at the formulation milestone, as the customer itself starts to implement and controls his strategy work from now on. There is also another project type; we often call it change management. The customer has given himself a strategic target and a way to reach it. So, the analysis and formulation are done by the customer, and within the change management process we help our customers to implement these strategies, and then we often have an ex-post evaluation to control the targets and benefits they achieve within their strategic projects. So, to give a proper answer I can state that we often use these tools in analysis and formulation, and if you have a complete transformation project we use these along all four or three stages. Our implementation and control phases are normally interlinked.

Question 10b***Interviewer***

When looking at the list again, during what phase would you typically use the following tools?

Consultant 2

SWOT - A, F; KSF - A, F, I, E; Core Competencies - no; Scenario Planning - F, I; Value Chain - A; Five Forces - no; VRIO - no; ILC - no; PESTLE - no; Portfolio Matrices - A, F; Generic Strategies - no; Strategic Groups - no; Ansoff - A; Bowman - F, I; Ashridge - no; Blue Ocean - no; Cause and Effect Chain - A, F; Transformation Map - F, I, E

Question 11***Interviewer***

Referring to a specific strategic problem, which strategy tool has particularly supported you/your organization the most/least?

Consultant 2

The most used tool and the best used tool is the SWOT, because it is very simple, and each person, each customer, and each employee can assess this tool. The portfolio matrix is even simpler, and it is very easy to use, and it is simple to define what you want to do with this tool. Cause and Effect Chain is also simple and really nice to apply in a real project. The transformation map is a little bit more complex, but you have a very focused documentation of your goals, your targets, and the way from your actual situation to the overall target. What is least helpful? I love scenario planning, as it allows defining more than one strategy, and on your way to implement a strategy you have checkpoints. If something happens on your way to your target you cannot

lack to choose an alternative scenario. In the early stage you maybe have to do a little bit more work, but this makes your strategy process more secure. Unfortunately, it is very complex, which makes it sometimes very problematic, because I need a customer with very high level of maturity while using this tool. So, if you try to work with a customer or partner with a fairly low level of maturity it will be very hard to use rather complex strategic tools. Tools like scenario planning will not bring the effect you want to get. It is a nice and important tool and I think it is one of the best strategic tools I can see on this list, but it is not easy to use at all. When thinking about projects where we applied it, I can definitely say that it was one of the most problematic ones.

Question 12

Interviewer

How do you appraise the success and workload of the strategy tools outlined below, and how would you rate their efficiency?

Consultant 2

That highly depends on the tool you are working with. Tools like the SWOT analysis are very simple and easy to understand without investing too much time to learn all the basic rules connected to it. I think producing results can be very time consuming, but usually it is absolutely worthwhile using them. For the more complex tools my answer is a bit different. The context has to be well thought of and using them is also risky, because you spend a lot of time to produce a significant output. I would always recommend using tools, because of their proven success. Overall, they were invented to make things easier, and this is how you should see and apply them. Maybe it is also helpful to gather partial results first and then you go on. Yes, when I compare success and workload I can for sure say that they are something I would always use to solve a customer's strategic problem.

Consultant 2

SWOT - 5; KSF - 4; Core Competencies - 0; Scenario Planning - 2; Value Chain - 3; Five Forces - 0; VRIO - 0; ILC - 0; PESTLE - 0; Portfolio Matrices - 4; Generic Strategies - 0; Strategic Groups - 0; Ansoff - 3; Bowman - 3; Ashridge - 0; Blue Ocean - 0; Cause and Effect Chain - 4; Transformation Map - 5

Question 13

Interviewer

Do you/does your organization adapt the tools-in-use to the specific organizational context? Please provide examples.

Consultant 2

We adapt some tools, because we think it is sometimes not very valuable to use the tools in the defined way. So, the people we work with are able to recap these tools as we provide them with the same background information for the method like an actual practice book would do it. If you do not explain your changes you will probably get different problems on the customer side, as they are mostly unable to catch up with your findings. When adapting tools everyone involved should have the same understanding. What we do when we adapt these tools is not really a true adaption of the tools or the method itself, it is more often a kind of content

management. We decide which content truly fits for our purpose. In our consultancy we have a clear guideline. We check the experience documentation of previous projects and then we decide which variables we should have a closer look on. This knowledge database includes most methods we have already applied with significant cases. This metopedia includes content e.g. best practice examples, benchmarks, or focus themes. So, it is not an adaption it is more a content management system, which provides us with alternative application possibilities.

Question 14***Interviewer***

To what extent are strategy tools used to reach a rational answer rather than post-rationalizing decisions that are already made?

Consultant 2

Normally, you should not ask me such a question, but I think I can try to give you a suitable answer. In our case we have the ex-ante and ex-post problem. In order to define the ex-ante evaluation, you need some long-term experience, and if you are more coming from the ex-post side you can at least give a concrete answer e.g. when we use these strategy tools we will definitely reach the answer we are looking for. I think the question depends on your management style. Sometimes you have to ask yourself: have I reached this rational answer because I have used a strategy tool or was it rather my personal experience in the market? Often times the tools are used to justify findings, or to proof that the idea of a C-level manager was right, which is probably your point. That happens, but only with inexperienced tool users. Somebody who is capable of using a tool to reach a rational answer is a true strategist. To sum up, tools should be used to reach a rational answer and if they are used for post-rationalization then you might not trust the result, because the solution will most likely be biased. A fool using a tool is still a fool. You need to have the proper experience to apply them; otherwise you will not be able to reach a rational answer at all.

Question 15***Interviewer***

What are the advantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Consultant 2

The most important advantage of using strategy tools is that you are forced to work in a very independent and objective way. Tools are a transparent way of doing strategy work, as everyone is able to understand them. They are simple, and they structure your thinking. It is better to work with them, instead of simply grounding your work on numbers and the beliefs or gut-feeling of narcissist managers. In practice you need guided processes and the tools are one way of having that.

Question 16***Interviewer***

What are the disadvantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Consultant 2

Without being familiar with or without having any experience they most likely lead you to wrong decisions. Sometimes they are just too simple. It is necessary to know the right situation to reach the set target, but who tells you that you have chosen the wrong tool? Also, the customer needs to have the knowledge of how to interpret the results, because at some point he will be left alone. This is time consuming and not as easy as it seems. If people are not familiar with the tools, it is sometimes almost impossible to create the acceptance for them. Maybe one last comment: original tools have their boundaries and finding a way to circumvent them is sometimes the biggest part of the work, because in many cases they simply will not fit as they are. Here the strategist has to be very experienced and creative to think of alternative ways.

Question 17***Interviewer***

When looking at current strategy tools used in your organization, how do you assess their value in the future?

Consultant 2

I think we will need more and more strategy tools, and in the consulting environment they will become much more of an USP. Some tools are simply commodity and you have to know them, because it is part of your daily business. In the future there will be a story behind the tools, which I call content. Within the strategic process you of course need the right tools, but you also need the right content like best practices, figures, and documented experiences, and that is the gap we have to fill in future, which is the gap between the tools and the real effective work in the strategy process. It is not only about the methods. Content and experience will play the same or even a much more interesting role in the future.

Question 18***Interviewer***

How would you evaluate the impact of strategy tools?

Consultant 2

I want to answer this question by making reference to an old strategy tool. We often used benchmarking. Within our strategy process we used benchmarking in order to track if the strategy, the target, or the transformation idea was running in the right direction. We were able to measure performance, control milestones, or track the effects on the cost efficiency and things like that. But in practice it is not really easy to get a real measure. So yes, there is an impact, but it is highly dependent on the context you are facing. There are usually different dimensions you have to bear in mind, and especially when using a tool the information that is presented is transparent, and sometimes people do not want this high degree of transparency. Often times these tools tell you the truth, but unfortunately nobody wants to know see it.

Question 19***Interviewer***

How can strategy tools enhance the efficiency of your organization's strategy process?

Consultant 2

Strategy tools are some kind of defined standards. You can change them between different projects, you have a defined method, you have predefined steps to build a strategy, and so your consultants can change the tools between projects. If you have a standard toolset ready you can be very effective, because you have an immediate starting point for your project work. So, having tools and the experience ready will definitely enhance the efficiency of an organization's strategy process, but you need a proper level of maturity while using them, because you need to know how to use the tools and for which situation a certain tool is the right one. Using the wrong tool in the wrong moment can lead to more chaos than success. You have to get a good idea where a tool is helpful and where it can be harmful.

Question 20**Interviewer**

What are the conditions for the successful utilization of strategy tools?

Consultant 2

If you do not have some sort of knowledge management, and at the next stage it is called experience management, you will not be able to successfully use strategy tools in practice. You need to document the working experience with these tools, you also need available templates for using these tools, and you need examples out of practical project situations from different customers with different target structures. If you do not have this, you will not be efficient in using these tools. And on the other side you need a liability to use these tools for your decision making. So, for each decision you have to make within the project or your own organization you should make use of such tools, which does not mean you should only rely on them. In my eyes it is a must to use such tools while doing strategy work, because otherwise they would not have been developed in the first place.

Question 21**Interviewer**

What problems should future strategy tools aim to solve?

Consultant 2

As I said before, the main questions we have to answer in the future are the questions of how to manage long-term transformations. On the one hand side it is a question of the method or the tool, and the other hand side you need to have the experience. You will need a strong focus on which things you are able to define within the strategy process, and what is the real theory behind that. Here your practice view comes apart. Tools should be used to solve practice related problems. Content will play a huge role and the tools we will use in the future will have to answer questions about how our digital way of living will change in a complex network, which is already a complex system of dependencies. Therefore, we will still need tools that reduce the complexity of such networks and tools that tell you the main milestone to make your decision. As already said, it has to be a mix of tools and experience e.g. the very modern simulation and experimenting approaches. The successful use of tools strongly relies on the experience of the applicant and here we need to put our focus on. Why do you think consultants are needed all over the world? This is probably one point for that.

Question 22

Interviewer

Do you have any more questions or is there something you would like to add?

Consultant 2

May it be possible to get your results after you have finished your study? That would be great. I can only say: keep focusing on the word practice. I like the idea of creating the bridge between theory and practice.

Interview – Consultant 3 – C3**Question 1*****Interviewer***

What is your current position and area of responsibility within the organization?

Consultant 3

Right now, I am placed at Company X and I am a team leader at the business development unit for topics that evolve around production. So, everything that basically leads to having a train on the track.

Question 2***Interviewer***

What is your current role in strategy work?

Consultant 3

On and off I would say. There are cycles within our company. So, if you just have a strategy, let us say on a corporate level, then we really start the strategy process all over again. What we have been doing in the past was looking at micro strategies. For example, even on a department level you can try to develop a strategy that a) basically tries to connect to the corporate strategy and then b) tries to define an outline what the strategy basically means for this specific department. So that is stuff that we have been doing regularly, because it is some sort of cascading strategy down to your operational level. It is sometimes not the super big framework on: what is the role that our organization wants to have in the next 10 or 15 years, but it is a little bit more hands-on. So, what does it mean to have a target like: we are going to be a leader in sustainable xyz - and what does it mean for department a or b? Is there a measurable goal and what are the measures on things that you would have to undertake to complete this goal? So that is for me also strategic work, but it is a little bit different than strategic work you probably do on a corporation level.

Question 3***Interviewer***

What experiences do you have with strategy work?

Consultant 3

What I did in two cases was scenario planning, which was very interesting. If you work at Consultancy X most of the projects have some sort of strategic nature or components. You are trying to think about the stuff that is going to happen in 10 years and not in the next 10 months. A true strategy project I did once was basically based on a scenario planning exercise. What we also did in another project was trying to identify the demand for a specific resource that a country needs to import and based on this evaluation or model we outlined different options that the country basically has in order to distribute this resource in the country. That was really on a higher level - explaining them that there are generally three or four options that you could take, what are the pros and cons, and also trying to identify the drivers that basically determined the different options that our client had.

Question 4**Interviewer**

What are in your view typical strategic problems? Please try to describe various typical problems that come to your mind.

Consultant 3

A strategic problem deals with mid- to long-term issues you have to think about, because other than that it would be a tactical problem. Such a strategic problem basically evolves around things where you have to set, or you have to decide for a path you have to/ or want to walk down for the next months or years. I would say that is how I would understand strategic problems from a general level. So, nothing that is basically a one shot decision, a or b, but rather the plan of how you want to react to certain things that you do not necessarily even know right now. It is more or less the framework of how you are going to act and react in next considerable time.

Question 5**Interviewer**

How would you/your organization attempt to solve such strategic projects? And do you follow a significant process that guides the strategy work?

Consultant 3

That heavily depends on your point of view - if we look at strategy work from a Company X or any other global consultancy perspective, where you strictly follow a certain process, or whether you take the completely different perspective from the corporate world e.g. Company X, which is much more intuitive and impulsive. It is not really surprising, as Company X prides itself in being the guys you call if you have a strategic problem. But the process at Company X (and I guess it would not be much different in all the other consultancies e.g. BCG or Bain) is based on a lot of different frameworks or documents that come from research, the so called PDs - practice documents, and there it depends on the exact problem you are trying to solve. These instruments provide you with a way of how you can reach a conclusion. If you know that you are going to a sore automotive company and here it is about how to position the brands, and then there is usually some sort of a document that outlines: what are the central questions that you have to ask yourself or your clients? What are actually frameworks you could use that help you to answer these questions? And what could be the best way of executing our plans? We usually have a workshop, which lasts for two days to look at former approaches that have worked well in similar projects. We look at old cases and try to find commonalities in order to approach a strategic problem. In a way this is how we are gaining ideas for the creative problem solving. Another huge part of the process has been the senior consultants as they guide the thinking process. They a) point you to the right people or b) point you to the right documents you should look at. At Company X it is very much a standardized way of doing strategy, and we had very short wrap up times to develop an action plan. In usual cases, which are very dependent on the actual scope of the project, you are right on the client side and you are expected to deliver results more or less on day three! There is a minimum time in thinking about how you are going to do it, and much more focus lies on the actual talk to the experts and clients. But still this is also highly dependent on the people that are involved in this process. Experience in strategy work plays the #1 violin, as

it is sometimes not efficient to work with the biggest talents that just graduated from university. At the end of the day, you sit together with 5 guys and you are trying to find the best-practice way for your specific problem. The structure or process delivered through the consultancy simply helps you to be more focused.

Question 6

Interviewer

How would you describe strategy tools?

Consultant 3

A strategy tool most importantly provides you with structure or something that helps you to structure your own thoughts. They can also help me to outline important aspects of a problem I should consider while looking for answers. The SWOT is nothing more than basically just structuring the way we think about a problem. 90% of the frameworks are just structure combined with intelligent questions you could ask yourself. And then the second point is that you also have a suggestion of how to approach or how to use these frameworks in a sense of: how would we use that? do we have to conduct a series of interviews with the C-Level guys; or are we going to have a big workshop with around 40 people in one room where we are going to use consensus technologies - or something similar where we can basically vote for an answer or the best way to arrive the answer as quick as possible. That of course also depends on group dynamics, but if you have the structure, which is more or less a framework of things that you are using to find an answer for your problem, and you have the way or let us say the path based on different formats and methodology, then you simply have to bring the rest from your own personal experience.

Question 7

Interviewer

Which of the following strategy tools do you know?

Consultant 3

SWOT - yes; KSF - yes; Core Competences - no; Scenario Planning - yes; Value Chain - yes; Five Forces - yes; VRIO - no; ILC - no; PESTLE - no; Portfolio Matrices - yes; Generic Strategies - no; Strategic Groups - no; Ansoff - no; Bowman - no; Ashridge - no; Blue Ocean - no; Eisenhower Tool - yes

There are probably a lot of tools we have used, but probably under a different name. All cases basically followed a review or let us say some type of audit, but from your list I think I have named the ones that I truly know. Mostly Company X nowadays uses mixed approaches - taking one part from framework A and leverage it with some parts of another model B and then the consultancy says: what we have seen in practice is that this way of doing it is the one true way and it has worked in various other cases so far. As most of the Company X consultants rather come from non-business backgrounds we might not be aware of all proper textbook names of such tools, but to some extent we include all of them in our work.

Question 8**Interviewer**

Are you familiar with the terms ‘strategizing’ or ‘strategy-as-practice’? What meaning do you associate to them?

Consultant 3

Yes/NO - I think I have actually heard about strategy-as-practice, but I couldn’t tell you what the official meaning is. I think, strategizing goes towards the same direction. Probably, it is about not having strategy as something that you do ones, but rather some kind of routine of an organization - like the way of how you approach strategic problems - more or less like the habit of the organization I guess. In contrast to this big project where you line up the strategy for the next ten years and that is it. Like this typical one-shot game.

Question 9**Interviewer**

In what situations do you/does your organization use strategy tools to conduct your/its strategy work? – Please also explain how.

Consultant 3

I was just thinking about one of my recent clients and their last big strategy project they had, and I actually think there hasn’t been any tool that they really used. It is sometimes funny if you look at the discussion, and I told you there are 5 people around the table and at least 4 different understandings of the term strategy itself - What does strategy mean? What is a strategy? What are the basic pieces of the puzzle that you have to put together to have a real strategy? I mean if you asked people without giving them a presentation format you would not get a lot of overlap in their answers - I am pretty sure about that. And if we look at the end product it reflects that. It is more or less a bottom up approach on collecting stuff that you think is important and then you try to come up with something that makes them fit together. Difficult to say, but honestly, I haven’t seen any real strategic planning process with this client - Company X. There was a tool they have used a lot, which is called the Eisenhower Matrix - urgent and important are the two dimensions of it. I would not consider it as a strategic tool, but that was the closest approach towards structuring their thinking. At the end of the day, there are probably two or three people who used it a lot, who have quite influential positions, and that is why everyone was suddenly using it. It is a very simple way of looking at issues and it can help you to prioritize, but it is not a one size fits all solution. And then again, I think a lot of people do a strategic project once or two times in their life, and then they are moving on and they are probably not involved next time - so there is not a lot of organizational and institutional knowledge that these people have. Thinking of a situation - I would say in practice they are used to create some level of communication between the managing teams. In true consulting projects we use them to start our reviewing process, but what I experienced on the client side was mostly very much intuitive decision making.

Question 10a***Interviewer***

The strategic management process is oftentimes divided into four stages – analysis, formulation, implementation, and evaluation and control. In what phase do you/does your organization most frequently use strategy tools?

Consultant 3

At Company X you focus on the first two steps, analysis and formulation, because when it comes to implementation and evaluation and control you are normally not at the client's side anymore. This is also a big issue if you look at how you can really have a sustainable impact, because you are not around when people are working with the stuff you came up with. Also, when they have the real-life test of what you have thought about they fail to execute it without your support, because people do not accept it. Consultancies focus a lot on phase 1 and 2. By the way, at Company Y they also look a lot at formulation as there is a lot of discussion on how to put things and how you could phrase it, but they spend very little time in evaluating and controlling, which I would say is a true weakness.

Question 10b***Interviewer***

When looking at the list again, during what phase would you typically use the following tools?

Consultant 3

SWOT - A; KSF - F, I; Core Competences - no; Scenario Planning - A, F; Value Chain - A, F; Five Forces - A; VRIO - no; ILC - no; PESTLE - no; Portfolio Matrices - A; Generic Strategies - no; Strategic Groups - no; Ansoff - no; Bowman - no; Ashridge - no; Blue Ocean - no; Eisenhower Mat - I

Question 11***Interviewer***

Referring to a specific strategic problem, which strategy tool has particularly supported you/your organization the most/least?

Consultant 3

LEAST - I do not really know. MOST - I think what I really like is scenario planning. So basically, looking at different "highly uncertain outcomes", which was actually already a plus to give the client a feeling for what are the things that could happen. You have three or four scenarios and then the client can think about how likely are these scenarios for him, and what are you going to do to be prepared. So, the whole process to find out - what are the drivers in the future that people at the organization (from very different departments) perceive as important. Even more interesting was the task of how you try to rank the scenarios and then distill the three or four drivers that are important for all - something that I found very insightful. If I think about complexity - it helps you more than a simple tool like the SWOT, which is done on one piece of paper, similar with the value chain or the Five Forces. Scenario planning is a little bit more complicated, but in this sense it can probably help you more than the simple tools as it has many more insights that are basically packed into the idea of the framework.

Question 12***Interviewer***

How do you appraise the success and workload of the strategy tools outlined below, and how would you rate their efficiency?

Consultant 3

Based on the tools that I actually used, I can say they all can be very helpful. It sort of really depends on the discussion that you have. All these strategic tools are more or less only a structure and how efficient they are or how much they can really help depends on - if you have a good discussion around them. If you look at - SWOT, Value Chain or the Five Forces, these are things that can help you, but only to the extent that you fill them with great content, and that is something that no framework or strategy tool in the world can help you to do. They can only help you to ask the right questions, but the content is not coming from the tool itself!

Consultant 3

SWOT - 3; KSF - 3; Core Competences - 0; Scenario Planning - 5; Value Chain - 3; Five Forces - 3; VRIO - 0; ILC - 0; PESTLE - 0; Portfolio Matrices - 4; Generic Strategies - 0; Strategic Groups - 0; Ansoff - 0; Bowman - 0; Ashridge - 0; Blue Ocean - 0; Eisenhower Matrix - 3

Question 13***Interviewer***

Do you/does your organization adapt the tools-in-use to the specific organizational context? Please provide examples.

Consultant 3

I am not 100% sure of how for example scenario planning is defined in textbooks, but I know that at Company X there is a strategy practice and these guys have a lot of documents on how to do scenario planning, and that can be pretty fancy I think. They have various documents for certain types of environments that you are working in, like an environment that faces complete uncertainty for example. So, there are four or five different environments that you are working on and based on these you come up with a different amount of strategies. When talking about that, I think, or I assume that we do much more than what the textbook solution says. To be honest, most people do not care about the proper definition of it, but I am sure there is an overlap between the practice and the theoretical view. I do not really know what the books say, but I know the way how Company X does it. Adaptation of them for me is inevitable, as you are always facing different situations while applying them. Again, I am not a big fan of the one size fits all solution approach. I would say there is a lot of fancy stuff you can do and then there is of course always a reference chapter in the PDs on how to apply significant instruments in different industries e.g. energy industry, automotive industry, utilities industry etc. Overall, the amount of adaptation is very high. At Company X definitely, but at Company Y it is close to zero.

Question 14***Interviewer***

To what extent are strategy tools used to reach a rational answer rather than post-rationalizing decisions that are already made?

Consultant 3

I think that also depends. I would say at Company X, where you also have a lot of people that would say that the tools are heavily number driven, we claim that tools are definitely used to reach a rational answer, as we tend to sell these results. Sometimes too many static quantitative measures play the major role, where decision makers do not care about any other qualitative results. The answer that you are going to give will maximize our set target. In the Company X cosmos you would say that easy tools are used to find the right arguments for an answer. Actually, each Company X project starts with a question, which is sometimes a quite painful process, because it takes about 4 hours to find two sentences to start with. The answers to these questions are usually delivered from tools like scenario planning. That is why I think, or that is how I have perceived and lived it, that we use tools or framework to reach a rational answer and we are not post-rationalizing decisions.

Question 15**Interviewer**

What are the advantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Consultant 3

The main advantages of strategy tools are sense-making and structuring. Further, I would say that you have lot of knowledge in a good strategy tool, which enables you to claim: what are the questions that we should ask? This process could be translated to condensed knowledge in my opinion. Tools carry a lot condensed knowledge to make it clearer.

Question 16**Interviewer**

What are the disadvantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Consultant 3

Of course, a structure is something that puts boundaries on your thinking. Obviously, that can be something that prevents you from thinking outside the box and the box in this case would be the strategy tool.

Question 17**Interviewer**

When looking at current strategy tools used in your organization, how do you assess their value in the future?

Consultant 3

They will still be around in the future. Obviously, there are things that an organization still needs as there is always a process where you have input and output factors. So, there is always an abstract layer that you can put on top of anything that you are doing when you look at a corporation. That is something that strategy tools do. They can be applied to various situations, because they are generic in a sense. Of course, if you tailor them to certain situations it is probably a little bit different, but I would say they will still be useful to develop structure and to make sense of difficult strategy tasks even in the far future. They can always be helpful to at least start the process.

Question 18***Interviewer***

How would you evaluate the impact of strategy tools?

Consultant 3

On the corporate level, e.g. Company X I think the impact is pretty low, as most of them are not really applied nor accepted. But as a consultant that is what you are doing. In most of the cases organizations have a lot of skills in absorbing the input of let us say a consultancy has given to them. Of course, the results are not directly translated into actions, but no one truly names the results of tools as convincing arguments when standing in front of an executive. It might be helpful to migrate these theoretical results into practical actions, but I think for the normal guys in an organization a strategy tool is nothing that really bothers them in their daily operations.

Question 19***Interviewer***

How can strategy tools enhance the efficiency of your organization's strategy process?

Consultant 3

I think tools definitely have the ability to enhance the efficiency of an organization's strategy process. I do not think that you are going to reinvent the wheel with them, but ideally a strategy tool is a collection of a lot of knowledge about the questions that you have to ask in the right structure to tackle a problem. Your chosen tool does not have to be the right one for every case, but at least for 90% of the cases. So yes, they can help companies to be more efficient.

Question 20***Interviewer***

What are the conditions for the successful utilization of strategy tools?

Consultant 3

Since the strategy tool itself is only a framework that gives you structure and probably educates you about the process or the methodology of how to apply them - it means that the unique content is basically the output at the end of the day. It is not something that is produced by the tool but rather by the people that apply the tool. An important condition is, to have a least one person that has seen this strategy tool applied by someone who knows what he has been doing. It really helps you to understand what the important steps are in order to make something out of this work. That can also help you to inject content into the framework. Other than that, it is kind of difficult, because if you haven't done it before or haven't seen someone doing it - I think it is too much theory and not enough practice. It can be helpful, but for really successful implementation you always need someone that can guide you through the process.

Question 21***Interviewer***

What problems should future strategy tools aim to solve?

Consultant 3

I do not think the theory around these tools should change significantly, but rather the application of them has to change. From a practical point of view the application should connect the tools to the rich data that is available nowadays. Connecting strategy to large datasets and then trying to identify what are the actual data pools you need to access and what are the things we need to look at. The results of these tools should not only lead to another discussion, but rather creating a direct access to the related numbers. The questions we ask should still be framed through strategy tools but including the right data will definitely help you to speed up the process to come to meaningful answers and to stop the gut feeling competition. At the end of the day it is important that you have lots of different opinions on the table supported through numbers or hard facts. If there would be some sort of system that enables you to include much more data I think that would make tools much more powerful within the future. In a way the theoretical concepts should be closer connected to the real life.

Question 22***Interviewer***

Do you have any more questions or is there something you would like to add?

Consultant 3

Not really, when looking at the list of your frameworks I realized that most of them do not really matter in the real world e.g. at Company X. My feeling would be that the whole theoretical discussion about what is the right way of looking at strategy is a little bit disconnected from what people do in real life. At least people in real life without the support of someone who is probably a strategy consultant or somebody from academia e.g. Porter does not have the right skills to apply all these tools properly. You should try to stay with your idea of connecting theory and practice in order to make your tools more popular for the real world.

Interview – Consultant 4 – C4**Question 1*****Interviewer***

What is your current position and area of responsibility within the organization?

Consultant 4

Within Company X I am working as a project leader, this means that I am leading small project teams consisting of 1-3 consultants. I usually also face bigger project setups, which is highly dependent on the task the customer assigns us to. So, it can be projects of up to 30 people, but it can also be just me and my team solving a question for a customer.

Question 2***Interviewer***

What is your current role in strategy work?

Consultant 4

Not all of our projects are focused on strategic questions, but some are of course. What do I do as project leader? I secure the milestones, enforce discussions, and I try to be as open minded as I can. Since we are working for clients I am only able to provide strategic advice, which sometimes means I have to be very clear about something that is extremely unsatisfying or unprofitable. My team and I check strategic alternatives e.g. we look into the project plan and realize that a certain strategy is simply not working. At that point we try to make a case and provide our customers with different alternatives. Of course, the famous portfolio analysis plays a tremendous role here. I am a sales person, so I always try to deliver a solution to enhance the entire portfolio for our client, but normally this can only be done for a single business unit.

Question 3***Interviewer***

What experiences do you have with strategy work?

Consultant 4

I can give you an example. I developed different strategies for automotive players, which meant that I had to develop service and also sales strategies with the question: how to enter markets where the customer is not placed or not involved yet. So, my role, I would say, is to be the leading advisor or referee. In some cases, we develop true strategies that are focused on different organizational functions. During the time as consultant I was already part of the development team for sales strategies, cost-cutting strategies, but basically all kinds of available strategies.

Question 4***Interviewer***

What are in your view typical strategic problems? Please try to describe various typical problems that come to your mind.

Consultant 4

Typical strategic problems are very clear to formulate. A strategic problem appears, when a customer or client is not really sure how to answer to a new market, where he hasn't played a role yet. For example, this can be market entry strategies which are quite a typical task for us to solve. Also, quite typical, and I think that is the biggest focus that we had in the last 12 months, is the currently overarching topic of digital transformation. Meaning that a lot of our customers or let us say all of our clients are facing really disruptive situations in some areas, as too many digital opportunities occur at the same time; e.g. opening new sales channels, redesigning production processes, etc. Through the occurring digital phenomenon many clients are facing disruptive situations and therefore we were asked to solve these problems for them by coming up with new digital driven strategies. When I think about the last decade it was all about the positioning of our clients e.g. in the sense of their cost position many companies showed true weaknesses, as they were unable to make the transition by themselves. So here we mainly had to develop cost-reduction strategies. The smallest part, but it is still a significant part, are mergers and acquisitions.

Question 5**Interviewer**

How would you/your organization attempt to solve such strategic projects? And do you follow a significant process that guides the strategy work?

Consultant 4

Honestly and I think that is one of our strengths, we do not really use strict patterns; meaning we are not always using Porters Five Forces to solve a problem, it is rather always an individual setup or individual approach to solve a problem, that was brought to us by a client. Of course, we use (maybe more in the background) or think about different frameworks and tools like the SWOT or the Five Forces etc., but we do not follow a strict process. I think the key approach for us is to put ourselves into the client's shoes; meaning to really understand what the problem is, and to understand what severe problems the client faces. This is truly our starting point. We start with really huge analytical work, we develop hypotheses, we approve them with the data we got, and then we mirror our results with for example benchmarking data, which means that we are looking around what the competition does in the same situation, but still I cannot think of the one true strict pattern even though this might sound like one.

Question 6**Interviewer**

How would you describe strategy tools?

Consultant 4

Strategy tools in my mind are frameworks or let us say clusters of questions you have to ask, and directions you have to walk through, or you have to check in order to solve a problem. Strategy tools are frameworks to solve problems in a structured and question-based way.

Question 7**Interviewer**

Which of the following strategy tools do you know?

Consultant 4

SWOT - yes; KSF - yes; Core Competencies - yes; Scenario Planning - yes; Value Chain - yes; Five Forces - yes; VRIO - yes; ILC - yes; PESTLE - no; Portfolio Matrices - yes; Generic Strategies - yes; Strategic Groups - no; Ansoff - yes; Bowman - no; Ashridge - no; Blue Ocean - yes;

I think that is a competitive set of tools that you have here, and I do not think I can add any more "true" strategy tools.

Question 8**Interviewer**

Are you familiar with the terms 'strategizing' or 'strategy-as-practice'?

What meaning do you associate to them?

Consultant 4

Honestly, I do not know either one of them, but I imagine that strategizing might describes the actions you have to undertake to solve a problem in a strategic way; meaning using strategic tools while practicing strategy work. Strategy-as-practice... when you consider practice or if you consider functions within a company e.g. controlling, sales, etc., and then you look at university teaching where you can learn all the basics for these functions; you should realize that strategy has to be explained in the most practical terms otherwise it is useless. The combination of the two terms, strategy and practice, might be the answer to your question. Making strategy work touchable, understandable, or even action based for people that do not know what the purpose of strategy is.

Question 9**Interviewer**

In what situation do you/does your organization use strategy tools to conduct your/its strategy work? – Please also explain how.

Consultant 4

One time my team and I were asked to give advice on how to access the Brazilian, Russian, Indian, and Chinese market for automotive suppliers to be more precise for truck suppliers. In that case we thought about various things. First of all, we had to analyze the current positioning of the client. For that we used parts of the framework of Porter and we also used the SWOT as a starting point to think and analyze the current strategic situation of our client and the industry. But as I said, we do not say let us do the SWOT or let us look into the Five Forces, we are rather interested in the questions within these frameworks that appear in our thinking process. I am not sure whether we put the templates on the table and analyzed everything along them, but of course we know them and used questions from the tools to start our strategic analysis in order to look into the current situation and priorities.

Question 10a***Interviewer***

The strategic management process is oftentimes divided into four stages – analysis, formulation, implementation, and evaluation and control. In what phase do you/does your organization most frequently use strategy tools?

Consultant 4

Definitely in the analysis phase, because it is the phase where you have to put yourself into the client's shoes, and where you have to create a holistic view of the current situation. I think these strategy tools, as you name them, are quite powerful troubleshooters to build up this holistic view. When it comes to formulation, I would call that the result of our projects or the advices that we give our clients, which basically shows them on how to approach such a situation, on how to access the market, or on how to conduct the merger, etc. Overall, this is really client specific and some of them even highly value it if we do not use those strict frameworks, as they rather expect us to adapt our knowledge/advice on their specific situation or issue. In that case using these static tools can rather be harmful for us. In implementation and evaluation and control it is also a bit different. I am not saying you do not do these stages without tools, but I think here you rather use other parameters. Normally our work stops after the first two stages, but sometimes we even kick off the implementation but sooner or later it is the client's responsibility to let it happen. Therefore, I can only underline that we most frequently use these tools during analysis.

Question 10b***Interviewer***

When looking at the list again, during what phase would you typically use the following tools?

Consultant 4

SWOT - A; KSF - A; Core Competencies - A; Scenario Planning - A; Value Chain - A, F, I; Five Forces - A; VRIO - A; ILC - A; PESTLE - no; Portfolio Matrices - A, F, I; Generic Strategies - no; Strategic Groups - no; Ansoff - A; Bowman - no; Ashridge - no; Blue Ocean - A

Question 11***Interviewer***

Referring to a specific strategic problem, which strategy tool has particularly supported you/your organization the most/least?

Consultant 4

MOST - It is the SWOT, KSFs, Value Chain and the Five Forces. I think those have been the most helpful ones when I think back. In projects, I have worked in, these 3-4 tools were mostly a good starting point, as we already had questions readily available. The biggest issues in new projects are the right questions we should ask, and therefore tools can help to guide this process. The SWOT was the overall picture and e.g. the Value Chain was used as an overall guideline; meaning going step by step through all the functions. LEAST - Honestly there is none. In the case we consider a tool as not useful, we do not use it. I cannot pick one of them, which I consider as least useful. Scenario Planning was at some point problematic, as our client thought the

scenarios that we provided are all going to happen. He was absolutely confused, because it was the first time that somebody approached their company with something like that. It is based on assumptions and that is why we think it is rather superficial.

Question 12

Interviewer

How do you appraise the success and workload of the strategy tools outlined below, and how would you rate their efficiency?

Consultant 4

I think the most common frameworks that I use, or we use, are the simple ones, because those are the ones that are most thought through. Everyone knows them, and almost everybody has used them ones or twice, which makes it much easier to start the analytical thinking process. If you can put a complex problem in a very easy and transparent framework in order to structure it, and I think that is the biggest advantage of using a tool, then this is the most efficient approach to conduct strategy work. So, the very good or the perfect tools are really efficient, when they are easy to apply and to adapt to a specific situation. The structure of them should be clear and not complex, and it should be obvious what results they can deliver. The workload - we try to limit the time of using a tool, because we rather want to focus on the true problems and afterwards you can still use one or the other tool to present your results. So, our workload is rather small compared to the success that we achieve with the frameworks.

Consultant 4

SWOT - 5; KSF - 4; Core Competencies - 3; Scenario Planning - 3; Value Chain - 5; Five Forces - 5; VRIO - 4; ILC - 3; PESTLE - 0; Portfolio Matrices - 5; Generic Strategies - 0; Strategic Groups - 0; Ansoff - 4; Bowman - 0; Ashridge - 0; Blue Ocean - 1

Question 13

Interviewer

Do you/does your organization adapt the tools-in-use to the specific organizational context? Please provide examples.

Consultant 4

Yes, we adapt our tools-in-use. Some of them we use as they are e.g. the Value Chain, but others like the Key Success Factors or the Core Competencies we use to pick the main issues or questions from those tools or frameworks but of course not the complete set of questions. We basically extract the questions that apply best to the particular case of our clients. Another example is the SWOT, because it is so easy we use it as it is. This holds also true for the Ansoff matrix. Our portfolio matrix is an easy and very good way to visualize the situation within one or more competitive markets, but in some cases, we adapt the axes as there is no one size fits all solution for such a rather complex picture. We change variables, segments, meanings, etc., but always with regard to the particular client.

Question 14***Interviewer***

To what extent are strategy tools used to reach a rational answer rather than post-rationalizing decisions that are already made?

Consultant 4

It depends on the tool we speak about. If you use all the tools that I mentioned in the analysis phase it is definitely a good lever to explore the problem, to get to know the problem, to get deeper into the problem, and to develop hypotheses for a possible solution. All that rather stands for reaching a rational answer. Maybe some of them, which are also good to visualize a structure e.g. portfolio matrices, are in some cases used to post-rationalize a decision. Our clients know that we are famous for specific tools and therefore our bosses sometimes force us to come up with the company solution, which is not always the right way to approach a client's problem. But in the big majority of the cases the tools are really used to reach a rational answer, because otherwise there would be no surplus for us to spend time with them.

Question 15***Interviewer***

What are the advantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Consultant 4

Those strategy tools help you to describe or understand a complex problem so that you can define the problem in a very sharp way. They can help you to consider all aspects of a problem, but this depends on the framework you are applying. Most of the frameworks are designed to allow you to consider and cover all aspects, so that you do not forget something that might be important. It is also a true advantage to work in a really structured way along the problem and in the end when you present your solution then the tools allow you to visualize your findings in a very transparent and well understandable way. To sum up, it is good to use these tools to grasp the entire problem in a holistic way and not to forget important aspects on the one hand side, and on the other to structure and visualize your solution in a very easy and comfortable way.

Question 16***Interviewer***

What are the disadvantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Consultant 4

That is why I said that we only use them to recall the underlying questions and not to strictly follow a process. If you use the tools or the strategic frameworks in a very strict way, then in many cases they are not really applicable to problems you are facing. Following them strictly will harm your project as you will not deliver the outcomes that the client might expect from you. This very structured way of doing strategy work can sometimes hinder you to extract the whole value of your solution.

Question 17***Interviewer***

When looking at current strategy tools used in your organization, how do you assess their value in the future?

Consultant 4

I approach this question from another point of view. If I look back, then I have seen that a lot of new strategy tools are evolving, and old tools are adapted and upgraded, and of course researchers are always looking for ways to develop new frameworks. A lot of the frameworks like the Five Forces, the Ansoff matrix, or the SWOT are pretty old-fashioned, and some people even say they are already outdated, but the sense of them or the way how the approach problems is and will always be the same. Maybe they will have other names, or they are upgraded, but I think the core ideas will last. Of course, the markets are moving really fast due to things like digitalization, and we will probably see more lean or agile approaches in the next years, but the traditional tools will always have a meaning when the users are able to adapt them to the specific situation.

Question 18**Interviewer**

How would you evaluate the impact of strategy tools?

Consultant 4

Since I am working in a strategic consultancy I can for sure say that they play a major role in my work. In my view it always depends on the type of project you are on, and it depends on the problem you have to solve for your client, but if you think about strategic problems then they usually have a huge impact. They can work as eye-openers! I think this best expresses their role. When I am saying they have a huge impact, but that does not mean I can simply use a tool and have immediate success. They are something you should always have on your mind and something that you can use to structure your thinking. They will grant you new dimensions or questions to solve your problem. They have impact, but probably not if you blindly apply them and wait for the coin to drop.

Question 19**Interviewer**

How can strategy tools enhance the efficiency of your organization's strategy process?

Consultant 4

I think the tools, if you know them really well, can provide you with a set of good questions in order to grasp the problem and they can also give you a good idea on how to structure the solution. How can they make a strategy process more efficient? Yes, maybe you should ask a consultancy. One thing for sure drives efficiency: the proper use of them. I have seen a lot of mistakes in the projects where I have been part of, but at this point you need someone that really knows what he is doing. This person should be the one that can guide you through a process that is based on the tools. He has probably already adapted one or the other and maybe this is the key to this question. You need to have strategists in place that know what they are doing and then you can work with your people, otherwise no one will even think about using them.

Question 20**Interviewer**

What are the conditions for the successful utilization of strategy tools?

Consultant 4

Well, in my job environment all of our clients are more or less at the senior level, so they are usually familiar with the development of a strategy and mostly they are also familiar with the usage of strategic frameworks or tools. I think one success driver is when your client understands the way you think and the way how and why you apply a tool. So, it is really helpful if you provide your clients with some limited understanding of the tool itself. They are the ones that have to accept to work with the tools. That holds also true for our organization. Of course, we have those tools written down in our knowledge documents and we also have templates that are usually ready to present, and I think everyone is familiar with them, but of course there are always specialists for one or the other task. Another condition is the situation itself, as tools do not always fit into every situation. So, it really depends on the difficulty and the strategic dimension of the questions or the problem that you are facing.

Question 21***Interviewer***

What problems should future strategy tools aim to solve?

Consultant 4

The strictness and their static nature is a problem, therefore the tools should be more dynamic, agile or lean so to say, because we are currently facing a lot of rapid changes in all markets, and one of them is the digitalization, which has rather a disruptive impact on the major part of the industries. So, a good strategic framework should, from now on, also deal with disruptive technologies or disruptive business environments in order to overcome this huge threat. Starting with the task: what is disruptive within our industry?

Question 22***Interviewer***

Do you have any more questions or is there something you would like to add?

Consultant 4

No, not really. Asking the why question is always interesting, as you aim to solve a knowledge lack. I think you ask the right questions, but on the next stage you should go a bit deeper. Of course, I am interested in your results and I would love to see them once you are finished.

Interview – Consultant 5 – C5**Question 1*****Interviewer***

What is your current position and area of responsibility within the organization?

Consultant 5

I would rephrase it to my clients maybe and to the companies where I have invested within recent years. My responsibility would be to help my clients to revitalize their innovation culture, especially in more traditional mid-sized companies with some established years in the market. With young start-up companies I am more working on their business concept in order to find the right fit, market/product fit and to work on their operating model, or entrepreneurial design model. There I am very active. It is more a very close sparring-partner or advisor relationship.

Question 2***Interviewer***

What is your current role in strategy work?

Consultant 5

Well, that is a question of how you define strategy. Innovation itself is strategy for a company. In that perspective it is very strategic work. But on the other side, if you talk about classic models that are around - of course we apply them to create some sort of a mental framework or mindset of how to look at, and which perspective we want to take during steps the company is taking - like bringing in a new product, improving a product, taking away a product from the market, offering new services, or going in cooperation etc.

Question 3***Interviewer***

What experiences do you have with strategy work?

Consultant 5

So, if I would talk from the perspective of my previous role, being in the management of a bank, we used some of the traditional models to create some structure, but it was more an intuitive process - I would say. The main impact on our strategy discussion was to bring in as much different perspectives as possible. From an outside perspective now, it was more a hands-on approach to find the right fit for the company and the market. It was more an intuitive, expert-driven approach bringing many different perspectives into one room to start this debate.

Question 4***Interviewer***

What are in your view typical strategic problems? Please describe at least three typical problems.

Consultant 5

There are many facets of this. One facet is certainly, having a team discussing strategy on a very academic level or abstract level, which rather creates distance to the real life. This level also creates a distance between many people that have no real approach to this academic abstract level. Another topic/facet is to create an ideal world for strategy debate, which also leads to distance in deciding where the company stands at the moment. So, the gap between the potential of the company and where the company wants to be can get very wide - that is another pitfall in my eyes. You create a strategy slide deck and you fail to implement the strategy, because your organization is simply not ready for it.

Question 5**Interviewer**

How would you/your organization attempt to solve such strategic projects? And do you follow a significant process that guides the strategy work?

Consultant 5

One thing is - it is always good to have some neutral persons or at least one person in the room that can work on a trade-off. You have a trade-off on what is the optimal, ideal strategy work for the company and what is the potential of the company. Of course, on the flip-side of discussing too much on ideal work you raise the chance to discuss too much within your box. So, you are not pushing the boundaries of the box enough. You remain within your box, within your solution room, and believe what you think is the only possible way. So, in general, you need to have somebody who guides the debate with an open mind when it is necessary, especially when people tend to say: we cannot do that, we cannot do this, and that is not possible either. So, that is one part. The other part is bringing in different perspectives (is always helping) to open everybody's mind a little bit more as well as engaging people in debate, which is also very important. Talking about this, I think it is very important to take the fear out of the room. Especially, when you talk with managers on the highest level you have a lot of communication between the lines. This communication is highly power-driven. So, who is the most powerful in the room? Who has the power shall say the most important things and that is not always the case. So, what is necessary for strategic management? Maybe first do more listening and be more humble about your own role, and listen carefully to the different perspectives in the room and to what exactly is on the table. Then you need a very cool or creative way of talking about visions and maybe some crazy ideas to solve a strategic problem. After that it takes the facilitators process to sort out what is feasible now, in the midterm, and of course in the long-term. In a way, organizations need a customized or individual process that should be connected to strategy work. Starting with ideas and listening and forwarding it to the corporate level. Such a process cannot be standardized! If you take two companies with the same product in the same market you will realize that they are completely different. They have different approaches of bringing something to the market and they have a completely different mindset in their company. Having an idea is one thing, but the execution of the idea is the main thing (e.g. Uber). It depends on the mindset within the company and it is the question of how to approach and engage stakeholders, and outside parties.

Question 6***Interviewer***

How would you describe strategy tools?

Consultant 5

Do you want to know what I have learned in theory or do you want to know what I think is a good theoretical tool? I think a good strategy tool is just a tool like a hammer that I need to put a nail in the wall. They cannot solve everything or completely enlighten the strategy process, that is for sure. I would say the main purpose of a strategy tool is to give some sort of a guideline to get an insight. An insight that you would not usually see in a very complex situation. Normally, you get flooded by information and if you look at a problem from the meta-level it is too complicated! You cannot oversee all the criteria. A strategy tool will give you some structured guideline of how to look at all sorts of criteria and helps to get various insights.

Question 7***Interviewer***

Which of the following strategy tools do you know?

Consultant 5

SWOT - yes; KSF - yes; Core - yes; Scenario Planning - yes, Value Chain - yes, Porters Five Forces - yes, VRIO - yes, ILC - yes, PESTLE - yes, Portfolio - yes, Porters Generic - yes, Strategic Groups – no; Ansoff - yes, Bowman's Strategy Clock – no; Ashridge Matrix – no; Blue Ocean - yes, Minimal viable product analysis (MVP) - yes, Experimenting - yes, Dynamic Simulation - yes

Question 8***Interviewer***

Are you familiar with the terms 'strategizing' or 'strategy-as-practice'? What meaning do you associate to them?

Consultant 5

I do not know what the real definitions could/should be. I could think of that strategizing is more thinking about the potential and strategy-as-practice is more coming from what is possible with the given strategic circumstances within an organization.

Question 9***Interviewer***

In what situation do you/does your organization use strategy tools to conduct their strategy work? - Please also explain how.

Consultant 5

If we talk about experiments for instance, that was and is a tool that we have used on a daily basis, and I would say scenario planning is something that we have applied, which is something that I would apply as a starting point for setting the strategy for the upcoming years. But scenario planning can also be applied to see where

you are now and what has changed within your scenarios, and what new scenarios are maybe possible now. I would not use it on a daily basis, but maybe on a yearly or quarterly basis (e.g. strategy review). Of course, dynamic simulation is something we have used to get a more detailed level for very complex problems that are more related to the internal circumstances. Let us say, finding what moves the needle in between the bank and what the real critical path is. So, if you switch on something here - what do you get at the end of the chain. This tool is something we have more used on an ad-hoc basis.

Question 10a

Interviewer

The strategic management process is oftentimes divided into four stages - analysis, formulation, implementation, and evaluation and control. In what phase do you/your organization most frequently use strategy tools?

Consultant 5

I think they are great in all phases/stages. The more complex your environment is, the more you need some sort of framework to come to a new insight. However, that is just the theoretical or ideal world. In reality there is a very strong use in analysis and formulation. Tools are much less used in implementation, which is more a hands-on approach. Although there are a lot of other tools we apply, like change management tools, in order to implement strategy. Evaluation and control is a more tool related approach like using KPIs and seeing how they have been developed - those types of tools. From evaluation and control you usually restart the analysis process again. Everything starts all over again. When it restarts you can see where you landed and adapt from this point.

Question 10b

Interviewer

When looking at the list again, during what phase would you typically use the following tools?

Consultant 5

SWOT - A; KSF - F; Core Competencies - not used; Scenario Planning - A, E; Value Chain - not used; Five Forces - A; VRIO - not used; ILC - not used; PESTLE - A; Portfolio - not used; Generic - not use; Strategic Groups – not used; Ansoff - not used; Bowman's Strategy Clock – not used; Ashridge Matrix – not used; Blue Ocean - not used; MVP – A, F, I; Experimenting – F, I; Dynamic Simulation - E

Question 11

Interviewer

Referring to a specific strategic problem, which strategy tool has particularly supported you/your organization the most/least?

Consultant 5

MOST - To overcome a problem it was definitely scenario planning! LEAST - I think the PESTLE analysis is a very academic approach to a lot of things that you already know. I mean there is no tool that led us to a completely catastrophic decision. If the room is full with experienced people, with a good intuition, and with good knowledge of the market, then it is very difficult to conclude with catastrophic decisions on a daily basis. You may find catastrophic decisions by ignoring a disruptive trend or sleeping over it. Than a PESTLE analysis would just bring it to mind, that there are FinTech's. With such information we deal every day. I think such a tool is good for someone, who is completely new to a market in order to get an overview on one page, which basically tells him in which market the company is embedded.

Question 12**Interviewer**

How do you appraise the success and workload of the strategy tools outlined below, and how would you rate their efficiency?

Consultant 5

In general, the main focus, also of our work, is scenario planning. That is where we discussed most and that is also what I do when I talk about innovation culture with young start-up and mid-sized companies. Regarding innovation, you always have to think in scenarios, because there you have real juicy situations where you can talk a lot, where you can apply fantasy, where you can apply the potential of the company, and then you do not need to fix a certain point in the future. So, it is much more open minded. That is something where the workload will not end. All the other tools (SWOT, Five Forces, PESTLE) we did very briefly. We put a minimum workload in them. Some of the tools were sometimes required by the board. So, we used them to fulfill the needs of the board, but not to get a real insight out of it. Of course, it depends on the acceptance of the tools, but if I consider the endless strategy slide decks I have seen in board meetings I cannot say that strategy tools are very helpful, because they do not help you to do the job. They rather help you to set a direction. Tools are highly efficient, if they are directly integrated in the daily business (e.g. experimenting, and the MVP approach), but most of the traditional ones are too static to serve this need.

SWOT - 1; KSF - 4; SP - 5; VC - 1; Five Forces - 1; PESTLE - 1; Portfolio - 0; Generic Strategies – 0; Ansoff - 4; Bowman – 0; Ashridge – 0; Blue Ocean - 3; Experimenting - 4; MVP - 5; Dynamic Simulation – 3

Question 13**Interviewer**

Do you/does your organization adapt the tools-in-use to the specific organizational context? Please provide examples.

Consultant 5

That is an easy one. We use scenario planning, which is a very open tool. You need to interpret somehow and make it useful for yourself. We used it to make budget decisions to create a best case, worst case and a base case. In general, three different budget scenarios that helped us to come to our decisions. We also used scenario

planning for strategic moves in markets (e.g. entering a new market). Experimenting is very general, but we used it mainly to test a product or our campaigns for instance. I would say that all tools should be adapted to their specific situation. What we did in experimentation - we launched A/B-testing for example, which is an action case of two different websites or two different communication messages around a product or addressing one product in two different segments or applying different prices in the same segment to see where the price elasticity lays. The MVP is more a debate of what you think is really the minimal viable product feature that you want to test. PESTLE, SWOT - we just took these tools for debates. There was no need to adapt them for our specific case.

Question 14***Interviewer***

To what extent are strategy tools used to reach a rational answer rather than post-rationalizing decisions that are already made?

Consultant 5

I love this question, but I will not go into a lot of detail here, otherwise we could talk for hours. In the context where I worked the last years and today, that has never been the case - to just post-rationalize a decision. Tools were more used to open up for discussion and then coming to a conclusion. But of course, there are situations, especially in larger organizations, where you could end up having a situation where you need to post-rationalize an already set goal or strategy. The most often you would hear: It would be good, if we would come to the same conclusion and maybe you cross-check it with your set of tools. That is normally CXO language for: Please give me the results that I want!

Question 15***Interviewer***

What are the advantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Consultant 5

As I said, when properly applied they open up the mindset. They can give structure to overcome complexity and they give some sort of a framework for a process within the strategy team to come to insights and conclusions.

Question 16***Interviewer***

What are the disadvantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Consultant 5

If badly applied; If you do the wrong perfect, then you do it just perfectly wrong. But if we put this aside - if you put in too much time and effort to formalize things that you already know without a tool, then you just waste a lot of time with academic discussions that are basically not necessary. Additionally, there are also situations where they are misused to post-rationalize decisions. In general, there is a need to simplify complexity, but the oversimplification of the tools can be problematic.

Question 17***Interviewer***

When looking at current strategy tools used in organizations, how would you assess their value in the future?

Consultant 5

The environment we live in today is not made for corporations where strategy planning could take half a year until managers have reached a conclusion. The market could already be gone or irrelevant after this time. If we stay in such a dynamic environment, and there is no real evidence that this will change so quickly, I think many of those tools will just be forgotten, because it takes too much time and effort to come to conclusions, and I think we will need other tools to come to better decisions that are more adapted to the actual environment we are working in. Tools like experimentation and scenario planning will be the tools of the future, because they are highly flexible to use. They are the only ones that have a real impact! Even traditional organizations are looking for alternative ways to conduct their strategy work more sufficiently. In the past, you knew you could invest this amount of money and half a year later you would have this outcome. Today, you put in this amount of money and it could be that it is gone, or you get instant results in form of returns, or you get nothing at the end of the day. Nothing is really plannable! The tools of the future need to be adjusted to a very dynamic feedback-driven approach.

Question 18***Interviewer***

How would you evaluate the impact of strategy tools?

Consultant 5

From my personal perspective or from a general perspective? Personally, I like direct feedback. In English you say: the proof is in the pudding when you eat it! So, you can make up a lot of ideas on the best recipe, but in the end, somebody has to eat the pudding, and then you see whether it was a good recipe or not. I like feedback-loops a lot and I think that the impact of strategy is made visible, which can directly be experienced by operations in their daily life. Every tool that leads to direct feedback is the right tool. For the other tools, I do not think that they have a real impact. These tools, in the best way, give a structure and in the worst case they are just a distraction.

Question 19***Interviewer***

How can strategy tools enhance the efficiency of your organization's strategy process?

Consultant 5

If you apply them in your daily business, then it becomes your strategy. I do not think that those academic tools, we have discussed in the list, enhance the efficiency very much. If you look at larger organizations, then you will see the marketing department where people only work on these tools. These people tend to be bureaucrats and not very active in true strategy work. So, they do a lot of desk research and want to feed the strategic process as well. In my personal opinion, I think that it is not very efficient to create a lot of distractions

just to come to a high-quality SWOT, PESTLE, or BCG analysis. If you are unable to apply the tools in real life and you do not see the results they can produce, you should rather stop using them.

Question 20***Interviewer***

What are the conditions for the successful utilization of strategy tools?

Consultant 5

First, you should take away hierarchy. If you are locked in the room with experts and different perspectives from the CXO level you will experience hierarchy, but this hierarchy does not necessarily get expressed within the process. So, take away the hierarchy and the fear that you might say something wrong, just because a manager is in the room, and give everyone a certain amount of time to run through the process. Strategy work should be similar to the process of design thinking in order to make it more emergent and creative.

Question 21***Interviewer***

What problems should future strategy tools aim to solve?

Consultant 5

A future strategy tool should be flexible enough, that I can apply it to my organization without making too many compromises. If I apply the tool I tend to simplify, but if I simplify too much just to use the tool, then it has no real use for my company anymore. A tool should be flexible enough that I can apply it to my circumstances or environment, and flexible enough to come to different types of insights, and it should not be too difficult to create the settings for it. If you need a lot of research to feed the tool it would get too complicated and nobody has the time to gather huge loads information, which becomes old very quickly. A future tool should be able to force direct feedback-loops, either within or outside the organization, which would be optimal to the dynamic markets. Meaning - getting direct feedback from the customers or your other direct stakeholders.

Question 22***Interviewer***

Do you have any more questions or is there something you would like to add?

Consultant 5

It would be interesting to hear how the practicality level of the answers would differ between larger organizations and smaller ones. How long does it take in big organizations to make a strategic decisions (maybe) supported through tools, and who is/ or who is not involved in true strategy work.

Interview – Executive 1 – E1**Question 1*****Interviewer***

What is your current position and area of responsibility within the organization?

Executive 1

I am the director of strategy and development within the internal consulting department, which is my official role. So, more or less I am a corporate director. What do I do? Right now, I have the responsibility for various huge projects. I can give you two examples. The company I am working for wants to build a new plant somewhere, which is an investment of around 1 Billion Euros, and I am responsible for the decision - where do we or where should we do it? The other example; we have a few businesses, one of them consists 80% of that business and it represent 12 Billion in net sales yearly. We want to reorganize the structure from the top down to become more customer focused, which involves 35000 of the 47000 people at our company. How do we create a basic framework for this issue? This is something I do as well, just to give you a few examples.

Question 2***Interviewer***

What is your current role in strategy work?

Executive 1

Since I am working for the internal consulting my job is more focusing on the implementation, but we are also doing consulting for strategic work. So, when one of our business partners says: okay we need a strategy for this, this and that; then we help. In that sense we are doing more management strategy and we would support in processes where we either go high level design, high level strategic decisions, or high-level implementation.

Question 3***Interviewer***

What experiences do you have with strategy work?

Executive 1

I led the global launch of an international product. So, we had nothing and then you have a year and a team together where you bring medical and marketing people together to decide where do we position ourselves, how do we compete, against whom are we competing, where do we want to launch? So, you do marketing, geographic expansion, life cycle management of a global brand, which does not exist on the paper. I think most of the strategy tools came to play there and that project has been the broadest one so far. There was also a second project, which was a restructuring of a business unit at a local level; and the other one is a project where we have just bought a portfolio and a team, where our task is to integrate two portfolios and two teams. This project is a post-acquisition integration at a local level. And fourthly, is the project that we do now, we offer our support on very high-level strategies, but we are supporting in the process.

Question 4***Interviewer***

What are in your view typical strategic problems? Please try to describe various typical problems that come to your mind.

Executive 1

Usually the first question is: where are we going? Quo Vadis? Where are we going and why are we here? For example, our company has actually four businesses. So, problems are: should we be in all four? Should we have a fifth one? Should we make one independent? Should we actually combine two as we might see eventual synergies? All these questions stand for one. Another is if you take the biggest unit and that one is the one that covers many different pharmaceutical areas. This one represents 80% of our sales, the other stands for 20% of our sales, but in 5 years' time we expect that the biggest one will go down to 40%. So, do we invest in A or not, or do we manage for profitability? Do we dare to do that? Do we then invest in B to bring it 20% up, or are we now going to invest in areas where we have never been? This is the uncertainty of strategic questions or problems. Another idea; let us go into orthopedic pain even though we have never been there, and we have no idea. Why are we here and where are we going? That is where you really need to think about what drives us, what are the needed capabilities? Are these capabilities we want to acquire? Or how does the market changes? That is where big strategic things come in, which is located on a very high organizational level. On the lower, given the surroundings and let us assume we know where we are going and why we are here, and then you get the question: how are we going to do this? Is the current setup, right? Does it fit for our purpose? If we go to battle, should we go with seven small troops or should we bring in a big brigade and just walk over the people? And there are probably reasons to do both at different times. And that "how-question" occurs a lot, like does this make sense? What about the setup of our unit or of our team? And you have this question at high levels, which is something I am doing right now, and you have it at lower levels where you should do it for small teams. Once these decisions have been made the question of how do you then implement those strategies comes up. But, strategy implementation is not strategy. My firm's belief is that you first need to know "why" you are doing it and then "how" you do it, and then if you do not deliver on the "what" you may as well not have had a true strategy.

Question 5***Interviewer***

How would you/your organization attempt to solve such strategic projects? And do you follow a significant process that guides the strategy work?

Executive 1

I think I will split my answer into three. Yes, we have a very specific process on how the corporation strategy is done, which is more or less a repeating cycle. The question I sometimes ask is: are we running the process or are we really asking strategic questions? With that I mean: are we sitting together every year to create strategy for business A, B, C and D and then the overall one, or do we also step back and say what about getting rid of business A, combining B and C, and starting E? I am not sure if we have a process for that, which is my personal question. What we do are major processes; and do we truly have a clear structure? I dare to say that

at the moment we do not. We have a lot of experiences from the past and when we do something we look for the question: have we done this before? How have we done it? Let us set that structure up, let us make changes based on our learnings, and also pull out information from elsewhere, and that is done actually quite well; and then we build something and run the process. That truly happens, but are we strong in then implementing it? No, I do not think we are, but that is my personal opinion. Thirdly, and that is actually not strategy, but I am going to mention it anyway, if you then run a project the Why? How? What? starts all over again, and then we have the structure that works, and this structure is all about guiding your work. The why should never change, and I think the moment you go down from high level strategy to more tactical implementation there will already be more structures in place. The higher you go up it is perhaps less, although the higher strategy is a process, but if you go even higher like why are we here, which is a scary bit. All this brings me back to my favorite tool the Why, How, What? Approach as it allows you to use it at the lowest level, but especially at the highest you can use it a lot to start structuring your first thoughts.

Question 6***Interviewer***

How would you describe strategy tools?

Executive 1

Strategy tools for me are a means to either visualize, bringing complex data into a meaningful set of ideas, and once you have done that you start to understand your surroundings better and it also allows you to think what this data is telling me about where I should go. But overall, I think, it starts with visualization, from which you can go into planning, into the scenario where I have to change basic assumptions because the data told me something else to what I initially thought. Here I have to think about moving somewhere else. But it clearly starts with visualization and if you do not have the overview then you will see it; or if I have the overview I am able to tell you what the surrounding is about and what the issues are, and then you can have a meaningful discussion with me. Once you have visualized your findings it changes your assumptions, it opens up possibilities, it brings in strategic questions, it tells you where your gaps are, it helps you to perhaps move from I do not know what I do not know to I know what I do not know and therefore I can go and get it. Or I can say I do not know this, but here is my gut feel to go there. The visualization allows you to plan, change, post-rationalize, and that is how I and also people use these tools. Tools are ways to force me to get information, which I hate to do, and that is what people find tedious. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the strategists to make the tools chosen usable.

Question 7***Interviewer***

Which of the following strategy tools do you know?

Executive 1

SWOT - yes; KSF - yes; Core Competencies - yes; Scenario Planning - yes; Value Chain - yes; Five Forces - yes; VRIO - no; ILC - yes; PESTLE - yes; Portfolio Matrices - yes; Generic Strategies - yes; Strategic Groups - yes; Ansoff - no; Bowman - no; Ashridge - no; Blue Ocean - yes; Why?How?What? - Simon Sinek - yes; fever curve (profile analysis) - yes; Game Theory - yes

Question 8**Interviewer**

Are you familiar with the terms 'strategizing' or 'strategy-as-practice'? What meaning do you associate to them?

Executive 1

Strategy-as-Practice, if you ask me do I know that specific term, then I have to respond with: No. Strategizing, yes. What it would mean to me is the process of creating, changing, adapting, or updating a strategy. Strategy-as-Practice: I have two associations with that; one would be that it stands for being a strategist that practices strategy every now and then; the other association would be: let us bring strategy into our daily practice or let us stay in our thinking. That is the two things that come to my mind. Using tools is probably part of this practical approach as it helps you to structure your issues. I can do it with top tier executives, but I can also do it with my sister's kids. So, if strategy-as-practice would mean to integrate daily business and practice in order to have a daily interaction, and you should not see that separately, then that is what comes to my mind. Theoretical strategy knowledge and practical experience should always go hand in hand with each other, because true strategists should not think separately. Both parts are necessary. Maybe a more proper definition for it: incorporate strategic thinking in your everyday practice or business.

Question 9**Interviewer**

In what situation do you/does your organization use strategy tools to conduct your/its strategy work? – Please also explain how.

Executive 1

Various situations just pop in my head: do we want to buy a business? Do we want to sell a business? Do we want to reorganize a business? Do we want to start a new area of competence? So, these are typical situations, and I think you cannot go there without using any tools. And this is the answer for the corporation view. For myself I can say that we used most of them when we were presented with an absolutely surprising or shocking problem. This can be a product launch, this can be an upcoming acquisition, or anything else that our company is planning to do within the near future, but the tools came apart when we needed a starting point. How else would you start a task where you actually do not know how it is going to be in 6 months? In strategy it is often about the question: does it fit with what we as a company have done in the past? At this point all the usual strategic questions pop up again and you know the tools that are going to help you to solve these issues.

Question 10a***Interviewer***

The strategic management process is oftentimes divided into four stages – analysis, formulation, implementation, and evaluation and control. In what phase do you/does your organization most frequently use strategy tools?

Executive 1

The tools are used quite frequently within analysis. They are also used a lot, but a bit less than in the analysis, in formulation. They are almost completely not used in implementation, and I dare to say that in 99% of all cases companies do not even think about the last stage, because if they reach this stage they simply start the entire process all over again. Where these tools should be used? Again, you use them to visualize and then plan, identify gaps, etc. Ideally, and I have done this with a brand, you use many tools to understand your surroundings and it is perfectly fine that you use them; you should most frequently use them in the analysis phase. The tools tell you what you should know, but they also tell you what you do not. For analysis it is fine that you are using many more than you will in the end use for the formulation, but you have to make sure that you are not missing something. Let us use tools that force me to think in ways that I dislike, so that they tell you whether you have missed something. If you then go to formulation you would certainly use those tools where you have seen the biggest impact, whether it was opportunities or threats, and this is where you base your formulation on. After that you go to implementation, which is actually project management, and you are suddenly able demonstrate where exactly you are by making connections to the tools you have used in the previous stages. Within the implementation I would use the tools to communicate where I would like to go.

Question 10b***Interviewer***

When looking at the list again, during what phase would you typically use the following tools?

Executive 1

SWOT - A, F; KSF - no; Core Competencies - A, F; Scenario Planning - F, I, E; Value Chain - no; Five Forces - no; VRIO - no; ILC - A, F, I, E; PESTLE - A; Portfolio Matrices - A, F, I, E; Generic Strategies - no; Strategic Groups - A, F, I, E; Ansoff - no; Bowman - no; Ashridge - no; Blue Ocean - F; Why? How? What? - A, F, I; Fever Curve - F; Game Theory - A, F, I, E

Question 11***Interviewer***

Referring to a specific strategic problem, which strategy tool has particularly supported you/your organization the most/least?

Executive 1

MOST - Why? How? What? has helped me the most. The other tool that helped the most was the game theory and we use it a lot. This tool was somehow an eye-opener for me and we went to such an extreme that we spent a full workshop on the functionality of it. The game theory is our umbrella to reach a logical decision. We test everything that we do, and we level the results with our targets. It was quite useful when we planned to launch

our new brand, as it was guiding our decision-making process. Again, it was able visualize our weaknesses or things that we might have overlooked. LEAST - Let us put it this way, I need to answer this question from different levels. We had a process where we wanted to go outside and the product was there. So, the tools that look inside are then less relevant. When thinking about the outside world for sure the PESTLE and the Five Forces pop up and for sure you can use them, but it depends on where on my strategic level I am. On a lower level the Five Forces have been extremely useless, because the picture it is drawing was simply too broad. Looking at the industry itself is something you should do on the board level, but not when you are part of a lower level implementation team. Such tools have led my team to the point where they felt comfortable, but not to the customer and the opportunity that was connected to them. It clearly depends on the situation and the context you are facing. In some situations, it is extremely useful to use one or the other internal or external tool, but in other situations they will rather be a waste of time or they can even be misleading. Summing up, I can say that the game theory together with the Why? How? What? Thinking has been the main driver of success for the branding example, because both were really simple.

Question 12

Interviewer

How do you appraise the success and workload of the strategy tools outlined below, and how would you rate their efficiency?

Executive 1

It is worth to do it, and I even dare to say if you do not do it you are a dead duck in the water. In general, you need to use these tools even if it takes more time than expected. Again, it comes down to visualization. You need to understand where you are, you need to be able to communicate, you need to be able to follow up, you need to be able to come back, and only then the use of tools can drive success. People understand a picture better than long texts. I can only recommend that you take the time that is needed to find a valuable solution, and then workload does not play a role anymore. Companies can be very successful when they use tools, but they need to have the knowledge, they need to have the resources, and they need to adjust time to it. A powerful visualization does more than just planning, it also helps you to communicate, therefore implement, and therefore tells you if we have reached the solution or if we haven't. When looking at the organizational levels again I can for sure say it is worth while using them on the highest level, but if you go down to like brand level stuff there are a few that simply make no sense, and therefore are not worth while the workload. Especially the tools like the PESTLE and the Five Forces and even the SWOT are sometimes a no fit for this lower level stuff, because they cannot provide you with anything that solves a very specific problem.

Executive 1

SWOT - 3; KSF - 0; Core Competencies - 4; Scenario Planning - 3; Value Chain - 2; Five Forces - 0; VRIO - 0; ILC - 4; PESTLE - 2; Portfolio Matrices - 4; Generic Strategies - 0; Strategic Groups - 5; Ansoff - 0; Bowman - 0; Ashridge - 0; Blue Ocean - 4; Why? How? What? - 5; Fever Curve - 4; Game Theory - 5

Question 13***Interviewer***

Do you/does your organization adapt the tools-in-use to the specific organizational context? Please provide examples.

Executive 1

I adapt them! For example, the strategic group analysis, I adapt it and we for sure add more dimensions to our tools, or we connect 2-3 variables to make them more meaningful (e.g. growth vs. profitability; risk vs. investment, or risk and investment vs. growth and profitability). This is just a different way to look at different contexts in order to figure out where I want to go, and am I using it to figure out which business I want to sell. It depends on what your question is, and here the need for adaptation usually comes apart. The only situation where I would not adapt them is when tools force you to do something that you do not want to do, but I know I need to do it. At this point, I sometimes leave them "blondly" as is. Sometimes you have a group meeting and you have to say: okay, let us really try to answer it in the way we are supposed to.

Question 14***Interviewer***

To what extent are strategy tools used to reach a rational answer rather than post-rationalizing decisions that are already made?

Executive 1

I dare to say that in 95% of the cases within business practice it is a post-rationalization, if not more. But it is reality. This is why I gave you the branding example, because we had to do everything to make it successful, and here most of the tools forced us to do what we were asked for. Usually at this point you bring in an external consultancy, but I believe that is not the right move, as you should first go and do this yourself. When you do it yourself, then tools are actually used for what they have been developed for, but unfortunately they will still be used to post-rationalize later on. I often sit in presentations and I mostly know where people want to go, and what they are presenting is not un-useful. It is maybe part of the reality, but they normally leave something out, which I call passive lying. Their result is the one they want to present, but it is not the full picture, because it could possibly make their project miserable. Most strategists have to realize that the tools were developed to help you to ask the right questions and that is it. Tools are most used to visualize, and this visualization is either used to post-rationalize, which means I present a part of the truth that I want to present, and in good sense they are actually used to plan or to challenge.

Question 15***Interviewer***

What are the advantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Executive 1

Advantages - visualization that helps me through all the phases. The tools force me to get data in that I do not have and I did not know that I am missing it. They force me to do something. Visualization - which I can use to plan, to communicate, and to structure. They force me to obtain data that challenge my beliefs and that enlarge my knowledge in order to move to something that creates value. Their simplicity is clearly an advantage.

Question 16**Interviewer**

What are the disadvantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Executive 1

Using the wrong tool for the wrong thing, because nobody really guides you here (e.g. an internal analysis at a lower organizational is not really interesting). Tools become an exercise and not solution, and that is clearly wrong. If we are only filling out templates for the sake of slide decks, then we should stop using them, because this makes absolutely no sense. The how is seen as the why. Sometimes they are only established to say: here we go, this our new strategy process, which is wrong. The tools should not be used for the idea to establish a process. Tools perhaps increase complexity even though you wanted to lower the complexity while using them. Tools can either complexing things that are simple or they oversimplify things that are complex, but you will only have that complaint if you use the wrong tools. A simple result is enough; you do not have to complicate it, because you have the feeling: oh, this is not enough.

Question 17**Interviewer**

When looking at current strategy tools used in your organization, how do you assess their value in the future?

Executive 1

They will stay, and it is like a religion. As long as we do not know the answers to all our questions we will need something to create the world around us. We all try to do the same thing; we want to understand complex issues, and these issues start with very basic questions: why are we here? How are we going to solve this issue? What are we going to do about it? With these tools you are trying to create sense in a world that you cannot really grasp, as you of course cannot know anything, but you need to make decisions to move forward, and you need something that guides you. Our environment and especially industry environments are too complex and therefore we have tools right now and we will have tools in the future. I belief that tools will be changed or adapted, but the theory will last. In strategy we do not know what the reality is, but we have tools that give us the picture. So, they will be around us and we need them, and I belief with your own personal input you can make them last for a very long time. Every strategist has its strategy tool kit and he is responsible for picking the right one. Not all tools are helpful in any situation, but if you ask me "will they still be around?" I can for sure say: yes, they will be.

Question 18***Interviewer***

How would you evaluate the impact of strategy tools?

Executive 1

Yes, they have an impact, but sometimes for the better and the worse. One great example from the past comes to my mind here. It is the KODAK example. I could have shown you tools saying we should go here, because this is where our profitability looks most promising, and all of them trusted me and thought: oh, he is probably right. Unfortunately, I think the managers must have chosen the wrong tools. Based on that example, you can see how strategists were overcomplicating things, which were actually very simple, and even gave the wrong recommendation, because they believed they could survive everything. The answer to your question is: tools have a huge impact and usually very positively, but the danger is that you rely on everything they tell you. Let me make this clear, that is why post-rationalization can be so dangerous, because people trust you as they all think: oh great, when I look at this picture I truly get it. You should think through all of your analysis and challenge your results, because the impact is already there, but you have to make sure that your results do not change anything that might be dangerous for your entire existents. In the end, a tool is a tool; use it when you need it; do not use it when do not need it; but carry your box around and if new tools come up put them in; and every time you are approaching a problem open the toolbox and pick the tools with the greatest fit.

Question 19***Interviewer***

How can strategy tools enhance the efficiency of your organization's strategy process?

Executive 1

The visualize ideas and simplify things, they visualize gaps, and they visualize possibilities. Tools are more or less a way to present information, which you can use to make decisions and maybe also assumptions. People should use them to see the full picture, and only with the right set of questions your strategy process can be enhanced. The tools give you the questions, why do not you make use of them? Use them as a support or right next to your established strategy process and I promise that you will find new viewpoints on the results you have previously gathered without even thinking about a tool.

Question 20***Interviewer***

What are the conditions for the successful utilization of strategy tools?

Executive 1

People that are involved in strategy work need to understand the problem first and then certain tools will help you to come up with a solution. Again, this starts with the question: why are we here and why are we doing this? I can only recommend being as transparent as possible, which is pretty much the main condition for the successful utilization. You need to use the right tools for the right situation, and also the right people working on the right types of strategy at the right time. How can you decide on which tool is the right tool? This comes

with experience. Of course, you will make mistakes and waste time, but that is why you always have to carry your tool box around, because at some point there will be "the situation" for the tools that came to your mind first.

Question 21***Interviewer***

What problems should future strategy tools aim to solve?

Executive 1

My wish is that strategy is not a word, is not a noun but a verb, and I wish that it is as much part of our DNA as net sales are. Therefore, my wish is that strategy is not separated from the business. You cannot separate it from tactics, as well as you cannot separate marketing from medical. With that said my wish then is that strategy tools do exactly that. They should allow and force me to challenge myself, visualize what I know and what I do not know, and they should force me to classify the value of the results. I do not think that future strategy tools will be very different, as they will mostly be adaptations of the original frameworks, but the problems they should be able to solve in the future are the connections between all stages of the strategy process. Future tools should be capable of going through the entire process. Strategy without implementation is the same like implementation without strategy, as both will not work without the other. Future strategy tools should solve the issue of disconnecting strategy from business, or business from tactics, or tactics from strategy. I guess one of the biggest mistakes is to use them isolated from your process, since the integration is much more important than most strategists think.

Question 22***Interviewer***

Do you have any more questions or is there something you would like to add?

Executive 1

I do not know if you should change something in your questionnaire, but I would give you the following for your entire PhD. Strategy is done for a reason and that is simple: why are we doing it? Your PhD is more about the HOW, and not so much about the WHAT. Wherever you go, strategy is not a process for the sake of a process, and I know you know that. But to make your PhD your work I would recommend keeping asking the WHY, and then giving me a guide how it is done in the real world. Once we have our strategy, we need to ask ourselves how do we make sure that it is not just a process, and how can we really use it to go into operation-mode, and once we have operation-mode; how do we bring it back? Your question is good and simple, and you should keep asking people why are you doing that?

Interview – Executive 2 – E2**Question 1*****Interviewer***

What is your current position and area of responsibility within the organization?

Executive 2

I am the vice president of strategic development and I am directly reporting to the CEO, and my responsibility is it to oversee our corporate strategy.

Question 2***Interviewer***

What is your current role in strategy work?

Executive 2

So, what do we do? My team is responsible for the development and enhancement of the corporate strategy. We are the global "owner" of the strategic planning process and we are supporting the development of the overall portfolio of businesses, meaning divestments, in-organic growth, and organic growth in each and every field that we are in.

Question 3***Interviewer***

What experiences do you have with strategy work?

Executive 2

From my CV, I am now 10 years in business. I worked at a global consultancy firm for about 7 years. My role was mostly dedicated to strategy practice, but I would always divide that into three sections: strategy, restructuring and reorganization. These were the main parts or projects. Primarily I was based within the pharma and chemicals industry, but I also did some M&A work including due diligence processes (commercial, financial etc.), which completes more or less the picture. After that I joined Company X and I am now working in this department for roughly 3 1/2 years. Here I am primarily dealing with projects and global initiatives related to our business or tasks that are related to global milestones that were driven by the board of management. At the end of the day we are basically the ones who execute these plans.

Question 4***Interviewer***

What are in your view typical strategic problems? Please try to describe various typical problems that come to your mind.

Executive 2

First, I think it starts with - why do we have to have a strategy? This is truly the first thing you have to understand if you want to get to a specific goal in the future, and after that you have to answer the question of how should I do that. If you have understood that, the second question is: where to define and locate the strategy? Is it a global strategy? Is it a regional strategy? Is it a business strategy? So, the question you have to answer is: at what level do I have to undertake the strategy work? And when you know the level, you basically know the unit, for which you are doing it for, and here it becomes an easier approach, because you can immediately go through all the analysis, with e.g. all the tools you are working with. Thereafter you will have to work on a target picture, which is what we currently do with all our businesses. From there on we carry out some gap analysis on how to get to the picture in order to decide what has to be done in terms of missing competencies, and then it comes to the question of execution and there you have to define what kind of priorities or initiatives you are carrying out. We also do that with a road mapping process, meaning innovation roadmaps, technology and process roadmaps etc. So, and what is the key challenge there? It is not the tools, and it is not the process itself, it is the people! You are working with people that have an operating role in the business, which means they have their day-to-day business with day-to-day priorities. But strategy is nothing that you can do in a day-to-day manner. When you review or develop strategy it takes time if done in a proper way, and there the operating people need guidance through this process, e.g. with the help of tools or by just having the right questions for them, so that they are able to start their own thinking process. If this is very well managed with a workshop or process, then you are able to come to new perspectives and new ideas on how to further develop your business. What is also crucial for strategy work, even if it is not directly related to it, is culture. Maybe you know that culture eats strategy for breakfast. When we started to develop our new strategy two years ago we also directly had a parallel cultural development process in place. In a nutshell this is what I think are strategic problems that appear on an organizational level.

Question 5**Interviewer**

How would you/your organization attempt to solve such strategic projects? And do you follow a significant process that guides the strategy work?

Executive 2

Yes, we have a dedicated strategy process in place. We have more than 30 business fields whereby each has a single strategy, which is surrounded by the company's overall strategy framework. We also have a yearly strategy review, which is driven by the so-called Delta analysis. So, what has changed compared to the previous year? This is done for each and every business field. Normally, the management teams do this by themselves, but often times we have to support them due to reasons I have already described. After this data collection in all different strategic business fields we execute our strategic planning process. By the way, this is absolutely template driven. We call that the strategy book. Each of our businesses has a strategy book with all templates and tools inside just to give some guidance on how to do it properly. After that, this is used from the bottom up to the portfolio level where we then have a review of the overall portfolio, and this is then taken forward and reviewed every quarter by means of reviewing all specific strategic priorities in the so called "business review meeting". The whole board participates in this meeting and once a year we do a budgeting, and before

the budgeting we take the new information from the strategic review work and link it to strategic projects that should be executed within in the near and far future. In addition to that, we prioritize the cap backs allocation on the basis of the overall portfolio and the role each business field has in it. So, our strategy process is directly linked to the financial budgeting, which is also a crucial fact, because otherwise we have a lot of nice presentations but that would be it, and this is not working in practice. So, you really have to link it to the financials and then you can say where you would like to invest your money based on the analysis. Exactly this is done every year in our budgeting process and that is why the strategic discussion takes place before all financial discussions, which is absolutely necessary in order to create this close link between the two. Financials are not everything, but they should be in line with your strategic plans.

Question 6

Interviewer

How would you describe strategy tools?

Executive 2

I think they are a means of structuring your thinking. Some tools are helpful to do that in order to come to some good results, but of course tools cannot really reflect the whole complexity of the entire world. So, it is always a simplification of it in order to grab real important things, and if you apply them in a correct way you can really come to your conclusion, but if you have people that are not experienced in working with these tools they oftentimes can rather be useless. Maybe a second thought: the acceptance of these tools is highly driven by who is doing the work with them, because if they are not accepted I would recommend: Do not use them!

Question 7

Interviewer

Which of the following strategy tools do you know?

Executive 2

SWOT - Yes; KSF - yes; Core Competencies - yes; Scenario Planning - yes; Value Chain - yes; Five Forces - yes; VRIO - yes; ILC - yes; PESTLE - yes; Portfolios - yes; Generic Strategies - yes; Strategic Group Map - no; Ansoff - yes; Bowman - no; Ashridge - no; Blue Ocean Framework - yes; Delta Analysis - yes; Value Proposition - yes; IP Analysis/Strategy - yes; M&A Matrix - yes

Question 8

Interviewer

Are you familiar with the terms 'strategizing' or 'strategy-as-practice'?

What meaning do you associate to them?

Executive 2

I do not know if I truly know these terms, but what I would suggest is that the underlying idea is to turn strategy into practice, and to work in strategic ways by defining and implementing a real strategic approach, and not by just doing day-to-day work - the so-called gut-feeling strategy making. It is not about what the organization has, it more about what the organization does with it.

Question 9***Interviewer***

In what situation do you/does your organization use strategy tools to conduct your/its strategy work? – Please also explain how.

Executive 2

As I already said, in our strategic planning process the strategy work is absolutely template driven, which is probably the case for most corporates. Included in these templates are the strategy tools in order to conduct strategic analyses. So, they are applied at least once a year, when we do our strategy review, but also when we do other projects, which is rather an ad-hoc decision. We look at the tools and decide to use one based on the situation or problem we are facing - does it make sense or rather not?

Question 10a***Interviewer***

The strategic management process is oftentimes divided into four stages – analysis, formulation, implementation, and evaluation and control. In what phase do you/does your organization most frequently use strategy tools?

Executive 2

This is for sure in the analysis stage. For us it is highly useful to do an analysis in a very structured way and therefore you can easily apply these tools. In all the other stages we include the information that we have gathered during the analysis, but the majority of strategy tools is definitely used in the first phase. Some tools create interlinks, e.g. the SWOT analysis delivers valuable information in order to formulate objectives or develop the hypotheses.

Question 10b***Interviewer***

When looking at the list again, during what phase would you typically use the following tools?

Executive 2

SWOT - A; KSF - A; Core Competences - A,F; Scenario Planning - A; Value Chain - A; Five Forces - A; VRIO - no; ILC - A; PESTLE - A; Portfolio - E; Generic Strategies - F; Strategic Groups - no; Ansoff - A, F; Bowman - no; Ashridge - no; Blue Ocean - no; Delta Analysis - E; Value Proposition - F; IP analysis - A, F, I; M&A - A, F

Question 11***Interviewer***

Referring to a specific strategic problem, which strategy tool has particularly supported you/your organization the most/least?

Executive 2

MOST - absolutely the portfolio matrix. It was very useful when we defined the overall strategy and then derived the business field strategies. There was a process before that, which was focusing on the question: how can we develop these new business fields. We never had these business fields, so we literally created a completely new strategic planning unit. After having defined these units we put everything into the portfolio to map all new fields against each other in terms of attractiveness and their competitive position. I think this was the first time, that we had a real deep transparency on our businesses. That was also very helpful for the communication with the top managers. Now it is accepted and implemented, and we are also working with it with respect to our resource allocation. LEAST - Maybe the ones we are not using, because the tools we are using are mostly useful otherwise we would stop using them. I cannot think of a tool that has been misleading or not working. The performance of a tool depends on its users and acceptance.

Question 12**Interviewer**

How do you appraise the success and workload of the strategy tools outlined below, and how would you rate their efficiency?

Executive 2

Using them is clearly very time consuming, but if tools, methods, frameworks or structured processes are not adding value, then I would recommend do not use them. We had such a phase, because the template-based approach was not accepted by the operating guys. In that case, strategy work would be completely useless and only time consuming. But thinking of my recent years at Company X I can for sure say, that the tools we have used were highly successful, and it was always worth it to spend time applying them. Meanwhile we managed to have a real accepted strategy process, and with this process also the tools, as people have realized what you can do with these tools and understood that they really add new perspectives that they never had before. As such, I would say that the efficiency or the success is very high, however you really have to take care that you do not overload the organization with the entire process. That also means that not each and every analysis and tool has to be applied in a new way each year. That is why we do the Delta analysis to keep our process efficient and to just focus on what has really changed.

Executive 2

SWOT - 4; KSF - 4; Core Competencies - 3; Scenario Planning - 2; Value Chain - 5; Five Forces - 5; VRIO - 0; ILC - 3; PESTLE - 3; Portfolio - 4; Generic Strategies - 4; Strategic Groups - 0; Ansoff - 5; Bowman - 0; Ashridge - 0; Blue Ocean - 0; Delta - 5; VP - 5; IP Analysis - 4; M&A Matrix - 5

Question 13**Interviewer**

Do you/does your organization adapt the tools-in-use to the specific organizational context? Please provide examples.

Executive 2

We absolutely adapt the tools to our context, but maybe we do not adapt them, we rather apply them in a different or let us say our way (e.g. the portfolio matrices). There are a lot of portfolio matrices and each and every consultancy firm claims their one is the right one. That is okay for me, but what we tried is a bit different. If we look at the BCG model I like the idea of relative market share although it is not all about market share, but what I do not like is that they only plotted market growth on the other axis, as market growth does not describe market attractiveness. I can give you an example: in solar industry you have very high growth rates, but the market is highly unattractive. So, BCG would claim to invest in it. That is why we had a closer look at the McKinsey approach and decided that we need more than one criterion for market attractiveness. Therefore, we now have five criteria to define what market attractiveness is truly about. We are basically combining two tools. If you use the McKinsey approach for competitive position it is always skewed, and that would mean that all businesses are way too good. So that is why we only took their market share approach - of course this also depends on market definition etc. The tool also has a lot of weaknesses; however it is easy and fact based, but too much based on the personal perception scoring of the guy who is doing the analysis with the McKinsey approach. All that led us to the combination of both models.

Question 14**Interviewer**

To what extent are strategy tools used to reach a rational answer rather than post-rationalizing decisions that are already made?

Executive 2

I can give you an example. We took a look at a data-based analysis of Bain. They plotted ROCE and relative market share within their portfolio analysis. What you see is that the higher the relative market share the higher the ROCE. In particular that means that leaders outperform followers. Then we did exactly the same for our portfolio and the result was exactly the same. We were earning money in businesses where we had a very good position and we were losing money where we had a very weak position. We plotted it in the exact same way and mirrored it and that is why I think we were not justifying it, because we took empirical evidence. Then we applied that to our portfolio, and basically saw the same results. Is it now true or not? Or is it just a statistical view? Well I do not know, but from the pure observation we draw the conclusion that there has to be something with this relationship. Although there are a lot of researchers and maybe also practitioners that are telling this, I would still claim that there is always a rational answer coming out of these tools. That is why I would say that we are not trying to justify our results, as we always do the analysis from scratch, but of course you always have to ask yourself - is that really an analysis or is that what I would like to have as a result? This can only be prevented if you really question yourself all the time. It is for sure not about belief! It is rather about facts and figures.

Question 15**Interviewer**

What are the advantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Executive 2

The tools are structuring your thinking, which is really the core advantage. You normally have a relatively easy concept combined with a relatively easy tool and if you apply it in the right way you can come to some good conclusions. You of course discuss your results with the management team whether these conclusions are really reflecting their gut feeling, their management view, or if they rather not do it. It is always a combination of doing tool work and the reflection of the reality.

Question 16***Interviewer***

What are the disadvantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Executive 2

If you are really believing that tools deliver the truth, then very bad results can appear. So, if you do not have this process in between to conduct this gap analysis with the reality, then tools could possibly lead you to a wrong decision, which would be a disaster for a company. That is why I think it is really important to understand that a tool is just a tool, and a tool has some advantages, but it cannot portray the whole reality as it is. You have to be very clear about what to expect from the tools and what their boundaries are, and which answers cannot be delivered. Therefore, I recommend that you should always do the loop or the reality check!

Question 17***Interviewer***

When looking at current strategy tools used in your organization, how do you assess their value in the future?

Executive 2

Well, I do not think the value of the tools will further increase, but I would rather say that it is even more important for tool users to employ them better and to fill them with data that we already have, because this is what is mostly problematic. Tools will always be around and there are a lot available, but I do not think we need more. Strategists should invest the time in the existing tools and take all the data they have and put it into the appropriate tools. This is the more crucial work for the future, and that could be done in an even more structured and efficient way. More tools? I do not think so.

Question 18***Interviewer***

How would you evaluate the impact of strategy tools?

Executive 2

Well, if you employ them properly the impact can be very high. Based on our portfolio analysis and value chain analysis we really undertook some real-world decisions e.g. to divest businesses, to close businesses, and also to decide where to invest. So, I would say: applied in a very proper way the impact is quite high.

Question 19***Interviewer***

How can strategy tools enhance the efficiency of your organization's strategy process?

Executive 2

First, if you do not have a good process it is rather not increasing efficiency, it is decreasing efficiency. Without a process it is much more time consuming to undertake strategy work. But when your organization has reached a stage where everyone sees the added value of using the tools, then you can enhance the overall process itself. In the beginning using tools is not efficient, as it is just something where you have to invest a lot of time. When you have done it once, you probably come to a more review-based approach, which allows you to make adjustments at each and every stage of the process. Exactly this makes your strategy process more efficient and tools work as a great support. At this reviewing stage you do not have to discuss every topic again, because you already have an overarching strategy in place. So, some answers are simply clear and they are given, so you do not have to invest time again e.g. Company X - should we invest into polymer business? No! We can now say that we base our strategy on our core competencies, and polymer is not one of them. If that is not clear, the organization will probably spend a lot of time looking into these fields, where we can say no, because this is not part of our strategy. So, in that way, let us say by avoiding work, it is also a way to increase efficiency, but in the beginning you have to invest time and resources to develop a tool-supported strategy process.

Question 20***Interviewer***

What are the conditions for the successful utilization of strategy tools?

Executive 2

You have to have someone in the board who is a supporter of structured and analytical thinking; someone that has an understanding of this approach. If you do not have that it is going to be difficult. Second, you need to have the acceptance of the process and the tools within the organization, and if you do not have that you better close the strategy department and save the money. I fear that a lot of strategy processes are not accepted throughout the corporate world, as people think it is just about presenting a template and in the next year it is already a different one. Third, ease of applying a tool. If the tool is too time consuming and too complex that you even have to be a strategy expert to understand it, then the implementation of the tool will not be possible as nobody would accept it.

Question 21***Interviewer***

What problems should future strategy tools aim to solve?

Executive 2

A tool itself is not solving a problem. Future strategy tools have to be designed in a way that they are really easy to use, should not lead to misleading results, and they should also be applicable for people that are not really experienced. What we often do is the development of own tools like e.g. two-times-two matrices and then we just plot success factors on the axis in order to develop a new matrix. In a sense, tools should be more

flexible and allow their users to further develop them or showing people how tools could be used in a more flexible manner. Unfortunately, tools are not designed for each and every problem that you have. A concept that already includes more flexibility would be highly appreciated.

Question 22***Interviewer***

Do you have any more questions or is there something you would like to add?

Executive 2

I do not think so, but I would just like to emphasize one thing one more time. Strategy and tools are one part, but the other side is really the culture, and it should not be underestimated. Corporate culture, acceptance, usability, ability, resources and time are the keywords in my mind.

Interview – Executive 3 – E3**Question 1*****Interviewer***

What is your current position and area of responsibility within the organization?

Executive 3

I have a general management responsibility for an unprecedented access to medicine program, which is unprecedented in the pharmaceutical industry, and the general management role comprises everything from production until marketing introduction, until launching the program, and creating demand for the program. The important thing about this is that it is not only shaping the industry itself, because it is more a first mover step that we are taking. It is also a collaborative program with many different partners e.g. governments, non-governmental organizations, private sector, and academia. So, basically it is about managing an ecosystem of partners locally and globally in order to create medicine access for poor patients and poor income settings.

Question 2***Interviewer***

What is your current role in strategy work?

Executive 3

I mean the current role regarding strategy is to make something happen, where no one has a golden bullet to. There is no royal road to success. So, I continuously need to adapt my plans, my thinking, and align the organization behind that. So, it is very much emerging from a strategic perspective. Of course, we have a five-year PNL business plan that is based on assumptions, whereby some of the assumptions are good and others are very good. So, my role is to continuously focus on updating this plan or let us say I am taking care of the fine tuning.

Question 3***Interviewer***

What experiences do you have with strategy work?

Executive 3

In previous roles I have been a strategy consultant in my former organization. I have led a strategy group and conducted the annual strategic planning process for a multi-billion-dollar business, and I prioritized the research and development pipelines and analyzed these projects from an opportunity and risk perspective.

Question 4***Interviewer***

What are in your view typical strategic problems? Please try to describe various typical problems that come to your mind.

Executive 3

When a problem occurs you have to put the right resources behind it. In the organizations I have been working with we were very much short term, quota and result focused, and especially there a long-term investment plan needed to be really implemented and tracked, which was absolutely a big problem. The long-term plans often times have to be sacrificed for the sake of short-term results. This holds true for all strategic matters such as expanding, cooperating, or divesting/investing.

Question 5**Interviewer**

How would you/your organization attempt to solve such strategic projects? And do you follow a significant process that guides the strategy work?

Executive 3

Having a dedicated process is extremely important to align the stakeholders behind the strategy. Having a process is, for me, the most valuable thing of strategic planning, which is an oxymoron itself, as strategy and planning do not really coincide from my perspective. But the planning component is important to create prepared minds, and to make the organization ready in case it is needed so that they can execute it on an opportunity. It is important to align the top management behind an investment or the strategic plan and the idea behind it. Ideally this should be anonymously, and you have to make sure that this plan is translated into individual targets. What helps in order to maintain the momentum is to commit broadly, internally and externally. So basically, make public as much as you possibly can so that are you really committed to what you have come up with. Some people have to watch you otherwise you will miss out on opportunities and maybe also make mistakes.

Question 6**Interviewer**

How would you describe strategy tools?

Executive 3

Strategy tools are a vehicle of bringing people together in order to speak about one topic, and that they can create prepared minds and structured thinking. Not less, not more.

Question 7**Interviewer**

Which of the following strategy tools do you know?

Executive 3

SWOT - yes; KSF - yes; Core Competencies - yes; Scenario Planning - yes; Value Chain - yes; Five Forces - yes; VRIO - yes; ILC - no; PESTLE - yes; Portfolio Matrices - yes; Generic Strategies - no; Strategic Groups - no; Ansoff - no; Bowman - no; Ashridge - no; Blue Ocean - yes; SDG-Methodology - yes; Hypotheses - yes;

What I liked very much in practical terms was the SDG (strategic decision group) methodology/approach. The underlying idea was to provide a methodology to brainstorm about perceived obstacles, about decisions that you can actively make, and about uncertainties; and here trying to put likelihoods to the uncertainties and to model really expected value NPVs with e.g. tornado diagrams and so on. It was a pretty sophisticated approach, because it also trains you how to assess likelihoods in your interviews without anchoring people. Generally, it was used to really figure out how confidence intervals for certain uncertainties could look like. Maybe another tool or mechanisms that need to be in place when it comes to strategy work are hypotheses. People have to or should always formulate hypotheses in order to validate those and not to discard those. So, this is a rather unscientific approach but it really helps to formulate something where people need to object the interview partners, because then you can be really sure there is enough evidence for a certain point. For me, tools lead to more precise questions rather than results. At this point, the hypotheses can be useful to overcome or answer these questions.

Question 8

Interviewer

Are you familiar with the terms ‘strategizing’ or ‘strategy-as-practice’? What meaning do you associate to them?

Executive 3

No, I have never really worked with those terms, which means I have to make a suggestion. I think it is an art by itself. Strategy-as-practice could mean: doing strategy in order to strategize. I could think of, bringing strategy to life, while strategizing, while establishing routines, while finding ways to conduct strategy work properly in practice. I always need to smile to myself when thinking about the fact that the Monitor Group went bankrupt although it was a strategic consulting boutique. Maybe they should have thought about strategy in a more practical way and not only in the artificial way they were known for.

Question 9

Interviewer

In what situation do you/does your organization use strategy tools to conduct your/its strategy work? – Please also explain how.

Executive 3

This answer I largely have to base on my previous experience. Some of those tools like SWOT analysis, key success factors or Value Chain have most frequently been used within the projects I have worked for. But this is basically it, as tools like the PESTLE analysis can only barely be used in practice, and the BCG/McKinsey matrices are rather used when an external consultancy comes in. Unfortunately, SWOT and core competences analysis are mostly prefilled by some self-announced experts in the company and then they are being presented and nobody really cares. They all want to know; what investments does your proposal require and am I willing to grant those to you? So that results into situations where people do not understand that opportunities and threats come from the external perspective rather than strengths. They mix it up and they really do not have a clue. KSFs are external and this is not about: oh, I need to have the right resources in place. When are they

truly needed? I think it is the situation when you need to structure a problem and when you need help to moderate a discussion, or maybe sometimes you even need them to stimulate brainstorming.

Question 10a

Interviewer

The strategic management process is oftentimes divided into four stages – analysis, formulation, implementation, and evaluation and control. In what phase do you/does your organization most frequently use strategy tools?

Executive 3

We definitely use them most for analysis and formulation. For implementation and evaluation, you would need to be really lucky if people come back to you and ask: where are we with regard to implementation? Usually this is maximum 1/10 of the initiative, just to make the board feel good and tell them that something is happening, and that we are on the right track. Of course, we always need to be on the right track, so tool results tend to be biased. Let us come back to implementation and evaluation tools. When I was responsible for the project management office of a major restructuring I had to orchestrate 25 work streams in a fully value chain encompassing project from early research until new sales techniques, and I was also responsible to change the operating model of the company. We used an implementation tracking tool, which was very much linked to our controlling systems and financial processes. With this tool we were able to track down measurement by measurement. I mean headlines for initiatives that needed to be implemented and then certain fulfillment criteria and metrics, and of course we needed to prove that. There were different stages of fulfillment and I had to report all implementation procedures and our current position every week, and with that we saved more than 500 million on an annual basis. So, an implementation tool should definitely be able to manage a project with all its components.

Question 10b

Interviewer

When looking at the list again, during what phase would you typically use the following tools?

Executive 3

SWOT - A; KSF - A; Core Competencies - A, F; Scenario Planning - A; Value Chain - A, F; Five Forces - A; VRIO - no; ILC - no; PESTLE - A, F; Portfolio Matrices - F; Generic Strategies - no; Strategic Groups - no; Ansoff - no; Bowman - no; Ashridge - no; Blue Ocean - F; SDG - A, F; Hypotheses - F, I;

Question 11

Interviewer

Referring to a specific strategic problem, which strategy tool has particularly supported you/your organization the most/least?

Executive 3

LEAST - There hasn't been a tool that has truly been misleading, because we hardly spend time on these tools in our organization. MOST - If anything really helps then tools like scenario planning, because when moderated correctly they can generate new ideas and new insights. The other stuff is always anchored and very much biased to the knowledge and experience of "highly" experienced colleagues. The thing that also helped a little was the methodology of the strategic decision group (SDG), which stimulated the initial brainstorming on obstacles, hurdles, and uncertainties, (I mean this was the home turf of many people, they are also anxious and scared) because based on that methodology you can try to flip it around and formulate it as an opportunity or something where you could actively decide upon. In that case the methodology becomes very powerful, as people have bought into the concept as they were voicing their concerns and if you then try to work with them and guide them to the actual opportunity, then you have established a powerful decision-making process. What eventually helps the most, is a PNL. You need to have a forecasted PNL and that is it, maybe even a cash flow statement when it comes to capital expenditure planning and so on. Usually, and that is what many companies or people do not really understand - they just take the PNL and basically try to derive NPV from that, which is wrong of course as it needs to be cash flow based, but it does not matter too much. All those other line items below the EBIT are just filled with assumptions or usual experiences.

Question 12**Interviewer**

How do you appraise the success and workload of the strategy tools outlined below, and how would you rate their efficiency?

Executive 3

Is it worth it? Well, yes and no. From my experience, almost everything in the company is linked to an individual. If you have a charismatic strategist doing the exercises with you, that is probably enough, and then you barely need a strategy tool that guides you. I mean when it is there you probably use it, but it is not because of the strategy tool that you get to certain results; it is because people want to work on the topic, which is similar to school - if you like your teacher and his class you usually score high. Now creating the bridge to success and workload of these tools: if you like the tool and you think it is worth spending time on it then please do it, but if it is just used to demonstrate your findings I would not recommend to spend too much time on it.

Executive 3

SWOT - 3; KSF - 4; Core Competencies - 4; Scenario Planning - 4; Value Chain - 4; Five Forces - 3; VRIO - 0; ILC - 0; PESTLE - 2; Portfolio Matrices - 3; Generic Strategies - 0; Strategic Groups - 0; Ansoff - 0; Bowman - 0; Ashridge - 0; Blue Ocean -3; SDG - 5 (highly efficient if conducted correctly); Hypotheses - 5 (would part of the SDP methodology, but working with them if done correctly then also highly efficient)

Question 13***Interviewer***

Do you/does your organization adapt the tools-in-use to the specific organizational context? Please provide examples.

Executive 3

No not really. I think, if you apply an already established tool you should not change its entire meaning, because when I think about the content that we fill into the tools it can sometimes change the initial purpose of a tool. But I would rather say no, no tremendous changes.

Question 14***Interviewer***

To what extent are strategy tools used to reach a rational answer rather than post-rationalizing decisions that are already made?

Executive 3

It is something in between unfortunately. The decisions are being made in some heads of people, which can either be the project leader who is asking for strategic support, or by one or two of the board members. So, it is a mixture of post-hoc rationalization and really finding the right answer. Strategic questions or problems should always be open and if somebody from the board would ask me to post-rationalize a decision with the help of a tool (and we already know the answer) then I would not offer my services to him. Ideally you use these tools when you are facing an unknown situation, or when you feel something is happening, changing, or commoditizing, so that you really need to change your entire company. For me this does not play a big role, as I am working in an industry where those changes are happening very gradually, and the margins are super high. So as long as the waiter comes we should order champagne! Of course, there are other industries where these tools are absolutely a great solution, but they should always lead you to a rational answer and not elsewhere.

Question 15***Interviewer***

What are the advantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Executive 3

Tools help you to structure your problem and also help to facilitate the discussion process of people that are not so much associated with strategic questions every day.

Question 16***Interviewer***

What are the disadvantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Executive 3

They can create an administrative burden, as they force people to fill out templates, which should rather be done in a dialog format. Sometimes tools that are used in practice are not guided by someone who really knows how to fill out the templates, as they are rather being sent around to people where it does not even make sense. On top of that you probably have a decentralized recollection of information, which can usually go straight into the bin (afterwards), because no one evaluated and controlled the input.

Question 17**Interviewer**

When looking at current strategy tools used in your organization, how do you assess their value in the future?

Executive 3

I guess tools will be around for decades to come. I consider them as definitions. From a mathematical perspective you work on something and then you suddenly realize you can universalize a certain pattern, and this will always be prevalent, and that is the power of those tools; that you can adapt them to various situations. So, why should they change? Maybe there will be further elements in the future like disruptive strategy situations or something else. I recently heard about a guy called Christensen. He claims that corporates should really step out of the usual industry frameworks or even attempt to kill these boundaries by doing something completely different, what is maybe even harmful for a company's present situation.

Question 18**Interviewer**

How would you evaluate the impact of strategy tools?

Executive 3

This would now be the median from all my ticks in your list approaches. Something around three. Let us be serious on the impact of these tools. You always implicitly use at least elements of those tools, otherwise there would be none of them in actual use. Tools are effective, and this can either be implicitly or explicitly.

Question 19**Interviewer**

How can strategy tools enhance the efficiency of your organization's strategy process?

Executive 3

You have to give them to the right people, strategists, and leaders, and make sure they are used correctly. The fact that they are simply used does not mean that it is simple to fill them with valuable content. How can you do that? You have to hire somebody as your head of strategy who does not only have a strategic consulting background, but rather somebody that has also seen something valuable for the company or the industry, that can either be a component of the value chain or something that makes him/her extremely valuable when looking at his/her previous experiences. If you found that one person then you basically have to bring in the best talent from your company and also from an external source, which should be people that are extremely charismatic

and intrinsically motivated; and you have to make sure that those people get high positions after about three years, and then you will probably have the right talent catalyst. This is how you can enhance proper tool use and the efficiency of your company's strategy process, but for this you need credibility and you usually do not get this if you hire a former partner from one of the big consulting companies being the group head of strategy and then after three years you realize - oh my god the guy knows all the tools and his team is maybe capable of doing strategy work, but we do not really understand how the industry is moving, because people do not have that gut feeling of proper work experience. At this point you want to get rid of that guy, but you realize his standing is so high and there is no other job you could offer to him. Such a person enhances the structure of your strategy work, but has he/she really helped you to make the entire process more sufficient? No, I do not think so.

Question 20***Interviewer***

What are the conditions for the successful utilization of strategy tools?

Executive 3

I would recommend to use the tools with medium level managers within the company, because they are close to the knowledge and close to what is actually happening, and then this is presented to the board somehow, and in the ideal situation at least your CEO has some kind of strategic intent and wants to validate the work that has been done in the strategic planning process. If you want to generate the perfect conditions for the successful application of the tools you should try to have separate sessions with all the board members with exactly the same tools that have been applied during the process, maybe even individually, and then you as a strategist have to moderate and glue all the perspectives together in another board meeting. Here the guys from the organization come on stage and present what the medium level managers think. At this point all participants will realize the acceptance for the tools and as a result of that some potentially clashing perspectives come apart, which is great soil for a fruitful discussion.

Question 21***Interviewer***

What problems should future strategy tools aim to solve?

Executive 3

The best strategy tool is to personally expose yourself into a different situation. So, that you emotionally feel or may feel to be in a completely different environment. Compare your tool results to others. Make a case for a different industry. Go outside your usual ecosystem and try stimulating new ideas. These new ideas will suddenly generate different answers/input for your tools. Some people think that all answers lie in all the data that is currently around, but you will certainly know that data is not information, that information is not knowledge, that knowledge is neither insight nor understanding. It is similar to the tools: It is about the brains that make best use of the data and the hypotheses and in the end that helps you to structure what kind of information or data you need to collect. If it helps to do some sort of datamining in order to generate some

hypotheses, then this is fine with me. I am not a digital native, but from a strategist's point of view available data is often times over interpreted.

Question 22

Interviewer

Do you have any more questions or is there something you would like to add?

Executive 3

I would love to see your research results.

Interview – Executive 4 – E4**Question 1*****Interviewer***

What is your current position and area of responsibility within the organization?

Executive 4

I am the corporate vice president for business and enabling strategies, which is the essence strategy department of our company.

Question 2***Interviewer***

What is your current role in strategy work?

Executive 4

Well, I am heading the strategy development within our company.

Question 3***Interviewer***

What experiences do you have with strategy work?

Executive 4

Previous processes or projects within my current company or from my previous work experience? Actually, when I joined my current company, which was about 4 1/2 years ago, I had to rebuild the entire strategy process. There was a strategy process in place that basically developed a new strategy every 5 years, which was apparently pretty tedious; at least that is what I heard from colleagues that have been involved in it. They used a lot of tools and even had a SOP on strategy development, however this turned out to be rather useless, because once it was developed it was put on the shelf and nobody looked in it again, and nobody really followed that procedure. So, it is another learning, which is not about strategy tools, but about strategy processes where you have to ensure that it is a more or less rolling and continuous process where you have to follow up on things that are agreed upon with regards to the strategy. But I guess this not truly the topic of your interview.

Question 4***Interviewer***

What are in your view typical strategic problems? Please try to describe various typical problems that come to your mind.

Executive 4

I mean the ultimate goal of strategy is, and here my Company X heritage is coming through, getting a competitive advantage. The question is: how do you get a competitive advantage? That is not necessarily related to what most of the "left wingers" say, that all companies want to get higher profitability. Profitability is a means to get a competitive advantage. Getting a competitive advantage means that have to ask yourself:

what can you do better, or faster, or differently than your closest competitors? Therefore, you need to have an understanding of how your external environment and business environment probably looks like. What are your own capabilities? And from thereon you have to develop strategic goals. Basically: creating strategic initiatives to implement the underlying actions behind the process.

Question 5***Interviewer***

How would you/your organization attempt to solve such strategic projects? And do you follow a significant process that guides the strategy work?

Executive 4

I like your word process. You really need to have a process that you need to follow. It does not have to be strictly, because the world is so complex and there are often changes and therefore you need to be able to adapt your process and your topics year by year. This is something you have to manage, and this is of course something you cannot find in strategy textbooks, because there they always recommend this kind of super-process, which is probably academically validated by a famous business school and additionally has a stamp from McKinsey or BCG. In my view, even with my past in consulting, I think you can take that and put all of this into the garbage can, because it is just not working in practice. Except if you really abstract this super-process in the entire organization, but what I have experienced I can for sure say this is also not working, because you are rarely in such a situation of power within an organization where you can basically say: manufacturing should do it that way, research should do it that way, commercial should do it that way. Sending out templates, getting the results, and discuss them. I mean people know how to play this and you do not really listen to your business partners, and then you just get garbage out of that.

Question 6***Interviewer***

How would you describe strategy tools?

Executive 4

First of all, I would like to say that business book definitions are mostly developed by people that do not actually have a connection to the practical world. If you screen Amazon for the word strategy you will find more than 100000 books that claim to describe strategy. That is more than you can find on cats or yoga. Strategy is one of the most abused words that you find in business. Strategy is everything and nothing. A strategy tool is a framework to get to a complex question and to a more schematic and transparent description.

Question 7***Interviewer***

Which of the following strategy tools do you know?

Executive 4

SWOT - yes; KSF - yes; Core Competencies - yes; Scenario Planning - yes; Value Chain - yes; Five Forces - yes; VRIO - yes; ILC - yes; PESTLE - yes; Portfolio Matrices - yes; Generic Strategies - yes; Strategic Groups - yes; Ansoff - yes; Bowman - yes; Ashridge - yes; Blue Ocean - yes

I know them all, because I have been in Company X, but I do not use all of them. There are no additional tools that I would like to add, and I think it is better to use a couple of tools stringently, than too many non-stringently. So, in my view this is a pretty decent list.

Question 8**Interviewer**

Are you familiar with the terms 'strategizing' or 'strategy-as-practice'?

What meaning do you associate to them?

Executive 4

I know strategizing and that for me is just strategy slang, and in my view, it has no proper definition. Maybe the daily strategy development could equally address this term. But what I can say is that I get really allergic with this sort of pseudo theorizing of true strategy work. Strategy-as-practice covers basically the same, maybe with a more practical lens on everything. But why is there a need for such terms? Why do not we stay with the common and very clear terms: strategy development, strategy processes and implementation? At the end of the day we have to make sure that we implement our strategies in companies and then we talk about things that really create value but adding more buzz-words to the exorbitant amount of useless strategy books is just nonsense for a strategy practitioner. When you translate strategy-as-practice to "bringing strategy to action or practice", then this is the actual implementation for me. It is the next step after the review and here you have to show your ability to bring your ideas to real life. I recommend that the researchers use the word implementation, as their fancy terms do not explain anything else.

Question 9**Interviewer**

In what situation do you/does your organization use strategy tools to conduct your/its strategy work? – Please also explain how.

Executive 4

In general, from a practical perspective one of the main tasks for strategy development is creating transparency, and if you have never worked in a big company then you probably do not have a glimpse of an idea how difficult such a task is to achieve. Normally you are confronted with a lot of particular interests - interests of divisions, interests of people, the career planning of people, hiding errors from the past etc. So there are many people that do not have the interest to have transparency, and do not have clarity, and therefore you apply a clear framework that requires a complete assessment along certain dimensions of a specific question, then this will create the needed transparency. Here the much blamed and very simple SWOT analysis can become a very efficient tool, as it requires not only strengths but also weaknesses, and not only opportunities but also threats.

You can have a pretty lengthy discussion and a SWOT of a certain business in order to force people to stop hiding certain issues, that people might perceive as jeopardy to either their reputation or positioning of their area of responsibility, which they usually do not like. This is one thing, but the other thing is giving a logical structure for the analysis of a problem, because even non-strategists find it extremely helpful to structure their own thought process. With every change in an organization's strategy, there has to be some analysis, and here we can use the given tools to structure our thinking, which has always been very stimulating and helpful.

Question 10a

Interviewer

The strategic management process is oftentimes divided into four stages – analysis, formulation, implementation, and evaluation and control. In what phase do you/does your organization most frequently use strategy tools?

Executive 4

The majority of tools we are using for analysis. On one hand for the analysis of the external environment/market environment, and on the other in order to discover our internal capabilities. The tools are particularly useful to create transparency, as they force you to position certain aspects, businesses, or capabilities into some sort of framework. That is the main use of these tools. We use a lot of them in the analysis phase and partially in the evaluation and control phase, but there only in a way to look at how things change over time in order to compare it to the original assessment or setup.

Question 10b

Interviewer

When looking at the list again, during what phase would you typically use the following tools?

Executive 4

SWOT - A; KSF - A, F; Core Competencies - no; Scenario Planning - A, F; Value Chain - A, F, E; Five Forces - no; VRIO - no; ILC - no; PESTLE - no; Portfolio Matrices - A; Generic Strategies - no; Strategic Groups - no; Ansoff - no; Bowman - no; Ashridge - no; Blue Ocean - F

Maybe a hint for your methodological analysis: a theoretical question you need to think about when you look into the methodology of your thesis - whether the tools from your list are really easy comparable, because some focus product strategies, others on new business strategies, and yet others are portfolio strategies/frameworks - so I am really looking forward on a good discussion in your thesis on how easily you can compare these. It seems so but the SWOT, for example, can be used for almost everything, but some of your tools are only useful for certain aspects of strategy development.

Question 11***Interviewer***

Referring to a specific strategic problem, which strategy tool has particularly supported you/your organization the most/least?

Executive 4

MOST - I already told you that I really like SWOT analyses. They are simple, but if you want to do it really right then sometimes you have to go back to the root causes. If you really do it right, it can be extremely powerful. I also like the value chain analysis, as it can work as a prediction for profit margin. LEAST - Yeah, maybe the Five Forces, as this tool simply does not do anything. It is a list of random facts whereby the user decides on the power, which makes it highly biased. The danger of strategy tools is their virtue of being a simplification of reality and they are meant to be a simplification of reality, but if you use a framework and the most important aspect for your industry is not even part of it, then it can be totally misleading (e.g. Five Forces). But this basically holds true for every framework. In a way you should always have a bucket for other aspects, because every framework is and has to be a simplification, but that is also the danger. When you oversimplify the danger starts. So, you should always keep in mind that the choice of a tool is strongly dependent on the case. By the way, tool that was least helpful: we do not have the time to play around with misleading tools, if something goes wrong you have to fix it. There is one way to really frustrate an organization: giving them useless tools. So, do not trust every consultancy with their new way of doing things. Imagine a workshop with guys from research, these are guys that really know what they do, and then you say: we have a lot of research projects - let us put them into a matrix. You will probably have an interesting discussion, because these are mostly very complex questions that they are aiming to solve. When you come with a very simplistic strategy tool the research department will probably freak out, as you are wasting their time. So, you need to have a much more comprehensive approach, which is not just based on one or the other tool. Tools can help here and there, but they do not provide the solution.

Question 12***Interviewer***

How do you appraise the success and workload of the strategy tools outlined below, and how would you rate their efficiency?

Executive 4

This has a high overlap with what I said before. I think the outcome of a tool should by all means be in relation to the time invested, otherwise I reckon it would not be sufficient at all. If the workload would exceed to outcome I would not apply the tool. In terms of efficiency it is hard to tell, because from one situation to the other it can highly fluctuate.

Executive 4

SWOT - 5; KSF - 4; Core Competences - no use; Scenario Planning - 4 (quite time consuming); Value Chain - 4; Five Forces - no use; VRIO - no use; ILC - no use; PESTLE - no use; Portfolios - 4; Strategic Groups - no use; Ansoff - no use; Bowman - no use; Ashridge - no use; Blue Ocean - 3 (also quite time consuming and laborious as well as pretty discussion and market research based, similar to the design thinking approach)

Question 13**Interviewer**

Do you/does your organization adapt the tools-in-use to the specific organizational context? Please provide examples.

Executive 4

Do we adapt the tools? Yes. Do we bastardize? No. For example, our portfolio matrix looks into market attractiveness vs. relative performance of the businesses, and relative financial attractiveness vs. relative financial risk. That is something that we find pretty useful by looking into the portfolio of businesses. It is a portfolio matrix, but it is neither McKinsey nor BCG. There are probably 100 or more different portfolio matrix approaches out there and maybe someone is using something similar to what we are using, but this is the way we like to do it and this matrix is accepted throughout the organization. The most important variable for us is the risk aspect, because we are privately held, we have a long-term focus, our strategic imperative is securing the long-term independence of the company, and maybe therefore we value certain factors higher or differently than other companies do. Therefore, we adapt it, but the SWOT we do not really adapt, as it would make no sense. But all this has something to do with expectation management - what do you expect from a tool or a framework? Of course, this highly depends on your own input.

Question 14**Interviewer**

To what extent are strategy tools used to reach a rational answer rather than post-rationalizing decisions that are already made?

Executive 4

Well, that is basically our task in strategy - to come up with something that builds the foundation for a rational answer e.g. creating transparency. If you do not have transparency, then the answer will be pushed towards a certain interest. So therefore, when we use it, we deliberately use it to come to a rational answer. But that is maybe not a virtue of a certain strategic tool it is rather something that you have to make sure while you are working with tools, that they are not abused for certain interests. So, it is not an intrinsic feature of such tools, it is rather a matter of how you conduct strategy work with your business partners.

Question 15**Interviewer**

What are the advantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Executive 4

Create transparency and structure the thought process.

Question 16**Interviewer**

What are the disadvantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Executive 4

One word – “oversimplification” of the real world.

Question 17**Interviewer**

When looking at current strategy tools used in your organization, how do you assess their value in the future?

Executive 4

As you might already know, I get an allergic reaction when things get too static. So, I try to use tools or frameworks that can structure a thought process, but these should not be too narrow and simplistic. Maybe we get new frameworks that will be more dynamic and more helpful but predicting the future of the very static tools is quite hard. Considering the changes in corporate landscapes one could recon that some of them will be gone, but honestly, I think most of them will still be used by tremendous amounts of business people. In a certain way you always have to visualize your portfolio along various dimensions, and therefore the tools are so far the easiest approach.

Question 18**Interviewer**

How would you evaluate the impact of strategy tools?

Executive 4

I would not overestimate the impact of strategy tools. I think these tools never lead you to a solution or let us say they are not providing you with a solution. Tools simply help to structure the process and again they deliver transparency. Of course, you are trying to solve a problem or a question, but tools rather lead you to new questions, which are extremely helpful, as you might forget important aspects without this sort of "structured way" of thinking. Let me give you an example. I have a business where the market attractiveness is declining and the overall assessment, the relative performance, is also only mediocre. In that case you need to do something, and you have seen that "in" the tool. This is the moment when you have to react or comment on that. What should I do with this kind of business? Should I keep it, because I just have it? Or do I need to restructure it? If I want to keep it I can at least make an investment stop and focus on other more profitable areas. Put the results transparent on the table and say this is how the assessment looks like, and this can be seen after we have applied the following tool. If we have such a result in a certain bucket of a strategy tool, then there are always multiple possibilities, recommendations or action plans. For example, selling the business ASAP, trying to restructure it, try to make it a cash cow business, but these facts will never be the straight answers of a tool. This is what happens after you have applied them!

Question 19***Interviewer***

How can strategy tools enhance the efficiency of your organization's strategy process?

Executive 4

Yes, some tools raise efficiency, but the main aspect of efficiency is of course the ability to manage the entire process in the best possible way. Of course, this process should be supported through the one or the other strategy tool, but you have to be able to make the right choice as well.

Question 20***Interviewer***

What are the conditions for the successful utilization of strategy tools?

Executive 4

Well, I mean people need to understand what a tool is able to do and what it cannot do. People need to be aware that it will never reflect all aspects of the reality. If you stick to these rules the tools can be really powerful, but you need to have the right people with the right mindset. If that is not clear, especially in an environment with a corporate culture that is very much based on expertise, then you will probably fail, which is also part of the expectation management. Maybe acceptance is also something that has to be there. There are normally two ways to get acceptance. First, you have to make clear that there is a value in it, and second you have to make clear what the tools can and cannot achieve - so as I already said the expectation management is important. However, your expectation management cannot be: Look this tool is a nice exercise and nice visualization, but it does not have any value beyond that. In that case most people would probably say: I have to prepare a product launch and that takes me 10 hours a day, and now the strategy department comes along and says I should fill in my data into a certain tool that you use for visualization? Are you kidding me? So there has to be a value connected to the use of a tool, because otherwise it not helpful and will for sure not be accepted. People work 50-60 hours a week, so the hurdle for tool to provide a significant value is quite high.

Question 21***Interviewer***

What problems should future strategy tools aim to solve?

Executive 4

If tools could better reflect the complexity of a business problem, then they would be much more valuable. However, in my view that is something you will never be perfectly able to achieve. Looking at the Five Forces, it is an oversimplification of the influences of a certain industry. What Porter has done is very simple. He categorized a complex world into five different influence factors and certain industries (like ours) and he just missed some. Such a tool in my view is highly superficial and sometimes even misleading. What we do instead - and I never called this a tool - we make a rather rigorous assessment of what are the external factors that influence our business? It is the environmental landscape, the market environment, and the competitive dynamics we are focusing on. We look into them, but we do not scan them with a certain framework. We rather ask ourselves: What are the events that have happened? So, if there is a consolidation in the US prescription

medicine providers market, then there would not be matrix or tool that would help us to find this exact problem, and if we fail here, then our strategy discussion is simply useless. From my point of view there is no tool that can help us with that, because it is simply work you have to do. Tools should support, but they do not do your homework.

Question 22***Interviewer***

Do you have any more questions or is there something you would like to add?

Executive 4

I think you have it between the lines, but what is important at the end is the critical assessment of what roles these tools can play in a strategic planning process. Potentially, you need to look into these processes and also what the dynamics of such processes are in the real world. That will probably help you to discuss what true value tools can provide.

Interview – Executive 5 – E5**Question 1*****Interviewer***

What is your current position and area of responsibility within the organization?

Executive 5

I am founder, CEO, and the head of my company. My responsibilities are product management, analytics and marketing.

Question 2***Interviewer***

What is your current role in strategy work?

Executive 5

That is hard to tell. As a start-up we have no dedicated strategy process, because the whole idea of a start-up can be located within a strategic map or strategic setting if you consider the industry. The set start-up is a strategic option itself. Our firm is using strategy tools to eco our business decisions and management. Strategy work, for us, is like a passive radar for us. Therefore, we take strategic evaluation tools and try to figure out how a strategic decision measures up when it comes to strategic analysis. This is basically my role at our company.

Question 3***Interviewer***

What experiences do you have with strategy work?

Executive 5

During my studies I worked with a business/management consultancy which mostly consulted projects in Eastern Europe and Africa. In Eastern Europe we were engaged with strategic planning, product management and marketing for local or regional energy providers. In Africa we did some projects with a non-profit background. In Tanzania, we were basically focused on equipping regional medical research facilities with a sustainable business model. They became able to run the business on their own in order to become independent from other income sources like a development aid or something. The most important thing about strategy work is the very character of what strategy is. In my opinion strategy is a communication tool. The more complex your business becomes, the more important it is to simplify the direction you want to go as an organization or as a certain business unit. The strategy work I experienced was used for communication on every hierarchical level of a company and therefore creates a better understanding of where to go and why to go there.

Question 4***Interviewer***

What are in your view typical strategic problems? Please describe at least three typical problems.

Executive 5

One of the main problems of strategy work is post-rationalization. There is a senior manager, or a managing director and he gets hired because of his experience in the industry (with products, with managing people, etc.). This single person comes to a decision and uses the concepts of strategy to post-rationalize it. I think, this is a very big problem in strategy analysis and formulation.

Question 5**Interviewer**

How would you/your organizations attempt to solve such strategic projects? And do you follow a significant process that guides the strategy work?

Executive 5

Solving the problem of post-rationalization in strategic projects is fairly impossible as these managers believe everything they say. Systematic work can help organizations to overcome this weakness, but most organizations lack to use the tools and concepts in an appropriate manner. No, there is not a structure or process that we follow. I think a strategy process is like a pencil or a piece of paper for an author. You have to have a basic or an advanced understanding of strategic analysis and strategic tools, but you have to be able to adapt them to the situation in your company (incl. top management). Therefore, companies should focus on the communication of a clear process which is different for every single industry. There are companies, which are able to cook with more complex directives and there are others, that require very easy to understand decisions and directions. You have the instruments at hand and you have to use them with a lot of creativity to find a customized strategic solution for one of your strategic projects.

Question 6**Interviewer**

How would you describe strategy tools?

Executive 5

A strategic tool is a framework, or a basic concept on how to analyze external and internal information in a way that I can use it for communication. For communication input from management, the board of directors, etc. and as a communication output for showing people where to go and why to go there, and why this makes sense. For me it is not like using a scheme and using it in the very same way it is presented to me in the books. I am not only able to alter it; I am required to alter it in order to customize it to the specific need of the organization. So, I take a specific tool, because I say: I evaluate this tool as suitable for my goals within in the strategic planning process, in this respective company I am working at, and then I can creatively alter this scheme to the needs of the company - like changing scales or changing dimensions of portfolio matrices for example. This is what I think stands behind strategy tools.

Question 7**Interviewer**

Which of the following strategy tools do you know?

Executive 5

SWOT - yes, KSF - yes, Core Competence Analysis - yes, Scenario Planning - yes, Value Chain - yes, Porter's Five Forces - yes, Resource-Based Analysis (VRIO) - yes, Industry Life Cycle - yes, PESTLE - yes, Portfolio Matrices - yes, Generic Strategies - yes, Strategic Groups - no, Ansoff - yes, Strategy Clock - (no), Corporate Parenting - (no), Blue Ocean - (no), preferred tools - alterations of the tools in the list

Question 8**Interviewer**

Are you familiar with the terms 'strategizing' or 'strategy-as-practice'? What meaning do you associate to them?

Executive 5

I heard about it, but I have no real idea what this means. I could possibly make a suggestion: I think it is about implementing strategy as a very hands-on process with very down to earth results for all the people involved in strategy work. On a regular basis you set up strategy as a process that runs continuously through the company that has its own organizational implementation – sometimes even a dedicated strategy department that takes care of most strategic problems. In a word the terms strategizing, or strategy-as-practice could mean: bringing strategy to life.

Question 9**Interviewer**

In what situation do you/does your organization use strategy tools to conduct their strategy work? - Please also explain how.

Executive 5

We use strategic tools or strategic evaluation as a concept for checking our business decisions. So, if we feel that a decision is so important that it is required or at least advantageous to check back with some rational concepts, we try to use tools for it. We perform, let us say, a strategic analysis lite. So, we try to get a basic idea in which strategic direction this decision could possibly lead us.

Question 10a**Interviewer**

The strategic management process is oftentimes divided into four stages - analysis, formulation, implementation, and evaluation and control. In what phase do you/does your organizations most frequently use strategy tools?

Executive 5

I think it is like a framing approach: analysis and formulation as well evaluation and control. For a start-up (our main customers), being a very small unit, it does not make sense to implement (so to say) a strategy. Even the word (implementation) is too big. You have to give people an idea where to and why to go there, and you have to check if this path you wanted to go truly happened. So, what we focus on is basically the analysis and formulation of basic strategic goals as well as evaluation control. In some cases, you have to counter steer if something is not going in the way you have planned.

Question 10b***Interviewer***

When looking at the list again, during what phase would you typically use the following tools?

Executive 5

SWOT - A, F; KSF - A; Core Competences - A; Scenario Planning - A, E; Value Chain - A, F; Porters Five Forces - A, F, E; VRIO - A, F; Industry Life Cycle - No; PESTLE - A, E; Portfolio Matrices - A, F, E; Generic Strategies - No; Strategic Groups - No; Ansoff - A; Strategy Clock - No; Corporate Parenting - No; Blue Ocean - No

Question 11***Interviewer***

Referring to a specific strategic problem, which strategy tool has particularly supported you/your organization the most/least?

Executive 5

I think there is a basic rule: the more complex a tool is, the less useful it is in your strategic process. In my opinion strategy is a communication process and if you look at organizations and big corporates especially - strategy and numbers have often become an obsession of management to make a decision count. In a way they want to proof their decision with the help of numbers and strategic concepts. It is like a religion! Why is that? Strategy and strategy communication are about creating belief. It is a very similar concept to religion. To create belief the concepts you are using should be very simple. The more simple a concept is, the easier it is to create belief using this concept. I normally stick with easy to understand concepts e.g. the SWOT, PESTLE - it is always a mixture of complexity and the popularity or rather the acceptance of a tool. The more accepted it is, the easier it is to create belief. The “simplicity” and the “image” of a tool - if you want to find two specific attributes.

Question 12***Interviewer***

How do you appraise the success and workload of the strategy tools outlined below, and how would you rate their efficiency?

Executive 5

The easier the tool, the more efficient it is. Less input and high outcome. This is what makes tools efficient.

SWOT - 4; KSF - 3; Core Competence Analysis - 3; Scenario Planning - 2; Value Chain - 5; Five Forces - 5; VRIO - 2; Industry Life Cycle - 1; PESTLE - 3; Portfolio - 4; Generic - 0; Strategic Groups - 0; Ansoff - 3; Bowman - NO; Corporate Parenting - NO; Blue Ocean - No

Question 13***Interviewer***

Do you/does your organization adapt the tools-in-use to the specific organizational context? Please provide examples.

Executive 5

This is what I normally do in the strategic analysis and formulation process. You have to specify, for example the dimension of a BCG or McKinsey matrix towards a direction so that it makes sense for a specific company or industry. In the BCG you have the dimension market attractiveness - so how to come to the measure for market attractiveness, which is an implication of the matrix itself. Normally I create a balanced scorecard to assign the numbers to the certain levels of market attractiveness. It is not only market size - it is mixture of market size, market growth, volatility and market development etc. You can create a scale to derive it for a certain coordinate of the numbers. I most frequently did this - if you simplify a tool too much (like the dimensions market attractiveness equals market growth) the TOP management tends to lose the belief in you. In such a case I often added some complexity to give people a feeling that more than a single variable was used to come to an advice (e.g. for the strategic analysis). I frequently alter basic tools, like Porter's Value chain. I take it and make use of single parts of the value chain but in another context. For example, I often mixed Porter's Value Chain with BCG matrices in order to come to the differences of certain departments or business units within the company, in different areas of the value chain, and to show how different (over the value chain) the strategic situation can be, even if I adapt the same measure like in the BCG matrix.

Question 14***Interviewer***

To what extent are strategy tools used to reach a rational answer rather than post-rationalizing decisions that are already made?

Executive 5

It is a problem that can very often be seen in bigger companies and corporates! Strategy is used to post-rationalize decisions that have already been made. Maybe you know that the business of management and strategy consultants is often not really based on conducting an environmental analysis or to formulate a strategy that is appropriate for a specific company, but rather to post-rationalize management decisions. I have seen it from both sides, as a consultant on one hand and as a management team member on the other side. In both cases there was a clear direction for the consultants to justify the advantages of management decisions that have already been made.

Question 15***Interviewer***

What are the advantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Executive 5

I think it is about standardization and communication. Strategy tools simplify a very complex world we live in and it also simplifies the input on the one hand and the communicative output on the other hand. Overall, the tools are important to ease up information in order to make it accessible and to get valuable in-depth input of people (e.g. used as a basis for discussion).

Question 16**Interviewer**

What are the disadvantages of using strategy tools in practice?

Executive 5

There are always two sides of the same coin. The main disadvantage or problem is “also” the high degree of simplicity, even though it helps managers in most cases. “Things go under your radar...” - there are tiny pieces of information that become very important for your strategy (or your company in general) as systematic strategic processes tend to over go them, which means you are losing focus without even recognizing it. Having a tool-based strategy process is usually very time consuming. Using tools is not really an agile concept. It requires a big corporate environment, which is hard to steer/manage. Here strategy tools can use their advantage of easing up the communication process. The smaller a company gets, the more obsolete an explicit or a dedicated strategy process becomes, because you are very agile, and you are able adjust your course very quickly. Bigger companies are not able to do that. One reason for that is the strategy process itself, as it is very time consuming and normally there is a strategy review every two or three years. This is usually the time it takes to come to a new strategic direction or decision. Biggest disadvantage: reducing complexity too much.

Question 17**Interviewer**

When looking at current strategy tools used in organizations, how would you assess their value in the future?

Executive 5

I think, what we see is a fundamental change in corporate culture. If you look at very successful business concepts, then you will clearly see that the smaller and more agile a company is the more successful, in terms of growth, product quality, customer centricity, it will be. There are only a few companies in the world, which have grown to a certain extent, that are able to maintain their leadership in an industry. The banks, for example, are tackled by more and more fintech startups and they begin to fear these companies. Senior bank managers even claimed that they fear the whole industry may become obsolete in the future. Strategy tools are normally used in bigger corporations and I think along with the declining influence of corporates in the techworld the importance of strategy tools (as we know them today), which are very appealing, but also very time consuming, will decline in the years to come. They become more and more obsolete and replaced through agile decision-making, which is still measured against some strategic analysis, but it is not a result of the actual tools anymore.

Question 18**Interviewer**

How would you evaluate the impact of strategy tools?

Executive 5

The impact depends on the size of the company. The bigger the company is, the more important strategic tools are, because they standardize information, analysis and communication. The smaller the company is, the less I would evaluate the impact of the strategy tools that you have listed. But the impact of strategy tools in general I would rate as promising, as tools are about information processing. This process is more important than ever, but the way, which is proposed by the tools in your list (this specific way of information processing), will become less and less important.

Question 19**Interviewer**

How can strategy tools enhance the efficiency of your organization's strategy process?

Executive 5

I think, it is not about the strategy tools so much, it is rather the strategy process that is able to enhance a company's efficiency. The tools in your list are pretty much similar to our approach, but the way these tools are embedded in the process has been changed significantly. It is less about the tools that could enhance the strategy process, but it is rather the process itself, which has to be enhanced.

Question 20**Interviewer**

What are the conditions for the successful utilization of strategy tools?

Executive 5

First of all, you have to have a better strategic management process in your company and only then successful implementation of strategy tools is realizable. An actual dedicated process is the one true condition for the successful utilization of strategy tools. Tools are the supporting elements in the background of the process.

Question 21**Interviewer**

What problems should future strategy tools aim to solve?

Executive 5

I think, especially for smaller companies it would be of great help if there were standardized strategy tools available, which already have implemented basic information or data on for example market growth of different sectors/industries or competitive information for certain industries, which would greatly reduce the time required to undertake a proper e.g. a SWOT or BCG portfolio analysis. I think it would also be helpful for many companies to have more information about their strategic position, with respect to the different dimensions that come along with certain tools. If tools become less time consuming their role would be much more important. Maybe on the path towards a more dynamic - "lean strategic planning process".

Question 22***Interviewer***

Do you have any more questions or is there something you would like to add?

Executive 5

Please provide me with your dataset. Such a research project is probably unique in its existence but having someone that explains the practical role of such processes would probably help a lot of companies. Of course, tools are used, but how do strategic managers see their role? Maybe you can focus on the timing issue a little bit more.

T Quantitative Analysis – Excel Workbook

(provided on DVD)