

Strategic Mindset in Media Companies

Learning and Training Practices in Mastering the Strategic Thinking Competency

A Dissertation

by

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List of Abbreviations

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AG	Aktiengesellschaft (Joint-Stock Company)
AR	Augmented Reality
AT&T Inc.	American Telephone and Telegraph
AUD	Australian Dollar
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCG	Boston Consulting Group's
CCTST	California Critical Thinking Skills Test
CI	Competitive Intelligence
CD	Compact Disc
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFO	Chief Financial Officer
CLD	Causal Loop Diagram
CNBC	Consumer News and Business Channel
Co.	Company
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
CSU	Corporate Strategy Unit
CTML	Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning
DOI	Digital Object Identifiers
DWeb	Decentralized Web
DVD	Digital Versatile Disc or Digital Video Disc
E-Learning	Online Learning
EA	Electronic Arts
e.g.	Exempli Gratia (for example)
et al.	et alia (Other Contributors)
EQ	Emotional Quotient
F.A.Z	Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung
G+J	Gruner + Jahr
GICS	Global Industry Classification Standard
GmbH	Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung
HBR	Harvard Business Review
HBO	Home Box Office (US video streaming platform)

HR	Human Resource
IG	Incubator Group
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
IT	Information Technology
IMP	Inter-functional/Multilevel Planning
IoT	Internet of Things
KGaA	Kommanditgesellschaft auf Aktien
MBA	Master of Business Administration
NACE	National Association of Colleges and Employers
NBC	National Broadcasting Company
p.	Page
PEST	Political, Economic, Sociological, and Technological
PR	Public Relations
PwC	PricewaterhouseCoopers
QUEST	Query Model of Strategic Thinking
R&D	Research and Development
RTL	Radio Télévision Luxembourg
SC	Strategic Cognition
SPG	Strategic Planning Group
SQ	Strategic Quotient
STF	Strategic Thinking Forum
STQ	Pisapia's Strategic Thinking Questionnaire
SOAR	Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
TV	Television
USD	United States Dollar
VRIO	Value, Rarity, Imitability, Organization
ZMET	Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique

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1. Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement

Many researchers assert that media companies are operating in a highly turbulent and uncertain environment that increases the urgency of developing and implementing novel strategies, reacting to the challenges, and managing the continuous innovation needed to succeed in the market (Picard 2004; Küng 2007b; Wilenius/Malmelin 2009; Mierzejewska 2011). In these circumstances, the most important skill of a media manager is to be an outstanding observer who analyses the company continuously in order to address diverse challenges, recognize the wishes of stockholders, and generate a long-lasting competitive advantage with a strong vision (Artero/Manfredi 2016, p. 58; Deuze/Prenger 2019, p. 16). However, from the scholar's perspective, most managers are educated and experienced in such a way that they come to rely heavily on a linear mindset. This will not adequately prepare managers to work in a complex environment full of uncertainties (Pisapia/Reyes-Guerra/Coukos-Semmel 2005, p. 42; Albarran et al. 2006, p. 58). According to French's (2009, p. 206) point of view, the obstacle is the traditional way of thinking and approaching the issues, which "is shackled to the equilibrium assumption of closed systems". This makes it difficult for media managers to achieve the intended purposes of media companies, especially as they pertain to the digital transformation, which calls for revolutionary change and open-system thinking (French 2009, p. 206; Villi/Picard 2019, p. 129).

Furthermore, based on a survey published in *Harvard Business Review*, Porter and Nohria (2018) determined that most CEOs of large companies do not spend enough time on strategy. These researchers indicated that many managers, instead of forecasting potential changes and working to achieve corporate aspirations, expend most of their time and energy reacting to existing problems and challenges (Porter/Nohria 2018; Villi/Picard 2019). However, proactive behaviour is required to predict upcoming challenges. For example, in 2019, Sony and Apple announced smart TV and TV+ to follow the business trends and be present in the video-on-demand streaming market. These decisions were been made in reaction to the increasing growth of competitors, especially the success of Netflix. Another example is the 'coronavirus outbreak', which has forced media companies to reconsider their structure and workflows to better manage the avoidable costs. In this regard, for example, in response to the funding challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) announced that they plan to reduce the travel budget in the next 5 years with the help of technology (ABC

2020). All these media companies' defensive strategies and reactions to the challenges through trial-and-error are in contrast with proactiveness, innovation, and strategic thinking.

Indeed, media companies are currently located in an increasingly changing competitive environment that presents a complicated set of strategic challenges to business analysis and development (Vukanović 2016, p. 1). Due to the expansion of consumers' demands and rapid advances in multichannel communicational technologies and infrastructures (such as wireless networks), the number of available media products and new players has grown (Baumgarth 2004; Chan-Olmsted 2005). In recent years, the process of media content production and distribution mechanisms has been completely changed by developing internet technologies (such as the 5G network). The evidence of previous studies shows that the merge of media sectors, convergence of information technology and the telecommunication industry, progressive deregulation in public policies, and appearance of cross-sectional competitions in global business, have all complicated the media's strategic environment (Chan-Olmsted 2005; Küng 2007a; Küng/Picard/Ruth 2008; Wirtz 2018).

By interviewing the US news organizations, Ringel and Woodall (2019, p. 4) indicated that the prospective strategies for long-term maintenance of digital-born content and archiving online news outlets on different platforms (such as social media) are very limited, which increase the risk of losing valuable content and the control of data over time. In that light, Krumsvik et al. (2019, p. 198) argued that the strength of the top managers in formulating a realistic vision for the company affects media innovation, success, and even failure. Considering the dynamics of media markets and the peculiarities of media business activities (e.g. journalism, entertainment, broadcasting, archiving, and publishing), it has become crucial for media managers to process a deeper understanding of conditional and procedural aspects of the strategy-making in media companies (Picard/Lowe 2016, p. 62).

Given all the above discussions, in the new media environment, there is a need for managers with practical competencies and developed skills to advance the mission and values of their company (Artero/Manfredi 2016, pp. 52, 57). According to the central assumption of this research, as an essential core competency these days (Artero/Manfredi 2016, p. 56), strategic thinking will help media managers to improve their capability to create a crystal-clear vision, plan and formulate effective strategies to achieve their companies' goals, control the results and solve the problems flexibly (Loehle 1996; Hübner/Jahnes 1998; Liedtka 1998b; O'Shannassy 2001; Fairholm 2009; Goldman 2012; Halvey 2016).

In the 1980s and 1990s, the concepts of ‘strategic thinking’ and ‘strategic mindset’ gained popularity in the literature of strategic management (Stubbart 1989; Porac/Thomas/Baden-Fuller 1989; Mintzberg 1994; Heracleous 1998; Hammer 1998; Pellegrino/Carbo 2001; O’Shannassy 2003). During that time, many experts posited that the paradigm of strategic management showed insufficient improvement in the implementation of strategies and that strategic plans often failed to be realized (Stubbart 1989; Zabriskie/Huellmantel 1991; Mintzberg, Ahlstrand/Lampel 1989; Mintzberg 1994). For example, Stubbart (1989, pp. 327, 329) criticized the previous studies for ignoring the capacities characterizing executives’ thinking and described the cognitive aspect as a ‘missing link’ in strategic management research. Thus, some scholars began to highlight the role of strategic thinking as an interactive and repetitive experiential learning process (Switzer 2008; Casey/Goldman 2010; Hughes/Beatty 2011; Sloan 2016).

The managers who are competent in strategic thinking have a deep understanding of the business and see the company as a system while also considering the relationships among the parts (Pisapia et al. 2009, p. 49). To think strategically, managers should ‘think outside of the box’. The ‘box’ represents the existing norms, ideologies, values, and beliefs that shape mindsets and mental defaults (mental models, thoughts), and attitudes of managers (e.g. Herrmann-Nehdi 2017, p. 3). Thinking outside of the box as a metaphor refers to expanding horizons, breaking confines in order to think divergently (without boundaries), and approaching issues from novel perspectives (e.g. Zhang/Gino/Margolis 2014, p. 12). To avoid becoming trapped in a closed context, managers must continuously redefine and re-evaluate their assumptions to be able to adapt and alter their companies’ business model and vision.

In fact, the competency of strategic thinking empowers managers to evaluate and generate innovative ideas that ultimately form a company’s sustainable competitive advantage (Switzer 2008; Casey/Goldman 2010; Hughes/Beatty 2011; Sloan 2017). Arguably, a more comprehensive definition of strategic thinking has been provided by Switzer (2008, p. 32). From his perspective, strategic thinking entails following evolving trends and quickly evaluating potential opportunities. This competency plays a central role in formulating strategies for media companies in a dynamic media market destabilised by rapid technological changes in a short time.

Although previous studies advanced the general understanding of strategic thinking by providing some definitions, there is yet no fine-grained process of studies and a clear agreement on the components and domains of strategic thinking competency. In addition, the formulated definitions and arguments existing in the literature have ignored the interdisciplinary relationship

between similar concepts with strategic thinking in various disciplines such as educational studies or cognitive psychology. Therefore, this study aims in its first steps to establish the cornerstones of strategic thinking. In fact, this study seeks to look beyond these literature streams and integrate the important and substantial knowledge of other research approaches to adequately deal with a complex topic and expand narrow research boundaries in the field of media management and economics.

Some researchers argue that in order to have media managers who can think strategically, companies should design training programs to focus more on managers' strategic thinking competencies (Bonn 2001; Goldman 2008, 2012; Goldman et al. 2015). The assumption here is that the mental model can be trained in a way that can increase managers' awareness of the flaws in existing dogmas (O'Doherty 2020, p. 370). However, researchers assert that satisfactory media training (Andreescu 2009, p. 48) especially formal training in strategic thinking is still absent (Goldman 2012, p. 36). The scholars believe that in media companies, due to the unique character of media products and the media industry, there is a need to pay more attention to empowering managers who have an in-depth knowledge of the industry and are skilled in strategic thinking (Wilenius/Malmelin 2009; Mierzejewska 2011; Villi/Picard 2019).

According to Albarran et al. (2006, p. 58), relatively few media managers are adequately prepared for managing the changes and innovation inherent in their industry. This study suggests that focusing on strategic thinking competency and its learning process – especially concerning leader and management development programs – is a new approach for media companies to develop unique visions and strategies. Based on empirical research of Goldman et al. (2015, p. 170), which evaluated the managers' competencies, there is a growing need for establishing useful approaches to the development of strategic thinking competency. The existing literature poses different techniques to improve the competency of strategic thinking, without considering influential elements such as industries' uniqueness, specific strategic or managerial challenges, work processes, cultural diversities, individual differences (e.g. dissimilar learning and leadership styles), and so on. This study will also fill this gap in the studies.

Furthermore, previous surveys illustrated that CEO succession planning within the media industry is a challenge (Artero/Manfredi 2016, p. 50). Most of the top managers have difficulties participating in organized workshops, mentoring, or development programs because they are busy with routine daily assignments aimed at discovering solutions to current issues rather than future problems (e.g. Porter/Nohria 2018; Villi/Picard 2019). For example, based on empirical research, even daily morning meetings in newsrooms fail to give managers space to think beyond ordinary news flows (such as reviewing the current edition) and immediate tasks (Mats

2013, p. 208). Constant adaptation and further development of the working methods underscore the need to use the workspace as a learning environment in which continual adjustment and knowledge exchange can occur (in German, *arbeitsgebundenes Lernen*: learning within the work process) (Ehrlich 2020, p. 44). Particularly, the informal interviews with managers and experts in the media companies revealed that little attention has been given to work-related learning along with a control on the content of training in terms of improving managerial decisions and strategic thinking competency. In addition, analysis of the outlines of management developments programs offered by media companies indicated that the uniqueness of media business and specific managerial issues have been ignored in most training courses. This increases the need for promoting learning practices that stimulate the specific competencies and skills of managers within the context of their industry (Bonn 2001; Goldman 2008, 2012; Goldman/Scott/Follman 2015).

Because learning to think strategically is a long-term process, this competency must begin to be improved early on, even in schools and universities (Iordanoglou 2018, p. 127). To educate future media managers, examining the existing resources and the remarkable value of media products and contents in educational procedures, especially in the field of media management and economics, is vital. Therefore, this study attempts to provide a list of suggestions as to how future media managers may foster their strategic thinking ability by re-evaluating the current practices, training process, and programs. To do so, the perspectives of the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning' have been considered to highlight how interactive learning content consisting of text, picture, and dynamic representations and communication is effective for learning strategic thinking.

1.2 An Overview of Research Field and Past Findings

In practice, pervasive changes force media managers to simplify their companies' missions in the form of strategies to make them practical. In this regard, the comprehensive view of corporate policies and future vision may be lost over time. For example, digital transformation is the mission of many German media companies. However, less common is a clear vision for applying diverse solutions and strategies concerning the whole specific business value of a company, along with financial and structural changes. This means that the vision is powerless in long term to deliver concrete transformational steps, which is undeniably critical for the success of the forthcoming business (Hess et al. 2016, pp. 123-125). In that light, studies have stressed the

high failure rate of organizational strategies in many cases (Candido/Santos 2015, p. 237). From the perspective of Noam (2018, p. 630) the problem lies in the unstable media market in which dissimilar variables influence the game of business simultaneously and continuously. Researchers found that stressful and threatening situations, which are inescapable in media companies, force decision-makers to respond to such crises quickly, which may restrict their information search and lead to confusion in ascertaining optimal solutions (e.g. Halvey 2016). For example, the Walt Disney Company's annual report in 2018 disclosed that managers find it very challenging to recognize the effects of changes and decisions on business strategy (i.e. there is a high degree of uncertainty about returns on new investments). The result of empirical research in Swedish media companies by Müllern (2006, p. 34) also highlighted this point that middle managers are even struggling to find their role in a situation of continuous change.

In that light, Artero and Manfredi (2016, p. 54) mentioned that poor management competencies in several cases highlight a need for a unique type of manager in media businesses. These researchers underlined that the management of media companies is challenging and that media managers are under extraordinary pressure to make effective decisions. In fact, a media manager who plays a major role in determining a company's strategic direction confronts unique and particular managerial issues (Albarran et al. 2006, p. 297; Artero/Manfredi, 2016, p. 59). Artero and Manfredi (2016, p. 44) also emphasized that, due to cooperating with diverse stockholders and running a multi-dimensional business, in addition to the traditional roles (such as motivating, planning, organizing, negotiating, controlling, and commanding), media managers should also play dissimilar roles and demonstrate varied competencies (such as communicating, conflict resolution, social monitoring, and strategic thinking). In that light, media managers should be more entrepreneurial and creative to develop new strategies in ways that surprise and confound their rivals (Picard 2004, 2005). Furthermore, by interviewing the editors-in-chief and human resource managers of the main Swiss-German media companies and professional training institutions, Theiss (2018, p. 209) sought to identify the skills and competencies that would be required for media professionals in the future. She concluded leading with a well-defined vision and strategy (thinking strategically) is an undeniable core competency in the new convergent media environment.

In fact, because many traditional and long-established media companies are locked in old thinking patterns, the role of strategic thinking as a core competency has become all the more crucial for such media companies (Artero/Manfredi 2016, p. 56). A deluge of studies inferred that a highly operative and effective manager must think strategically (Bonn 2001; Abraham 2005; Pisapia/Reyes-Guerra/Coukos-Semmel 2005; Goldman 2008; Goldman 2012; Kabacoff 2014).

Additional support for the significance of strategic thinking in companies was reflected in the work of Schoemaker, Krupp, and Howland (2013), who emphasized that most managers have difficulty identifying obscure opportunities and threats outside of their business (Schoemaker/Krupp/Howland 2013, p. 2). Likewise, the result of a study conducted by Hollifield et al. (2016, p. 134) indicated that it is challenging for newspaper executives to recognize and define their business and market, which leads them to choose the wrong strategy. In this situation, having a single strategic plan does not guarantee the success of companies in media markets. Therefore, according to the assumption of this study, strategic thinking as an essential competency enables media managers to have a strong insight into the future, to maintain awareness of external and internal changes, to respond rapidly to the environment, to modify modes of production, to deliver services faster and to generally improve the potential of their companies (Picard 2004; Switzer 2008; Picard 2011; Self et al. 2015).

Several scholars in management and business studies have made important contributions to the concept of strategic thinking. According to Goldman (2012, p. 25), studies in the past 25 years have shown that the main enemy of organizational performance is the absence of strategic thinking competency in top management. However, still, there is no convergence among different practices, approaches, and methods in all studies. In media management and economic research, the topic of strategic thinking is also very new. Only a handful of studies have addressed leadership and management explicitly as an important factor in the media sector (e.g. Shaver/Shaver 2006; Politis 2006; Aris/Bughin 2009; Harbert 2019). Researchers claim that there is limited focus on management and leadership development in terms of decision-making, which also reflects a gap in common agreement on definitions and approaches (Vito 2018, p. 253). The need for better management as well as leadership development and training has been also emphasized in the media and creative industry, especially public media (Harbert 2019, p. 12). For example, Harbert (2019, p. 7), by interviewing women who were responsible as a general manager, CEO, and executive network editor at public radio organizations in the United States, identified a distinct lack of standards for leadership development and training for media managers. Therefore, this deficiency increases the need for specific education, training, and diverse experience in media management at all levels (Artero/Manfredi 2016, p. 59).

As previously discussed, studies in strategic management showed a major shift of focus from the strategic management tools (such as strategic planning) to renewed dialogue about the mindset of a strategist and manager. Because strategic thinking is strongly underestimated and underdeveloped, especially in German media management literature and research, one of the goals of this research is to focus on this specific competency. For example, in empirical research,

Greck, Franzetti, and Altmeyden (2017, p. 126) observed that the German media industry is strongly traditional, which has its root in managers' ways of thinking about the strategies. This may hinder managers' ability to effectively adapt to the highly competitive and rapidly changing environment (Cole/Stavros 2019, p. 505). Therefore, the competency of thinking strategically should be a priority issue for future media economics and media management research. The question that arises here is how to improve the strategic mindset of media managers. Could strategic analysis methods such as Porter's five forces and SWOT analysis facilitate the process of managers' strategic thinking and understanding by providing a holistic organizational point of view?

In this regard, this study suggests that focusing on the concept of strategic thinking may be a new approach for media companies to develop unique vision and strategies to build and maintain long-lasting competitive advantages in the time of digitalization (e.g. Switzer 2008, p. 32). According to the assumptions of a resource-based view of the organization (Barney/Wright 1998, p. 37), the unique strategies that arise from the minds of strategic thinkers are valuable resources that could differentiate media companies from other competitors (in terms of rarity) and make the vision difficult to imitate. This means the unique policies generated in the mind of a manager are valuable property in a company that cannot be substituted (based on VRIO strategy).

In essence, it is important in strategic thinking to have a mental picture of the whole system of value creation within the organization and a clear strategic direction in mind (O'Shannassy 2003, p. 55). From this perspective, a company can be seen as a system in which roles, policies, relationships, and responsibilities interact with each other and affect performance (Beer/Finnström/Schrader 2016, p. 5). Therefore, based on the definition of the concept of strategic mindset, a deep awareness of media business trends and drivers along with profound knowledge about industry-specific characteristics is crucial for media managers. A famous example is a sale of the *Washington Post* (a US news company) in 2013 to Jeff Bezos (the founder and CEO of *Amazon*). The managers of the *Washington Post* were forced to sell by the failure of this media company to adjust its business model to digital transformation (Hess et al. 2016, pp. 123, 124). As the new owner, Bezos immediately changed the business model and built a new structure and culture (modern newsroom) to transition the company to a digital world. This way of thinking strategically of Bezos aims not only to survive the business of *Washington Post* but also to invest in the future of *Amazon's* representation by producing the relevant content to support its business (Weitz et al. 2019, p. 87).

According to the assumption of this research, by choosing and designing significant training programs, practices, and learning experiences, media companies can foster the strategic thinking competency of their managers. It can be argued that, in order to develop the approaches toward strategic thinking development and learning, the context of the industry must be taken into consideration. In this regard, business and management schools, universities, colleges, and consultancies equip managers with diverse skills that are required to resolve problems and run an organization (Brown 2016, p. 90). For example, the purpose of MBA studies is to nurture students by improving their generic knowledge and teaching them new managerial techniques that cannot be entirely applied to a specialized sector or specific industry such as the media industry (Klikauer 2015, p. 1104; Vogel 2018, p. 242). As a consequence, learning to think strategically along with considering the specific characteristics of disciplines is ignored. This became crucial especially for the field of media management and economics, which scholars perceive as a non-programmatic and unsystematic discipline (e.g. Mierzejewska 2011, p. 25). This study aims to emphasize management development contents and programs that are useful for training and promoting future media managers in specific competencies such as strategic thinking.

1.3 The Purpose of the Study

Increasing market transparency and fragmentation of consumer needs are forcing media companies to be more innovative and flexible than ever before (Wirtz 2018, pp. 202, 203). Picard and Lowe (2016, p. 62) highlighted the fact that media consumption's patterns are increasingly varied and eccentric. For that reason, some sectors in media businesses focus on building an individual relationship with their customers to reproduce valuable content and reduce additional production costs by individualization and multiple uses of content in different formats and channels (cross-media expansion). Furthermore, in the new media market, because of changes in media productions and distributions, it is difficult to find a stable position to confront rapid adjustments (Chan-Olmsted 2005, p. 5; Noam 2018, p. 629). In this situation, awareness of unique characteristics and the nature of media products help media managers to better understand the business environment and, consequently, to respond effectively to the market challenges and generate long-lasting competitive advantages (Picard 2011, p. 16). Then, as Picard (2011, p. 57) argued, the most important factor affecting the sustainability of media companies in this market is the leaders' effectiveness in dealing with managerial forces such as financial

control, productivity, innovation, and reaction to changes. This means, the media managers not only need to bolster their ability in terms of remaining aware of changes but must also be well prepared to develop new strategies to grow and survive in the market (Sylvie/Gade 2009; Krumsvik et al. 2019).

However, since the boundaries of the media industry nowadays are blurry (Faustino/Noam 2019, p. 148), developing a strategic plan has become challenging for media managers (Oliver/Picard 2020, p. 67). Moreover, unique characteristics of media products (non-physical, experimental or artistic-creative goods, and intangible contents), along with flexible production processes (customization and recreation), with diverse purposes (entertainment, educational and commercial) create a very different management environment, which increases the need for certain quick strategic decisions in this particular market (Shaver 2000; Dal Zotto 2005; Picard 2004, 2005, 2011; Albarran et al. 2006; Küng 2007a; Mierzewska 2011). Therefore, by conducting more studies in this area, a better understanding of how these complexities influence the process of managers' decision-making could be developed (Picard/Lowe 2016, p. 62). This research focuses on the mindset of the managers and strategists, where the decisions originate, and the analysis takes place. According to the literature review, to recognize the turbulences in the market, visualize and conceptualize the future of the business, respond rapidly to consumers' needs, and make fewer risky decisions, it is necessary for all managers to envision flexibly and think strategically (O'Shannassy 2003; Cole/Stavros 2019). Therefore, this study focuses on the competency of strategic thinking, which plays a significant role in the strategic formulation of media companies. In a media market characterized by 'hypercompetition' (D'Aveni 2010), the principles of strategic thinking are more likely to be appropriate for generating competitive advantages and managing the dynamics of strategic direction (D'Aveni/Dagnino/Smith 2010, p. 1371).

Drawing on the fundamental insights of previous studies, the strategic mindset of media managers can be the most vital and inimitable resource for media companies in the complex new media market (based on VRIO strategy). In that light, the stronger the managers' competencies of thinking strategically (through special creativity and long-standing experience), the more difficult it is to replace the managers in companies (e.g. Gläser 2014, p. 846; North, Reinhardt/Sieber-Suter 2018, p. 59). In this regard, the result of interviewing HR managers, companies' owners, and management development experts from different European countries (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Latvia, and Lithuania) also emphasized strategic thinking as a significant leadership and management skill for future managers in times of crisis (Iordanoglou 2018, p. 123).

To educate and prepare media managers to think strategically, there is a need to concentrate on personal development programs and to evaluate the leadership training courses with the aim of improving this competency. Nevertheless, researchers claim that proper media training (Andrescu 2009, p. 48), and especially formal training in strategic thinking is not a top priority for many companies (Goldman 2012, p. 36; Goldman/Scott/Follman 2015, p. 169). For example, through studying the three German publishing companies and conducting in-depth interviews with executive managers, Dal Zotto (2005, p. 51) found that the activities of these companies in the development of human resources are relatively weak. Moreover, the researchers mentioned that a central problem of many media companies is their focus on operational parts of digital products development, which hinders the media managers' dedication of time to think strategically about the whole business. This is even more pronounced in media companies that have limited staff assigned to strategy development (Villi/Picard 2019, p. 129). In this regard, just a handful of studies attempted to identify practices and methods aiming at improving the ability of strategic thinking (Watkins 2007; Casey/Goldman 2010; Dragoni et al. 2011; Goldman 2012; Kabacoff 2014; Goldman, Scott/Follman 2015). Scholars noted that there is still a limitation on a comprehensive study in developing this competency by considering the unique characteristics of products, market, and industry (e.g. Dragoni et al. 2011, p. 831). Therefore, due to a lack of research in developmental training, exercises, and self-help activities to improve the strategic thinking ability of managers, this study is designed to focus on this area especially considering specific characteristics of media companies.

Because the field of cognitive psychology and educational studies have presented concepts similar to strategic thinking (for example, critical thinking, divergent thinking, and system thinking), this research aims in its first steps to find the relationship between these concepts. Moreover, this study draws on several theories rooted in the field of educational and cognitive psychology studies with the purpose of providing some appropriate practices and suggestions that may be applicable to foster the competency of strategic thinking in media managers. Due to the interdisciplinary linking of different research areas, the research approach of this thesis is concept-driven or theoretical-conceptual (Phases 1 and 4 in Figure 1.1).

The concept-driven studies serve to close conceptual gaps (missing explanations) by developing a new theoretical concept, model, or transferring existing theories to new facts (Goldenstein/Hunoldt/Walgenbach 2018, p. 85). The theory- and concept-driven approach differs from the empirical-qualitative and empirical-quantitative works in terms of argumentation. This form of research serves to introduce new insights and advance theoretical arguments by using partic-

ular theories or concepts with a new explanatory framework for research (Goldenstein/Hunoldt/Walgenbach 2018, p. 43). In essence, the theoretical-conceptual approach and concept analysis aims to elucidate means for establishing the state of science that leads to a concept development by focusing on the nature of the phenomenon itself being studied and advancing a strong interpretation and understanding of the concept with the help of empirical references and best practice examples (Penrod/Hupcey 2005, p. 232). The central idea here is to develop a more comprehensive explanation approach to the concept of strategic thinking in the fields of media management and economics.

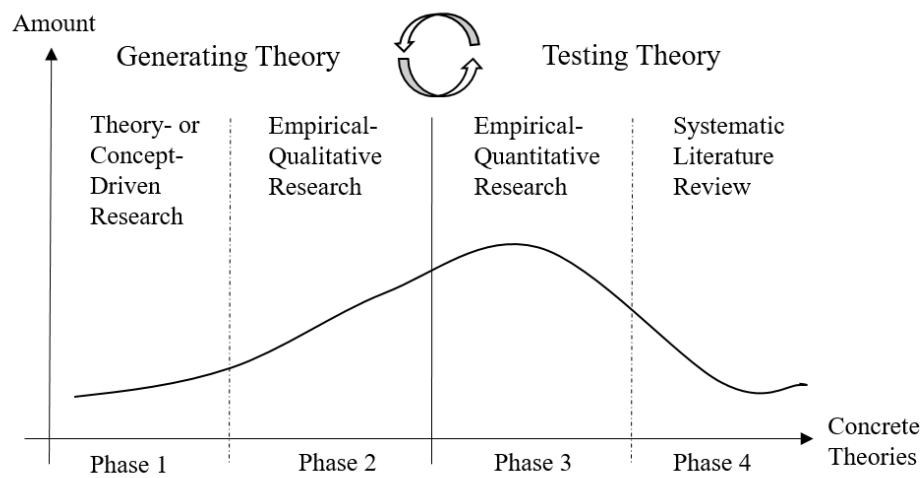


Figure 1.1: The life cycle of research areas (Goldenstein/Hunoldt/Walgenbach 2018, p. 7)

The starting point of this research builds a comprehensive literature search, in which the problem-relevant theories will be explained. Before the concept can be empirically tested (Phases 2 and 3 in Figure 1.1), definitions relevant to the concept must be taken into consideration. Thus, this analysis serves as a theoretical foundation and framework to define the concept of strategic thinking and categorize previous related studies. In addition to the analysis of relevant literature, content analysis has been used to give structure to the arguments and organize the information related to the research questions. The analysis concretizes the theories of strategic management and human resource management with consideration of the specific futures of the media industry and products. In this regard, best practices and actual examples from the media industry will support and complete the theoretical arguments and bring greater clarity to the construct of strategic thinking.

1.4 Research Question

The current situation of the media market shows great uncertainty on the part of media companies towards strategic planning and implementing strategies (e.g. Eigler/Azarpour 2016). For example, in the music industry, a clear response to the questions of online music distribution was lacking for years because of the big players (the dominant record companies or labels such as *Sony Music*, *Universal Music*, and *Bertelsmann Music Group*). Therefore, many music companies were bound to the business models of generating high profits with the sales of CDs and DVDs. Moreover, TV companies – especially traditional ones – are still striving to find ways to reach their audience and target groups in a changing world of multi-device utilization and trying to deal with user-generated content in dominant online platforms such as *YouTube*. Newspaper and news magazine publishers are looking for strategies to cope with the availability of free online news and information, and still do not have a convincing response to this situation. In general, continuing waves of mergers and acquisitions by giant technology operations such as *AT&T Inc.* and the appearance of streaming services have altered the media market completely (Holt/Perren 2019, p. 33). Even the top international media conglomerates (e.g. *Walt Disney Co.*, *News Corporation Co.*, and *Bertelsmann SE & Co. KGaA*), which have been successful for decades, are confronting heavy competition driven by novel players and start-ups in the telecommunication market. This study suggests that the strategic thinking competency and training to achieve it may be an appropriate approach for media companies to develop unique strategies in the highly unstable media environment. In fact, to survive in this media business, managers must think more critically and strategically (Villi/Picard 2019, p. 124). In the first step, it is crucial to know the mental models of managers in order to capture how they perceive, think, interpret, reason, and consequently act or behave and make an important decision. In this regard, the capacity to remain up to date and aware of rapid changes and permanent innovation as the prerequisites of strategic thinking should be considered and implemented in the training process and leadership development of media companies (Faustino/Noam 2019, p. 150). Nevertheless, as discussed above, some challenges still remain unaddressed, such as a systematic exploration of strategies and practices which help managers to improve their strategic mindset competency and strategize effectively in the context of media management.

From the above, the unique characteristics of media products and services make this industry unique and increase the essential value of reviewing the strategic plan and decisions before taking action. From this point of view, strategic thinking as a prerequisite for strategic planning should receive more attention in media management and economic studies. Considering the

dynamics of media markets, as well as the peculiarities of media business activities, it is essential to have a deeper understanding of conditional and procedural aspects of the strategy process in media companies (Picard/Lowe 2016, p. 62). Indeed, the media industry has been grounded on content that can be transferred easily into the digital applications. This led to the vanishing of the borders between individual and mass communication. The study of media management and economics as a cross-disciplinary subject contains different fields of research, such as political economy, mass communication, journalism, and media studies (e.g. Küng 2007a). In that light, the discipline of media management as a non-programmatic and unsystematic discipline must be developed (Mierzejewska 2011, p. 25). This study assumes that the literature of media management can be improved in terms of suggesting the relevant content and media products for increasing the opportunity of learning to think strategically. In fact, considering the value of media management subfields such as media studies is important. To do so, this study develops the concept of strategic thinking to benefit not only the fields of media management and economics but also other business studies. Because most studies share a narrow focus on a particular aspect of strategic thinking, and due to a lack of holistic research into the concept – including its key components – there is a need for developing related and understandable explanations to acquire accurate insights (Brown 2016, pp. 95, 96). Therefore, this study aims to provide comprehensive coverage of the broad range of literature and ongoing debate from different perspectives and disciplines such as educational studies. The first step of the research will systematically review the literature to generate a standard knowledge about the media industry and the competencies require to manage a media company in a new convergent market. According to the literature review, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What is strategic thinking, and which are its cornerstones?

RQ2: Why is strategic thinking relevant to media management? What would the applications of strategic thinking be in the media companies?

RQ3: Who should think strategically in media companies?

RQ4: How can media managers learn to think strategically?

RQ5: What is the perspective of cross-disciplinary fields on developing the competency of strategic thinking?

RQ6: Which values could media products add to the contents of educating, training, and developing programs in terms of improving the competency of strategic thinking and cultivating the next generation of media managers?

1.5 Thesis Structure

To find answers to these research questions, first, Chapter 2 will introduce basic knowledge about the uniqueness of the media market as well as specific managerial concerns and challenges in the media industry. It will be explained why media management is different at some points and why media companies need managers who can strategize more rapidly and strategically. Chapter 2.2 aims to dig deeper into strategic thinking and presents a general picture that discusses its background and generation. It is particularly necessary to have an agreement on the definition of strategic thinking including cognitive skills, which this study provided by precisely defining the terms of *skill*, *ability*, *knowledge*, *intelligence*, and *competency* to make it clear exactly what strategic thinking is. This study intends to look closer at the origin of the concept of strategic thinking and to clarify exactly what occurs during the process when a person thinks and approaches problems strategically and critically. In this regard, the cognitive clusters and relevant components underlying strategic thinking attributes will be introduced by summarizing and categorizing the extant strategic thinking studies across wide-ranging managerial, pedagogical topics.

Then, by reviewing the different descriptions and classifications of strategic thinking cornerstones, Chapter 3 seeks to provide a condition for further discussions. However, a certain level of uncertainty in the understanding of strategic thinking in the literature raises the essential question: Are there any similarities among different concepts such as critical thinking, divergent thinking, design thinking skill, strategic intelligence, and cognitive ability? However, it is vital to discuss the differences in the various theoretical backgrounds within the specific contexts of industry; reviewing the literature in Chapter 3 shows the existence of a common perception of the concept of strategic thinking and other related terms. The next goal of Chapter 3 is to summarize and decode the core elements of the strategic thinking competency to make this research understandable and functional for managers of media companies.

In Chapter 4, several educational and management development techniques will be discussed in terms of their applicability for improving strategic thinking competency. The influential factors in the process of learning to think strategically will also be explained. Chapter 4 seeks to answer this question: Is there any possibility of improving the training for the strategic thinking competency in the practices by considering the perspectives of different fields of study? In fact, this chapter aims to discover which kind of methods or cognitive practices could potentially contribute to the development of strategic thinking. Next, the study promotes a comprehensive way of approaching and learning to think strategically in the context of the media industry. It

will be established what must be evaluated in the process of learning to think strategically with the aim of discovering the educational techniques that can meet the required strategic thinking dispositions.

Then, based on educational research, this research also addresses numerous lessons and techniques including practices that are applicable in the process of training media managers to improve their strategic thinking competency. These lessons and techniques can not only help the media managers to advance their strategic mindset but also can be employed as a recommendation for any discipline (especially for educational purposes). Thus, Chapter 4 aims to present several suggestions to build a bridge and close a conceptual gap within the scientific knowledge, business theories, and professional practices. The closing chapters place greater emphasize on the value of media products in the process of learning to think strategically based on the assumptions of the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning.

2. Background of Study

2.1 The Strategic Challenges Facing Media Companies in Managing the Changes Based on Unique Strategic Management in Media Industry

2.1.1 Overview of Media Companies, New Market, and Involved Industries

The environment of the media industry is progressively fluid, unstable, and complex. One reason is the diversity of media activities (e.g. journalism, entertainment, broadcasting, and publishing). In fact, the media industry includes various companies such as news agencies, publishers, radio and television stations, and film or music producers with different functionalities (Weber/Rager 2006, p. 119; Aris/Bughin 2009, p. 2; Gläser 2014, p. 70; Hesmondhalgh 2019, p. 1). In addition to these traditional media companies, the appearance of new media businesses with the development of the telecommunication industry (e.g. social media and streaming services) makes it difficult to find a strong definition for media companies (Albarran/Moellinger 2017, p. 19; Oliver/Picard 2020, p. 67). Wirtz (2019, p. 16) assumed that the companies, which provide content for recipients or advertising markets belong to the media industry. Hesmondhalgh (2019, p. 1) expressed that media companies are involved in the creation of cultural products to shape knowledge and entertain people. From Weber and Rager's (2006, p. 121) perspectives, a company can be considered as a media company if media activities (content production, aggregation, and distribution) generate more than half of its revenue. However, it should be recognized that, in practice, it is not easy to determine the real amount of generated revenue; one example would be live radio events.

Certainly, the appearance of other players and groups of industries, such as the media-tech sector and network operators in the media business, has blurred the boundaries (Küng 2016, p. 277; Faustino/Noam 2019, p. 148). For instance, when Apple released iPods and iTunes, the music business entered the computer industry and e-business sector with the aim of simplifying the process of benefiting from digital distribution (Álvarez-Monzoncillo/Suárez-Bilbao/De-Haro 2016, p. 264). Therefore, the convergence of telecommunication and information technology with media business yielded a massive expansion of content through multimedia platforms and new generations of media products and companies such as *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Twitter*, *YouTube* (Küng, Picard/Towse 2008, p. 37; Artero/Manfredi 2016, p. 58; Wirtz 2018, p. 201). Figure 2.1 maps media and entertainment industries' contours with diverse sectors and business activities based on the structure of a Global Industry Classification Standard (GICS) (Küng 2017; Küng/Picard/Towse 2008; Wirtz 2018; GICS 2018). This industry taxonomy positions the new media market in the communication services where information technologies

and the telecommunications industry converge and shape cross-sectional competitions (Oliver/Picard 2020, p. 72).

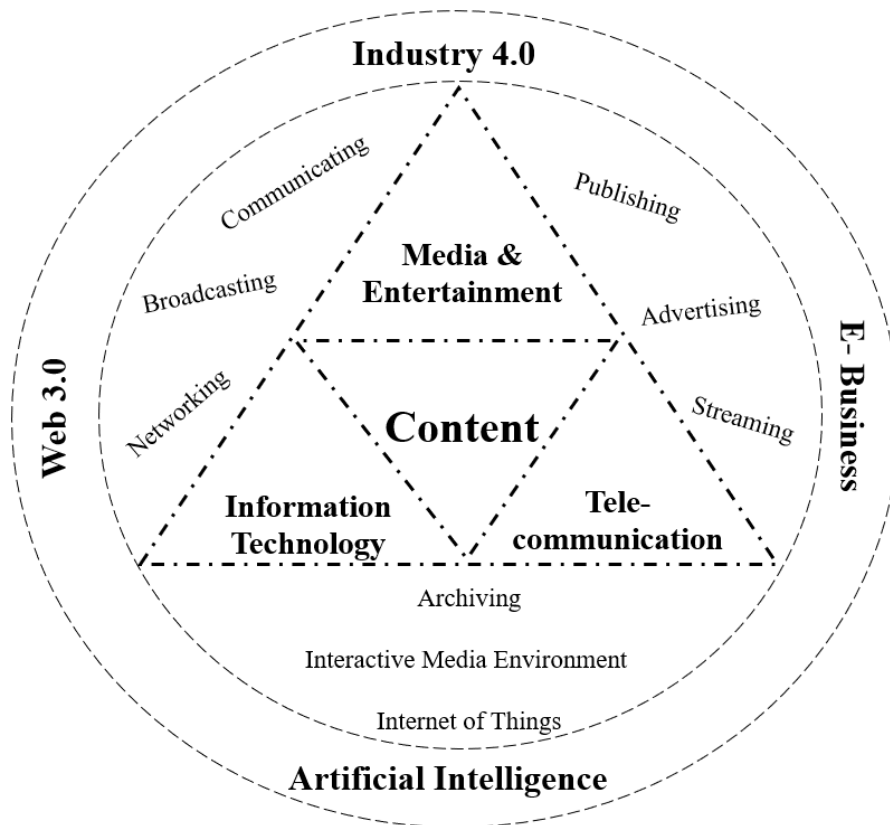


Figure 2.1: New media market (Based on the work of Küng/Picard/Towse 2008; Gläser 2014; Küng 2017; Wirtz 2018; GICS 2018; Hesmondhalgh 2019; Villi/Picard 2019; Faustino/Noam 2019; Holt/Perren 2019; Albarran 2019; Chan-Olmsted 2019; Oliver/Picard 2020)

The emergence of an interactive media environment and the appearance of content intelligence and cloud-based workflows allows companies to customize and individualize the user’s media experiences. On the other hand, it grants the audience the marketplace in which to act not only as a consumer but also as a content producer (Napoli 2016, p. 261). Apart from this, the Internet of Things (IoT) facilitates the connection of different household devices (for example, a smartphone or a tablet) with watching TV (Albarran 2019, p. 9). This gives media companies the chance to generate interactive advertisements (Khan/Bonné/Shahid 2017, p. 106). Furthermore, in the new media market, the media companies can create revenue through services such as multiple uses of content, content syndication, selling licenses (rights), event management, and merchandising (e.g. Eigler 2018, p. 1; Wirtz 2019, p. 103; Villi/Picard 2019, p. 128). Thus, according to this presented model and the above discussions, content as a core asset of media companies is reflected in all products, such as motion pictures or movies (including video on

demand), music or audio (such as audiobooks or digital radio), gaming (such as eSport games), print and text (such as online news) (Küng/Picard/Towse 2008, p. 37; Deuze 2011, p. 7; Gläser 2014, pp. 69, 75; Küng 2016, p. 277; Wirtz 2018, p. 320).

The actual value of technological development in the new media market has been reflected in recent media management studies, for instance, in the areas of artificial intelligence (Albarran 2019; Chan-Olmsted 2019), Industry 4.0, blockchain, and Web 3.0 (online learning portals, 5G networks) in terms of “new digital intermediate, platformization, datafication, and algorithms” (Deuze/Prenger 2019, p. 19). In this regard, for example, the use of a program such as *Salesforce* –with a set of advanced AI capabilities – by Financial Times (a daily newspaper that focuses on business and economic news) illustrates massive progress in smart CRM and marketing processes in media companies. *Salesforce* manages the distribution of content and tracks subscribers’ data as well as sales activities in a cloud (Salesforce 2020). Other media companies such as *Electronic Arts* (EA), *NBC Universal*, and *Activision* (US video game publisher) are also currently implementing this technology in their businesses (Salesforce 2020). Furthermore, *Netflix* as a data-driven company and a streaming entertainment service improves its movie recommendations and consumer experiences by utilizing algorithms and machine learning, which are pushing the entertainment and media industries into advanced spheres (e.g. Vogel 2018; Chan-Olmsted 2019). Moreover, the preservation and archiving of content through new technologies drawn the attention of many media companies. However, some obstacles and challenges exist, which must be solved to make massive progress in archiving policies (e.g. Ringel/Woodall 2019). Moreover, there is still a need for further studies on this topic to investigate the contributions of interactive home entertainment, blockchain, robotics, and extended reality (human-machine interactions) to the business model of media companies and, ultimately, market outcomes.

In general, this market convergence changed media content consumption entirely. According to the 2018 Nielsen Total Audience Report (a global measurement and data analytics company), US adults spend more than 7 hours per day interacting with diverse media such as live TV, Blu-ray devices, radio, and games (Appendix 2.1, p. 207). In Germany, the data are showing the same progress in recent years (Vau.net 2018). This global growth in media usage is forcing media managers to respond rapidly to the market, remain constantly aware of external and internal changes, continuously modify the forms of productions, deliver services faster, and generally change the potential of media companies (Picard 2004, 2011; Self et al. 2015; Wirtz 2018).

2.1.2 Uniqueness in Product, Market, and Business Model

Most of the theories and conceptual frameworks of media management and economics studies are driven by organizational studies (Mierzejewska 2011, p. 13). Nevertheless, the young field of media management is unique in many ways. Due to major differences in the structure and complexity of processes, estimating the possible costs of production, and investment, a better understanding of the uniqueness of media product, workflow, and distribution becomes more important (e.g. Picard 2011, p. 43). Therefore, by considering different points of view of various researchers, this part of the study aims to clarify the distinctive characteristics of media businesses and products to identify the specific strategic challenges that media managers are confronting.

The first unique aspect of the media market is the fact that many media products are non-physical, experimental goods or intangible content such as news, motion pictures, entertainment, fiction, or stories (Wirtz 2019, p. 45). As core assets of media companies, these products and content have specific characteristics of adaptation in their various formats. They can be distributed across diverse channels, customized, recreated, edited, and individualized based on customer demands (Deuze 2011, p. 7). In fact, content creation as a core business of media companies (see Figure 2.1) takes place in team-based and artistic-creative projects that require industry-specific skills and a high degree of flexibility and novelty (Malmelin/Virta 2016, p. 1051; Eigler/Azarpour 2020, pp. 1-3). Moreover, media content can be produced with diverse purposes: entertainment (in the form of narrative content), educational (informative content), and commercial (communicative content) (Küng 2001, p. 224; Wirtz 2019, p. 16). This means that media companies have the ability to combine different information with dissimilar resolutions to create a new product (Dewenter/Rösch 2015, p. 13).

Additionally, the high rate of failure – combined with the industry's high first copy costs and high economies of scale – generates great risks for media companies (Baumgarth 2004; Picard 2005; Aris/Bughin 2009; Küng 2017; Noam 2018; Wirtz 2019). In this regard, network effects increase the challenges of maximizing productivity in this market (e.g. Dewenter/Rösch 2015, p. 13; Noam 2018, p. 629). This means that the more people use the product or service, the more valuable it becomes for companies (Barret/Chun 2019, p. 21). Therefore, the business model of media companies can be varied from subscription-based or single-copy-based (hit-driven) to a freemium model, depending on their business focus and industry dynamics (Aris/Bughin 2009, p. 2). Nowadays, the digital transition is forcing media companies to switch their revenue model to a free digital model (Aris 2011, p. 266).

It must be considered that media companies can generate revenues partly from consumers and partly from advertisers by selling their products to audiences while simultaneously selling customers to advertisers (Wirtz 2019, p. 103). This means that many media products are assembled with advertising included (Dewenter/Rösch 2015, p. 13). From researchers' point of view, this dual-production marketplace affects the content strategy of media firms and leads to a situation in which the media companies must consider both markets cautiously in order to manage the brand and guarantee long-term success in the market (Baumgarth 2004; Aris/Bughin 2009; Mierzejewska 2011).

The concept of the dual marketplace in media companies can also be interpreted to the cultural and economic aspects of products and services (Weber/Rager 2006, p. 122). This means that media companies do not only have a social function (as a public service) but also have the purpose of making a profit. Therefore, media companies should compete with two different markets: the recipient market as a public competition and the advertising market as an economic competition (Weber/Rager 2006; Picard 2011). This principle of duality between economic and journalistic goals is varied in every media company (Schumann/Hess/Hagenhoff 2014, p. 10). In some situations, this gives societal responsibility to media companies and brings a great deal of conflict (Picard 2004; Albarran et al. 2006; Aris/Bughin 2009; Küng 2017). For example, whereas editorial staff aims to provide relevant topics for public communication, media managers focus on the competitiveness of the content and search for distribution options to generate maximum profit. Consequently, media companies deal with extraordinary political pressure, powerful players, and progressive deregulations (Picard 2005; Aris/Bughin 2009; Mierzejewska 2011). Thus, the company's strategy can be influenced not only by the external market challenges but also by media-specific public policies, cultural roles, pluralism, social cohesion, and regulations (Lowe 2016, p. 4; Hollifield et al. 2016, p. 267; Joyce, 2018, p. 6).

In the field of strategic media management, some academic books and case studies have sought to give a better view of the media business. For example, Küng (2017) used The Guardian, Amazon, Netflix, Pixar Animation Studios, CNN, and the BBC as examples of real-world media companies. It is obvious that many companies and managers search for the best way to enhance their chances of success in the market. However, by considering the point that the inputs (people, structures, technologies, systems, and processes) diverge from company to company and industry to industry (O'Shannassy 2003, p. 55), these questions must be investigated in more detail: Are there any methods or patterns that can be transferred into the media industry for the benefit of media companies in today's challenging environment? Is any media company

able to follow the methods of the other successful companies to guarantee its competitive advantage? Which of them can be integrated into the workflow of the media business?

Based on the above-mentioned characteristics of media markets and products, top managers and executives as key people in media companies are confronting specific managerial issues. They should not only be aware of the current situation of the business but must also consider the relationships among different stakeholders such as audiences, content makers, advertisers, investors, and regulators who are pursuing diverse goals (Lowe 2016, p. 4). The complexity of competition in media markets can be elaborated in detail based on the assumptions of the complexity model (Figure 2.2), which describes different typologies of business situations. According to this model, the new media market is located within the chaotic and complex sphere, where the goals of competition and the procedures and strategies are abstract. Because diverse stockholders are involved in a specific issue, there is, for the most part, no agreement as to exactly what the problem is. For example, the situation before a bankruptcy could be considered a wicked problem (chaotic situation) that requires novel specific practices for quick action to find obvious solutions (Hoffert 2020, p. 104). In this regard, solely benchmarking and searching for similar situations to learn from best practices is not useful.

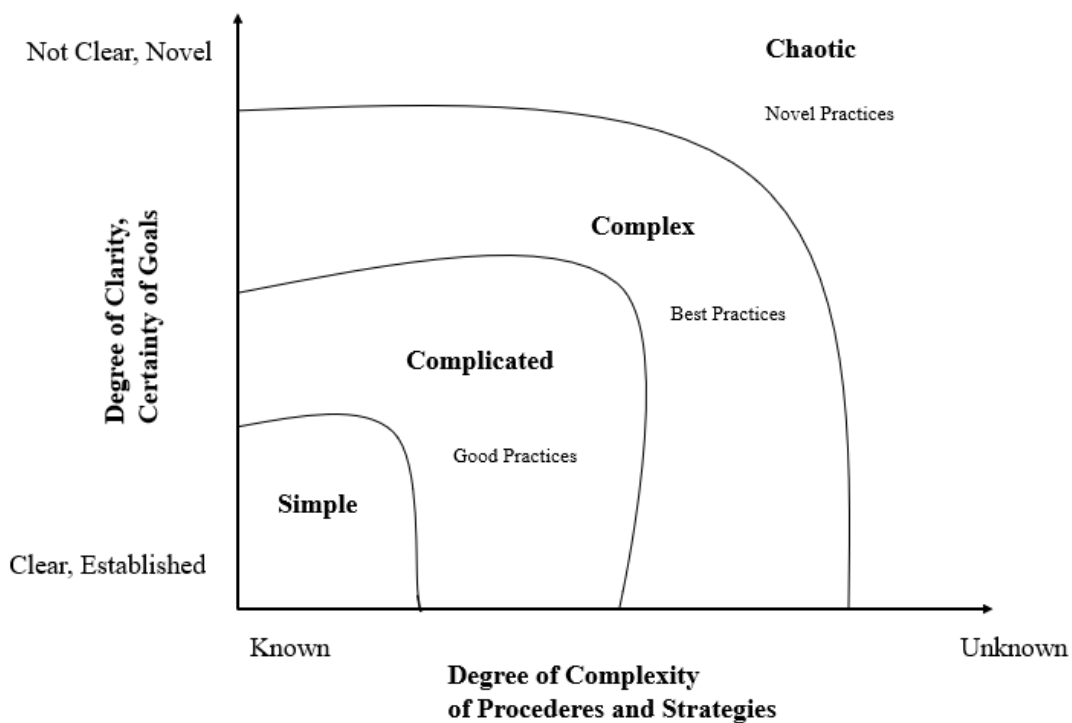


Figure 2.2: The business situation complexity model (Fuchs et al. 2019, p. 205; Hoffert 2020, pp. 103-104)

In contrast, in simple situations, the general conditions, priorities, and procedures are known to the companies. For example, the decision-making for the processing of a customer request or reclamation is clear and familiar. In this situation, previous experiences and traditional methods may be applicable, due to the linear relationship between cause and effect (Fuchs et al. 2019, p. 202; Hoffert 2020, p. 104). If the problem statement is complicated, the process, structure, and patterns of actions are obvious, but the goals may not be clearly defined (Fuchs et al. 2019, p. 203). Searching for good practices in the market to analyze the companies' goals is useful in this situation and will help media companies to find solutions applicable to a specific dilemma. In complex problems, however, due to the unclear relationship between cause and effect, an experimental procedure is necessary (Fuchs et al. 2019, p. 203; Hoffert 2020, p. 104). In this point of view, best practices may offer alternatives to the companies. According to the context of the problem and the degrees of certainty and clarity, targeted strategies and suitable methods could be defined. For example, agile methods (as a part of design thinking) are suitable for tasks and activities with unclear objectives because an adaptive approach is required to focus on quick results by planning appropriate reactions (Fuchs et al. 2019, p. 203). Therefore, for media companies operating in complex and unstable environments, relying only on traditional methods and good practices is a poor strategy to compete in the new media market. This study assumes that the competency of strategic thinking as intellectual capital will support the media managers in finding novel practices.

2.1.3 Distinctive Managerial Issues Facing Managers of Media Company

2.1.3.1 The Definition of 'Media Manager' and Related Responsibilities

The previous chapter discussed the main complexities and changes in the media market, which increases the need for specific media management in response to these challenges. In that light, the media manager who has a leading role in running, developing, and implementing media projects plays an important role in media companies. Despite a handful of studies related to this topic, there is still a lack of a clear explanation and definition about the characteristics of media managers' positions (Artero/Manfredi 2016, p. 47; Altmeppen/Hollifield/van Loon 2017, p. 6). Küng (2016, pp. 280, 281) asserts that the terms 'manager', 'chief executive officer' (CEO), 'leader', and any other manager title (e.g. 'middle manager') have been used broadly and interchangeably in the field of media management and economics. For example, 'media manager', 'media leader' and 'media enterprises' were used interchangeably in the research without a

comprehensive and strong definition of the managers' positions (Altmeppen/Hollifield/van Loon 2017, p. 6).

In one empirical study, Greck, Franzetti, and Altmeppen (2017, p. 123) provided an overview about the personal background and motivation of German media managers (using data from 759 questionnaires) who held leadership positions in newspapers, magazines, journals, news agencies, TV, radio and online media companies. They described a media manager as a person responsible for identifying the company's problems and defining its aims while aligning both societal needs and the economic values of an organization (Greck/Franzetti/Altmeppen 2017, pp. 120, 121). However, in this research, the difference between several job positions (e.g. editorial office and producers) and their impacts on managers' attitudes remains open. To understand which characteristics, reflect the media managers' job and position, qualitative content analysis has been conducted in this part of the study. The aim of content analysis as a research technique is to extract meaning from the data collected (written text) by breaking down, categorizing, and summarizing them to the manageable implication (e.g. Neuendorf 2016; Krippendorff 2018). To do so, this study collected the announcements of job vacancies for media managers or executive positions on *LinkedIn* in 2018 and 2019, especially in the media industry. *LinkedIn*, the largest professional networking site, publishes job vacancies for many companies around the world and has "more than 645+ million users in more than 200 countries" (LinkedIn 2019). This website provided this study with an assessment space in which to search for potential job positions for media managers.

This study has considered the job positions posted by *Sky UK* (a famous British telecommunications and media company) on LinkedIn (December 2018). To gather the data, this study searched for the job titles including the word 'manager', 'director', or 'executive on the *Sky UK* profile page. Appendix 2.2. (p. 208) illustrates the search engine of the company profile on *LinkedIn*. The results show that more than 550 job vacancies related to management positions were published by *Sky UK* in Britain in December 2018. Table 2.1 provides some examples of the available job positions at the management level of this media company. This research applied purposive sampling to choose only the job advertisements that provided the most evident information about the positions of the media managers. Furthermore, the data has been arranged by the author (retrieved from job descriptions), instead of using content analysis software (e.g. *WordStat*). Table 2.1 shows that the main responsibilities of media managers could be categorized from setting targets and prioritizing strategies, leading the business plan, monitoring the performance, to continue communicating with stockholders.

Job Title	Job Responsibilities Examples
Product Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lead the execution and development of the product strategy by identifying market opportunities and defining innovative and disruptive products - Ensure the product strategy implementation, use an innovation roadmap to maximize achievement of the business plan
Entertainment/ Business Communi- cation Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understand the business communications and market dynamics, needs, and competitor positioning - Build collaborative relationships with senior stakeholders across the business
Senior E-Com- merce Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Define and convey the roadmap and ensure the overall targets are being met - Provide strategic recommendations supported by data and search for the opportunities to apply these across multiple territories
Retail Field Opera- tions Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with the Trading Performance Executives to provide insights and resolve identified issues to ensure long-term sustainable change - Do consultative activities, including coaching and training with advisors
Program Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide authentic and mentorship leadership to project managers across the organization - Drive complex programs from the early stage of initiation to the final implementation
Digital Optimiza- tion /Analytics Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drive the product experimentation roadmap and deliver tangible business value by increasing customer engagement - Play the main role in setting the insightful strategy for the product team by Identifying new opportunities within the product development based on data analysis
Senior Propositions Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support teams in identifying opportunities to advance the proposition of the organization - Maintain aware of competitor propositions within the market context
Online Marketing Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Define strategies for the content marketing channels and be responsible for the efficient planning of the media spends and channel mix - Work closely with research teams to monitor campaign performance and take these learnings to provide recommendations for top management for future activities
Business Develop- ment Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do continually networking to build long-lasting collaborative relationships with key stakeholders and businesses' partner - Review constantly current performances and challenge the status quo
National Account Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be Responsible for the overall execution of the regional group's growth plan - Work effectively across wider business team including Marketing and Finance
Process Improve- ment Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plan and create a strategy and set targets and performance objectives - Work in partnership with the different business units to identify the scope and priorities of value-adding process improvement initiatives

Table 2.1: Some examples of job titles for managers working in the media companies
(LinkedIn, Sky UK, December 2018)

To expand and compare the results, this analysis was repeated in August 2019 for the US mass media and entertainment conglomerate, *The Walt Disney Company*. During this time, the company posted more than 1,300 job advertisements and searched for candidates all around the world. About 600 job titles pertained to management positions (see Appendix 2.3, p. 209). Next, some of these managerial titles were categorized based on the different responsibilities of managers in the various business units (Figure 2.3). For example, in this case, the media managers or executives who work in the department of production and operation have titles such as 'editorial and content manager', 'photo manager', 'design manager', 'creative operation manager', 'senior news manager', or 'executive producer'. In this point of view, a human resource manager or head of talent development who works in a media company also has been considered a media manager (Thesis, 2018, pp. 187, 188).

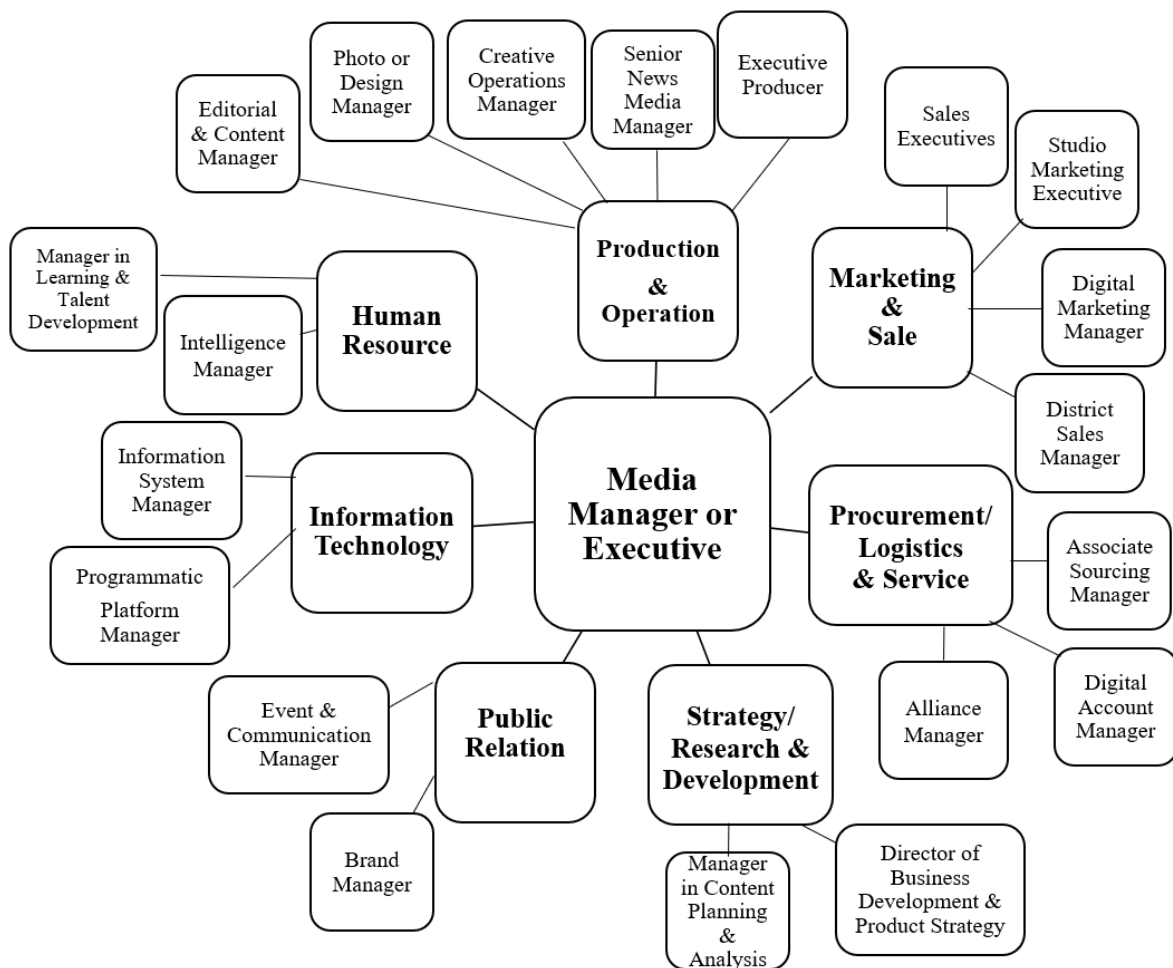


Figure 2.3: Some of the managerial positions posted on the LinkedIn profile of Walt Disney (August 2019)

The comparison of the results of these two-content analyses reveals similarities between the job titles and responsibilities of media managers in media companies. However, to gain the perspective of other companies and expand the definition of ‘media manager’, it is necessary to apply a broader analysis considering management positions within the other industries. Therefore, in the next step, the content analysis sought to determine whether the definition of the media manager position changes in the other business and industries. To do so, this part of the study searched for the job vacancies in *LinkedIn* calling for ‘media manager’ or ‘media executive’ by entering these phrases (in combination with ‘content’, ‘commercial’, ‘advertising’, ‘edit’, ‘publish’, ‘news’, ‘print’, ‘radio’, ‘TV’, and ‘social media’) in the search area (see Appendix 2.4, p. 210). Then, the results were narrowed by focusing on the jobs located in Germany and posted in August 2019. The outcomes show more than 2,700 job titles related to media management positions. Appendix 2.5 (p. 211) illustrates some possible job titles and the responsibilities that the corresponding media manager or executive declares to have. These jobs were requested within the diverse types of companies and businesses such as public relations and communications, fashion, and retail. For example, the most job positions requested were as social media, online marketing, or communication managers. The result showed that such jobs are equivalent to common media-related jobs in different businesses and industries. For example, the responsibilities of the social media manager position are associated with the evolving traditional roles of public relations managers in the form of digital media coverage and presentation. In general, the social media manager as an organizational representative is responsible for dealing with social media marketing and networking (Moretti/Tuan 2015, p. 154). Some of the main roles for the social media managers – regardless of company’s type – can be defined as that of a social analyst or strategist, content manager, or community manager (Neill/Lee 2016, p. 13; Moretti/Tuan 2015, p. 160). These roles and responsibilities can be also reflected in the other job titles such as digital project manager or digital marketing manager.

Taken together, based on all the above content analysis of job descriptions and a review of the related literature, the positions of media managers in companies can be divided into two main clusters (see Figure 2.4 on the next page):

- 1) Working at management-level positions in the media industry (for example, as a brand manager, business development manager, or information system manager at a publishing, television, radio, or game business) and undertaking responsibilities in a diverse area with different functions, such as analysing, planning and marketing (as illustrated in Figure 2.2). However, these responsibilities have similarities with occupations in other industries and are not unique to the media field (Artero/Manfredi 2016, p. 57). In

this category, there are other job titles comprising responsibilities that belong specifically to the media sectors, such as ‘content manager’, ‘editor-in-chief’, and ‘publisher’ in the publishing sector; in broadcasting, ‘producer’, ‘art director’, ‘studio marketing manager’, ‘program manager’, ‘artistic director’, ‘advertiser manager’, ‘video sale manager’, ‘news media director’, and so on.

- 2) Working at management-level positions in other industries (e.g. energy, materials, or health care), while having responsibilities in the area of media activities. Nevertheless, based on the specific requirements of the business sector, the job responsibilities of this group of media managers may be diverse. Some of the job titles here are ‘social media manager’, ‘digital content manager’, ‘e-commerce executive’, ‘online marketing manager’, and ‘head of advertising’.

The focus of this study is on the first group of managers who are not only content specialists (e.g. TV redaction and social media) but also business professionals (e.g. marketing and licensing) (Schüller 2015, pp. 218, 220) working in the extremely changeable environment of the media industry. Nevertheless, the findings of this study may also be relevant to managers who are active in other business sectors and industries (see Figure 2.4).

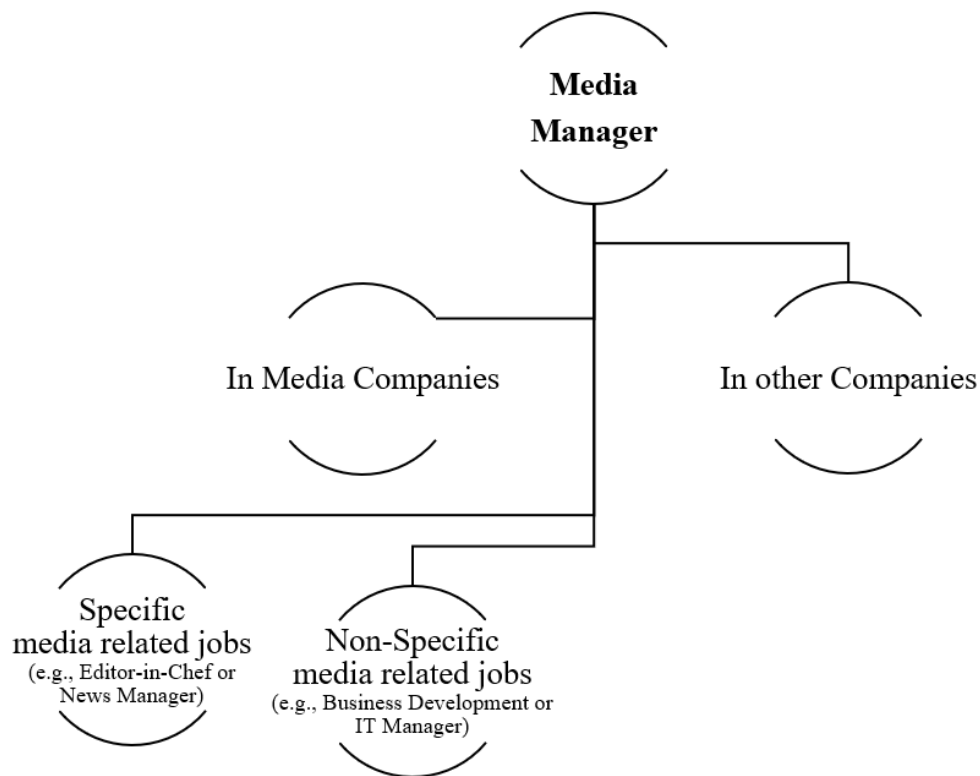


Figure 2.4: The schematic representation of media manager’s positions in different companies

According to the content analyses, the essential responsibilities, job profiles, and core tasks of media managers are heterogeneous (e.g. Gläser 2014, p. 847). Researchers believe that a media manager today fills a range of roles including the leader, director, organizer, operations manager, CEO, negotiator, trainer, public relations, and even entrepreneur (Hollifield et al. 2016; Artero/Manfredi 2016). As an organizer, for example, media managers define organizations' goals and set the instructions of the business game and strategy (Greck/Franzetti/Altmeyen 2017, p. 121). It is also obvious, due to the digitalization of all the processes of media production, that media managers (at any level such as CEO, middle manager, or supervisor) should not only meet the specific requirements expected within the roles but must also understand the business dynamics within the digital media context (e. g. Deuze/Prenger 2019, p. 14). They must be aware of competitors' positions or business missions, search frequently for market opportunities, and ultimately recognize new feasible business solutions (supported by data analysis) to ensure long-term sustainable changes. In addition to defining an innovative road map, providing insights, feedback, and strategic recommendations, doing strategic planning, working with creative workers and content creators, and coaching the multi-disciplinary teams are all part of a media manager's job (based on the above content analysis and the work of Albaran/Moellinger 2017, pp. 24, 25). This multi-tasking job consistent with diverse expected managerial performances increases the need to improve the strategic thinking competency of media managers. The next section will shed more light on the distinctive managerial challenges that managers confront in their daily business in media companies.

2.1.3.2 Particular Managerial Challenges and Concerns of Media Managers

According to the uniqueness of media markets and creative productions, as well as the cooperation with different stockholders (discussed in 2.1.1), media managers face diverse managerial challenges and issues in this industry. Some of them are universal, but most of them are specific to the media industry (Ferguson 2006; Artero/Manfredi 2016). In 'The Economics and Financing of Media Companies', Picard (2011, p. 2) explains that the managers of media companies experience different pressures based on their goals and functions. The competent media executive who works for example for TV companies is simultaneously responsible for managing content (editing, social monitoring, digitalizing), running business (do marketing, licensing, venture capital, portfolio management) and, controlling the processes (Schüller 2015, p. 221). This means that in addition to the traditional managerial roles (such as forecasting, motivating, planning, organizing, negotiating, controlling, and commanding), media executives must have

different abilities to undertake contradictory responsibilities (Artero/Manfredi 2016, pp. 47, 48; Albarran/Moellinger 2017, p. 24), such as harmonizing the tasks of creative workers (conflict resolution), dealing with the public ethics (e. g. individual privacy and digital deceptions) and strategizing efficiently based on the dual market values (economical and societal) with considering diverse purposes of content creation. These varied pursuits increase the complexity in different areas of responsibility and uncertainty in strategizing and policy-making.

Moreover, working with creative workers (e.g. artists, reporters, authors, and composers) is a special asset of media companies that makes their management a unique task. In media companies, as a part of the cultural and entertainment industries, artistic and creative professionals form the processes of activities in the value chain (Deuze 2011, p. 35). These kinds of jobs provide a working condition that is often impermanent and unstable. This has been referred to as ‘atypical employment’ in media companies (Bilton 2011, p. 37; Schirmer 2012, p. 34). In atypical employment, the mobility of workers (e.g. journalist, authors, actors, and graphic artists) and employment insecurity is high (Eikhof/Marsden 2019, p. 251; Eigler/Azarpour 2020, p. 3). Therefore, working in the media labour market by its nature requires greater risk-taking propensity (Chan-Olmsted 2006, p. 262). In fact, informal employment and the increasing number of freelancers have changed the way of organizing the work and management in the media industry (Deuze/Prenger 2019, pp. 20, 21). For example, studies in 2014 showed that the UK’s creative media workers in cable and satellite TV worked on average 52.6 hours per week (Eikhof/Marsden 2019, p. 252). This increases the difficulties of formulating long-term plans for staff deployment, due to work flexibility and uncertainty (Hollifield et al. 2016, p. 68). In particular, time pressure and unstable job positions increase the internal complexity, which increases the value and significance of a manager’s conflict resolution competency in media companies (Schüller 2015, p. 288; Hollifield et al. 2016, p. 5; Artero/Manfredi 2016, p. 58).

Moreover, the autonomy of creative workers and diversity of managerial power differentiate media management from management in other industries such as manufacturing. These increase the complexity of decision-making for media managers (Deslandes 2016, pp. 313, 314). As Bilton (2011 p. 35) explained, artistic creativity is a complicated and multidimensional process. Similarly, Küng (2011, p. 54) observes that creativity is a necessity for media companies, and creative workers require the space to be innovative. For example, the *Bertelsmann* corporation announced that it would continue investing in innovation and creativity in all aspects of its business and strategies (Bertelsmann 2019). In this regard, media managers must understand how to enhance the culture of creativity and organize the work of skilled employees and creative

workers, who have the potential to create exclusive content (Deuze 2011, p. 35; Artero/Manfredi 2016 p. 58). Thus, managing employees who are involved in multiple innovative projects is a unique task (Schirmer 2012, p. 202), that can be considered as a competency of creative talent management.

Subsequently, due to the countless ways of presenting, packaging, distributing, and delivering media products, identifying the audience's demands in this blurry media business becomes more challenging for media managers (Chan-Olmsted 2005, p. 5; Noam 2018, p. 629). Specifically, the radical changes in content production and its high availability in the digital environment and on social media platforms make it difficult to win consumers' attention and compete with leading broadband service providers and large media conglomerates such as *AT&T Inc.*, and *Comcast Corporation Co.* (Aris 2011, p. 269). For example, one of the problems that broadcast television managers are facing is in selecting, designing, and promoting the content (multicasting) while finding local advertiser sponsorship and reaching a niche in the market (Ferguson 2006, p. 303). In this regard, it is difficult for new entrants to build an independent brand in the media oligopoly market. Studies have highlighted the fact that only 10% of books, music, or films are successful in this competitive market (Noam 2018, p. 629). Appendix 2.6 (p. 212) presents the broad field of activities of media conglomerates that make competition so formidable for new media entrants.

As discussed in the previous sections, media-specific public policies, cultural roles, economics, pluralism, social cohesion (ethical concerns or moral responsibilities) and regulations influence the company's strategy (Lowe 2016, p. 4; Hollifield et al. 2016, p. 267; Joyce 2018, p. 6). The concept of the dual marketplace in media companies (discussed in Chapter 2.1.1) affects the media manager's decisions and the organization's goals (Hollifield et al. 2016, p. 298; Greck/Franzetti/Altmeppen 2017, p. 121). To survive in this market, it is crucial for media managers to strategize efficiently and to continuously adjust the companies' business model and value chain to respond quickly to changes. This can be considered as a competency of media managers in strategic thinking.

Overall, due to the unique features of the media industry (discussed above), media companies are struggling with the complex production process necessitated by the different markets (Lowe 2016, p. 4; Noam 2018, p. 629). To succeed, media managers must strategize systematically within this changing media market context (Chan-Olmsted, 2005, p. 5). One related example here is the strategic restructuring of *The Walt Disney Company* as a top performer in entertainment and media. In March 2018, Walt Disney divided its business into two segments: Parks, Experiences and Products and Direct-to-Consumer (streaming service) and International (Los

Angeles Times 2019). Later, Disney introduced two more business units, Media Networks and Studio Entertainment, each of which manages and organizes its teams differently. In 2019, The Walt Disney Company acquired *21st Century Fox* to enter a new business line and expand its market share (The Walt Disney Company 2019). However, Disney's Annual Report (2019, p. 22) revealed an open risk involved in that decision: "we may not successfully execute on our direct-to-consumer strategy". Thus, Disney's implementation of different strategies over time as a best practice indicates the necessity of adapting to changes and continuously re-evaluating the business direction. To summarize, the major challenges and concerns facing media managers in the specific context of modern media businesses can be categorized into two main categories (based on the discussions in Chapter 2.1.2):

- 1) Internal company challenges and concerns, such as harmonizing the tasks of creative workers (attracting, hiring, motivating, handling, and preserving) and managing the potential conflicts that may arise with the use of new technologies in the company; strategizing efficiently and continuously adjusting the company's business model and value chain to respond quickly to changes; fulfilling the diverse purposes of content creation, such as entertainment (narrative), educational (informative) and commercial (communicative); constructing a strong media brand and curating the company's reputation (the potential of network effects); and solving problems associated with data privacy, piracy, and digital deceptions.
- 2) External environmental challenges and concerns such as adapting to ongoing convergence happening among different businesses by having a deep understanding of what is going on in the other players and industries especially in telecommunication and information technology; competing with large media conglomerates and the leading broadband service providers and different stockholders; dealing with public ethics (social responsibility and cultural norms) or community policies (political governance or advertiser's interests) to handle media coverage and public presence; handling the fragmentation of consumer's needs and media consumption habits; and managing the risk generated by the high failure rate of products, combined with the industry's high first copy costs.

The question that remains unanswered is: What kind of competencies are required for media managers to confront these managerial challenges? To answer this question, the next chapter will determine firstly what the competencies themselves are. Chapter 2.1.4.2 will put more emphasis on the key competencies that media managers must have to work in the new media market.

2.1.4 The Key Competencies Required for the Management Positions in the Media Organizations

2.1.4.1 A Clarification of Differences Among Competency, Ability, Skill, and Knowledge

Numerous studies have attempted to address the differences among the terms ‘knowledge’, ‘skill’, ‘ability’, and ‘competency’ (Spencer 1997; Weinert 1999; Winterton/Delamare-Le Deist/Stringfellow 2006; Harlin et al. 2007; Colman 2015). Spencer (1997, p. 7) defines knowledge as what one knows competency. It has been further defined as “the result of an interaction between intelligence (capacity to learn) and situation (opportunity to learn)” (Winterton/Delamare-Le Deist/Stringfellow 2006, p. 9). In this regard, the knowledge one has acquired during life or crystallized intelligence (long-term memory) can be formed as a result of cognitive processing and information reasoning that occurred in the past and has been stored in the brain. On the other hand, fluid intelligence (working or short-term memory) is a cognitive process at the time of reflecting and transforming information to solve current and new problems (Weinert 1999, p. 23; Bergmann/Daub 2007, p. 82; Murman 2015, p. 113). Researchers have divided knowledge into diverse categories: declarative (knowing that), implicit or procedural (know how to do things), and non-declarative, semantic, or episodic (e.g. beliefs) (Stubart 1989; Goldman 2012; Colman 2015). Implicit knowledge in the form of experiences, abilities, activities, and routines exist without the person being aware of this knowledge. Explicit knowledge, in contrast, is the knowledge that an individual is aware of (Bergmann/Daub 2007, p. 82).

In the literature, skill has been assumed as a synonym for ‘ability’, ‘capability’, ‘capacity’, and ‘efficiency’ (e.g. Sen 1993, p. 30; Weinert 1999, p. 4; Kubr 2002, p. 81). Skill, as a level of performance, represents what one can do (Spencer 1997, p. 7). Capability refers to the different combinations of functioning and working, which a person can reach (Sen 1993, p. 31). Kubr (2002, p. 801) states that skill refers to the capability of doing things, applying knowledge and aptitudes effectually in the work situation. Like knowledge, skill can be divided into different categories: hard (technical) and soft skills such as emotional intelligence, leadership, conflict resolution, self-management, and communication (e.g. Laker/Powell 2011). Working memory plays a decisive role in acquiring a skill and knowledge (Winterton/Delamare-Le Deist/Stringfellow 2006, p. 11); this means skills can also be developed by repeating and practicing in different work situations, thereby forming an ability (Rowe 1995; Winterton/Delamare-Le Deist/Stringfellow 2006; Colman 2015).

Competencies refer to behavioural dimensions and individual actions that help individuals to distinguish an effective performance from an ineffective one (Soderquist et al. 2010, p. 326). The scientific discussion shows that the words ‘competency’ and ‘competence’ are distinct (Bergmann/Daub 2007, p. 76). Competence refers to a sufficiency of skill and particular standard that is observable and measurable (Rowe 1995, p. 15; Soderquist et al. 2010, p. 325). In contrast, competency is how objectives and standards are achieved, rather than what is measured (Rowe 1995, p. 13). Rowe (1995, p. 15) indicated that competencies or “behaviour traits that we look for in recruiting someone to a post will be different from the competence we wish to assess for someone in a post”. That means clear criteria are needed to judge whether the person is competent. For example, a manager can fail or succeed at running a meeting as a competence. When discussing competency, the question is not just about assessing a competence (here running a meeting); it is also about how the manager can perform better and which attributes, values and behaviours are relevant and influential in this situation (Rowe 1995, p. 16).

To better understand all differences among the above terms, the competency ‘iceberg model’ proposed by Spencer (1997) has been considered. This model outlined the characteristics of competency in different categories (see Figure 2.5): skills, knowledge, traits or general dispositions (attitudes refer to self-concept or the individual’s evaluation), value, motivation, and perception (Spencer 1997, p. 7). Based on this model (Figure 2.5), the observable aspects of individual competencies such as skills and knowledge are above the waterline. These aspects can be measured as competence. In contrast, the hidden competencies are deeper and central to personality (e.g. self-concept, trait, and cognition) (Spencer, 1997, p. 8). In this regard, competency has been considered as an underlying characteristic that can forecast the behaviour of an individual in the workplace (Spencer/Spencer 1993, p. 9).



Figure 2.5: Competency “Iceberg Model” (based on Spencer/Spencer 1993; Rowe 1995; Spencer 1997)

In summary, competency can be described as a thoughtful and habitual use of knowledge, skills, norms, mindsets, attitudes, and emotions that are essential to successfully responding to problems and mastering tasks in unexpected situations and specific job positions (Rodolfa et al. 2005, p. 349; Harlin et al. 2007, p. 86; Soderquist et al. 2010, p. 325). Therefore, competency as a multi-dimensional construct enables individuals to organize their knowledge and skills towards a certain goal, develop a realistic action plan based on the situation and incentivize them to accomplish the task effectively (North/Reinhardt/Sieber-Suter 2018, p. 37). The next section focuses on identifying the key competencies required for managing media companies.

2.1.4.2 Key Competencies of Media Managers in the New Media Market

According to previous discussions, media companies moved into unfamiliar territory with the appearance of the new media market where due to unique business, products, and workflows, media managers are facing different internal and external challenges (Chapter 2.1.3.2). In this setting, multidisciplinary competencies (knowledge, skills, ability, different mindsets, and attitudes) are needed for media managers to run their companies and harmonize simultaneously between using new technologies and leading creative workers (O’Donnell/Zion 2019, p. 230). In this section, the related key competencies for media managers in the new media market will be elaborated on in greater detail.

As discussed before, digitization and industry changes have caused a shift in the fundamental managerial skills and duties required of media managers, which must be improved (Sylvie/Gade

2009, p. 113; Artero/Manfredi 2016, p. 52). According to the job descriptions of media managers in Chapter 2.1.3.1 and the literature reviews, it can be concluded that today's media managers need not only to improve their general core competencies that can be applied to any managerial positions but also to advance specific media business competencies (Artero/Manfredi 2016, pp. 57, 58; Hollifield et al. 2016, p. 5; Greck/Franzetti/Altmeyden 2017, p. 121; Theiss 2018, p. 104). For example, Artero and Manfredi (2016, p. 56) attempted to categorize and summarize the new skills and competencies that are required of media managers today. These include creative talent management, communication, social responsibility, digital native, entrepreneurship, and strategic thinking. For example, through communication competency and effective agile project management skills, media managers could harmonize tasks, motivate creative workers, and manage potential conflicts that may arise from the utilization of new technologies within creative teamwork (Malmelin/Virta 2016, p. 1051). Moreover, it is necessary for every manager to become familiar with the potential of employing new or advanced digital media technologies, due to the exponential growth of technology development (Petry 2018, p. 43). This is the skill of being a digital native or competent in media literacy to have a deep understanding of the specific characteristics of media content.

In another study, by analysing the data gathered from the interviews with media managers in the United States, Albarran and Moellinger (2017, p. 24) focused on different kinds of abilities and responsibilities that are relevant for media managers in developing a taxonomy for managerial performance. Likewise, by interviewing the media managers and editors-in-chief of the main Swiss-German media companies, Theiss (2018) tried to figure out skills and competencies that will be required for media professionals and editors in the future. She concluded that leading with a well-defined vision and strategies (thinking strategically) is a critical competency that should be developed in the new convergent media environment (Theiss 2018, p. 209). In the following, each of these competencies, responsibilities, and abilities essential for media managers will be described in detail.

According to the specific concerns and challenges described in Chapter 2.1.3.2, media companies place a high value on human capital as a transporter of service and information. In this regard, media managers should consider that their competitors fight for talented human resources as a source of competitive advantages. Based on the study by Schirmer (2012, p. 202), attracting, motivating, handling, and keeping workers who are extremely creative is more challenging than managing employees in other workplaces and industries. Dealing with such staff who have a high degree of freedom in creativity is the main task of managers in media companies (Schüller 2015, p. 63). Therefore, media managers must have the skill of inspiring, hiring,

and transferring the knowledge of creative workers (this refers to the competency of creative talent management and team motivation) (Hollifield et al. 2016, pp. 68-71), which requires an effective leadership style to enhance the interest and commitment of these individuals in the companies they work for (Dal Zotto 2005; Yaghoubipoor/Tee/Musa Ahmed 2013). In fact, top management executives and leaders decide how much autonomy should be given to creative workers in order to simultaneously manage the conflicts and solve potential problems through negotiation (Hollifield et al. 2016, pp. 5, 6). Furthermore, due to varying levels of maturity among employees, the management and leadership styles of media managers must also be individualized (Schirmer 2012, p. 133).

Some studies have observed that the alignment and coordination across unrelated units and project-based works in media companies are challenging (Dal Zotto 2005; HBR 2015; Artero/Manfredi 2016; Hollifield et al. 2016; Noam 2018). In such a situation, the media managers not only must deal with internal challenges to handle the company but must also play a representative role to address the public or community's needs (Artero/Manfredi 2016, pp. 47, 57). Furthermore, harmonizing the tasks of creative workers and managing the potential conflicts arising from the utilization of new technologies, create different challenges for media managers in the company. Moreover, conflicting demands caused by political decisions and the diverse needs of stakeholders force media managers to assume different perspectives to make reasonable decisions (Deslandes 2016, pp. 313, 314). Additionally, due to the long-term impacts of media content on society, social responsibility and cultural norms must also be taken into account.

In addition to the previously mentioned competencies and managerial skills, the ability to understand online and social media activities are crucial for media managers (Theiss 2018, p. 113). This can be referred to as a social monitoring competency (Albarran/Moellinger 2017 p. 24; Artero/Manfredi 2016, p. 59), in which constructing a strong media brand and company's reputation as well as considering the potential of network effects, is important. In essence, advances in communication technology are causing a media convergence (Figure 2.1), in which different industry sectors allow the same content flows on large scale (Küng/Picard/Towse 2008, p. 37; Artero/Manfredi 2016 p. 58; Wirtz 2018, p. 201). Consequently, as Faustino and Noam (2019, p. 148) asserted, "today's media manager faces new industry players and more diverse issues compared with years past". Therefore, having a deep understanding of what is going on in the other businesses, particularly telecommunication and information technology becomes crucial for media managers (discussed in Chapter 2.1.4).

Being aware of opportunities and business changes, helps managers to have a deep understanding of the media business and develop valuable competitive strategies by identifying novel opportunities in other business areas (Picard 2011, p. 16). In that light, continuous learning, adaptability, flexibility, and redefining of the issues within a larger framework (thinking outside the box) are necessary competencies for media managers to address changes proactively and to meet companies' strategic goals and values (Hollifield et al. 2016, p. 154; Albarran/Moellinger 2017, p. 24). This is what researchers have termed the strategic thinking competency, which entails both cognitive ability and emotional intelligence (Graetz 2002; Dragoni et al. 2011; Calabrese/Costa 2015; Colman, 2015; Fehr/Huck 2016). Indeed, strategic thinking is considered a key competency for media managers in the age of digitalization and the media convergent environment (Grabher/Grawehr 2020, p. 173; Artero/Manfredi 2016, p. 56). Theiss (2018, pp. 108-110) described this competency as connected thinking, imagination, openness to change, agility, curiosity, and reflectivity as indispensable cognitive, technical, and social skills for media professionals in the media convergent environment. In fact, these competencies help media managers to strategize more resourcefully and purposefully to ensure companies' competitive advantages and to anticipate market trends realistically with the help of a clear vision (e.g. Switzer 2008). Chapter 3.5.2 will place greater emphasis on the benefits of thinking strategically.

Given these all foundations, it can be concluded that in comparison to managers in other industries, media managers are challenged by more complicated questions of value (Altmeyden/Hollifield/van Loon 2017, p. 3). As a result, there is an increased need for media managers who have competency in conflict resolution, creative talent management, team motivation, social monitoring, communication, and strategic thinking (Schüller 2015, p. 288; Malmelin/Virta 2016, p. 1051; Hollifield et al. 2016, p. 5; Artero/Manfredi 2016, p. 58; Deslandes 2016, pp. 313, 314; Albarran/Moellinger 2017 p. 24; Petry 2018, p. 43; Theiss 2018, p. 209; Grabher/Grawehr 2020, p. 173).

In summary, according to discussions about the specific internal and external concerns in Chapter 2.1.3.2 and the above-mentioned studies, the diverse competencies required for media managers are laid out in Table 2.2. As this table shows, strategic thinking is the most crucial competency for handling the challenges in media companies. Chapter 3.1 will provide a comprehensive explanation for the concepts of 'strategic thinking', and the next chapter offers a basic argument for answering the question of how this competency can be necessary for media organizations.

Internal Concerns	Competencies	External Concerns	Competencies
Harmonizing the tasks of creative workers (attracting, hiring, motivating, handling, and preserving) and managing the possible conflicts arising with the utilization of new technologies in the company	Creative Talent Management, Communication, Team Motivation, Conflict resolution, Strategic Thinking	Adapting to ongoing convergence happening among different businesses by having a deep understanding and knowledge about the trends in other industries especially in telecommunication and information technology	Digital Native, Strategic Thinking
Strategizing resourcefully, and adjusting the companies' business model and value chain continuously to answer to the changes quickly	Strategic Thinking	Competing with large media conglomerates and the leading broadband service providers to meet different stockholders' values	Digital Native, Strategic Thinking
Fulfilling the diverse purposes of content creation e.g. to entertain (narrative), educate (informative), and commerce (communicative)	Digital Native, Strategic Thinking	Dealing with the public ethics (social responsibility) or community policies to handle media coverage and public presence	Social Monitoring Social responsibility, Strategic Thinking
Constructing a strong media brand and companies' reputation (considering the potential of network effects)	Social Monitoring, Strategic Thinking	Handling the fragmentation of community's needs and media consumption habits	Communication, Strategic Thinking
Solving problems associated with private data, individual privacy, piracy, and digital deceptions	Digital Native, Strategic Thinking	Managing the generated risk through the high level of the failure rate of products, combined with the industry's high first copy costs	Strategic Thinking, Agile Project Management, Communication

Table 2.2: Current managerial challenges fronting media managers along with required competencies

2.2 The History of Strategic Management Studies in the Field of Media Management and Economics

2.2.1 Three Approaches to Media Management Research and Relevant Strategic Theories

To place the concept of strategic thinking among the theories of strategic management studies, this chapter adopts the perspective of Küng (2007, 2011, 2017), who classified the strategic theories in the field of management into three approaches: rationalist, adaptive and interpretative (Figure 2.6). She explained that the rational approach (also known as the classical or linear approach) emerged in the 1960s. The main assumption in the rational approach is that individuals and organizations behave reasonably in accomplishing strategic analysis with apparent goals and standardized processes (Küng 2017, pp. 49, 50). According to the rationalist approach, a strategy is a plan that has been shaped through methodical and chronological analysis of the organization's internal and external environments (Küng 2017, pp. 65, 66). This approach aims to answer the question: which changes are must take place, and why? The focus of the rationalist approach is on the analyses of the organization and environment to determine the optimal strategic options and maximize returns.

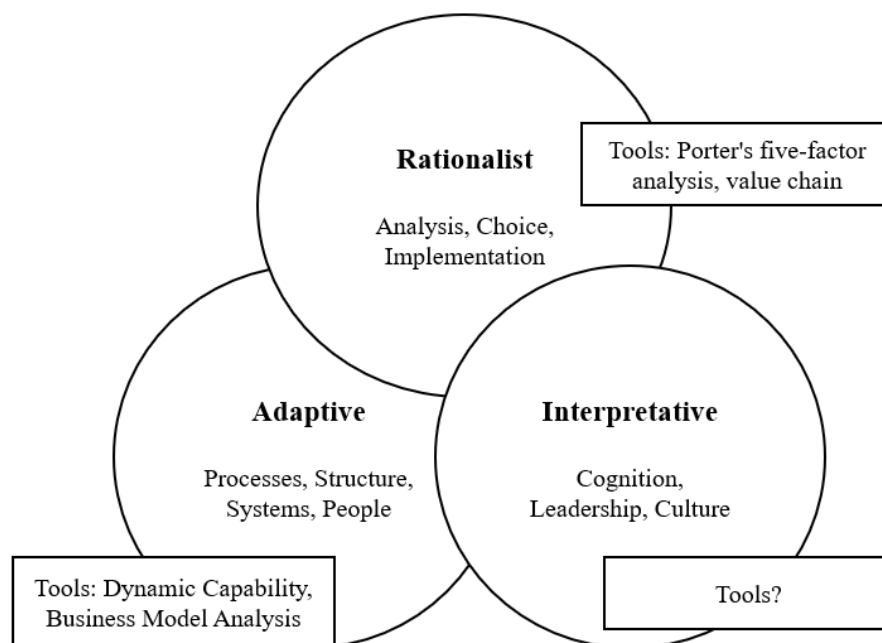


Figure 2.6: “Organizing” strategic theory (Based on the work of Küng 2011, p. 49)

Moreover, the rationalist approach seeks to find a strategic position that can ensure sustainable advantages for the company (Küng 2017, pp. 65, 66). Some of the well-known tools and concepts in this approach that also found applications in the media industry are listed as follows: Strategic planning (e.g. Picard 2004, p. 2), PEST analysis (e.g. Küng 2004, p. 47; Oliver/Parrett 2018, p. 344), SWOT analysis (e.g. Ferguson 2006, p. 297; Koch 2008, p. 60; Hollifield et al. 2016, p. 187), Boston Consulting Group's (BCG) or growth & share matrix (e.g. Picard 2014, p. 13), value chain analysis (e.g. Küng 2011; Hess/Matt 2013, Wirtz 2019), Porter's five-forces model (e.g. Küng 2011, p. 49; Lowe 2016, p. 17); resource-based view (e.g. Hollifield/Vlad/Becker 2004, p. 135; Hollifield et al. 2016, p. 103), and core competency (e.g. Chan-Olmsted 2004, p. 49).

Küng (2017, pp. 3, 51) asserts that a significant proportion of the existing studies that have dominated the field of media management and economics used rationalist approaches to investigate and analyse the strategies of media companies. Notably, Porter's five forces analysis and value chain analysis are some important tools in strategic management that have been employed as analytical frameworks in several academic texts by media management scholars (Mierzejewska/Hollifield 2006, p. 50). However, from the perspective of Küng (2007a, 2017), rationalist models lose their validity in fast-changing and dynamic industries like the media environment. The problem in using these kinds of tools is that carrying out an analysis from this approach requires a focus on the stable structure of the company and its business environment at a specific point in time (D'Aveni/Dagnino/Smith 2010, p. 1374). However, it is impossible even to determine the boundaries of the media industry, the structure of the market, and the business sectors (discussed in Chapter 2.1.1). Thus, there are obstacles to analysing strategic models and applying rationalist tools to new media companies (Küng 2017, p. 51), due to a large number of distinct sub-segments in the media sector (Aris/Bughin 2009, p. 2).

By criticizing the rationalist approach, which fails to adjust the company to the diversity of environment (Küng 2007a, p. 35; Küng 2017, p. 70), a newer approach – the adaptive approach – has gained prominence in the field of media management. In this point of view, strategy is seen as an ongoing process. Based on the assumptions of this approach, since the environment continuously alters the existing form of the company, processes and strategies become less capable of fulfilling the demands of the market (Küng 2007a, p. 34; Küng 2017, p. 155). Fundamentally, the adaptive approach highlights the need to consider the interrelationship between the structure, strategies, resources, and capabilities in response to every dynamic change in the media industry (Küng 2017, p. 66). With that in mind that strategic activities are a continuous process of reconciling and integrating the organization's external and internal worlds, dynamic

capability theory and business model analysis find applications in the adaptive approach (Mierzejewska/Hollifield 2006; Küng 2017). The scope of dynamic capability includes a renewal of the company's valuable resources (Oliver 2016, p. 294), which is one of the principles of ideal strategic thinking (Kanter 2011, p. 116). For example, in the digital transformation of media companies, the exploration and exploitation of digital technologies play an important role. In this regard, it is vital to not rely and invest only on the resources that already exist, but also consider the partnerships, acquisitions options, and external sourcing (Hess et. al 2016, p. 135). For example, the decisions of *FUNKE Mediengruppe* and *Hubert Burda Media*, the pioneer German media organization, to acquire job portals such as *Xing* (in 2012) and *Joblocal GmbH* (in 2014) illustrate thinking strategically about the company's strengths and resources (FUNKE 2020; Hubert Burda Media 2020).

According to Küng (2011, p. 49), the question that the adaptive approach seeks to answer is: how does change happen, and why? This approach aims to facilitate shifts in a company's strategic position to promptly confront business environment impacts and changes. Küng (2017) believed the adaptive approach is more suited to the specific features of the media industry. For example, media and broadcasting companies, especially those working in a fast and unpredictable e-business area, need to adapt their structures based on technological changes and developments and must strive to reconsider and redesign their strategies and structures based on networking, merging, and media acquisition (Küng 2017, pp. 155, 174). *The New York Times*, the most well-known news company, is a valuable example of an adaptive approach in action at a media company. *The New York Times* launched its website in 1996, started to merge print and online sectors in 2005, produced an e-reader app in 2006 and an iPad app in 2008, and established a machine learning team in 2014 (Küng 2017, p. 68).

The interpretative approach focuses not only on how a company can be adapted to the changes (as in the adaptive approach) but also on the unconscious and psychological aspects (such as individuals' mindsets, cognitions, and mental models), which are most often hidden and immeasurable in the companies. In general, to formulate their strategies, media companies start by analysing the situation based on established goals. Appendix 2.7 (p. 213) shows the common steps in the strategic management process (Wirtz 2019, p. 90). The data gathered from environmental and SWOT analyse provide information that is needed in the next step to formulate and realize the strategies. Stubbart (1989, p. 329) wrote that strategic actions and performances principally take place in implementation, where overlooking managers' thinking in the strategic management process may be dangerous. In fact, the influences of managers' underlying beliefs, assumptions, values, emotions, and motivations, as well as the effects of companies' policies,

and culture on the process of strategic management have been mostly ignored (Porac/Thomas/Baden-Fuller 1989, p. 398; Küng 2011, p. 50), due to the inherent difficulties of exploring and assessing these elements (Küng 2007, p. 35, Küng 2017, pp. 70, 71). Indeed, strategy formation and development is a cognitive process that happens in the minds of managers and strategists (Mintzberg/Ahlstrand/Lampel 1989, p. 170). In that light, the mental models of managers – including the assumptions, beliefs, images, and stories in their minds – shape their reasoning process, way of seeing the world, thoughts, and ultimately behaviour (Senge et al. 2014, pp. 235, 236; Hofert 2018, p. 4). This has a massive effect on the process of strategy formulation. Therefore, researchers emphasize the need for considering what happens in the mind of the manager before the strategy is made (Pellegrino/Carbo 2001; Sloan 2016).

In fact, managerial cognition has been seen as analytical thinking that influences the strategic choices and the process of evaluating information and decision-making (Steptoe-Warren/Douglas/Hume 2011, p. 243). As Porac, Thomas, and Baden-Fuller (1989, p. 413) explained, to make sense of the business, overcome ambiguities in the environment, and plan, managers simplify the processes underlying a business model. Nevertheless, in simplifying, there is a risk of losing significant anticipatory data and information. In fact, the mental model of managers and their interpretations filters the organizational response to the environment (Kaplan 2011, p. 667). This means managerial decisions are a mirror of the cognitive structures of decision-makers (Porac/Thomas/Baden-Fuller 1989, p. 398). Therefore, considering the power of media managers in public spheres and their competencies in handling dissimilar strategies (economical and societal) increases the need for highlighting the role of strategic thinking competency (discussed in chapter 2.1.4.2). To change and improve the generated strategies and find novel solutions for a media company, it is essential to alter the mental models of its managers. That is the goal of thinking strategically. Küng (2017) emphasized that because the importance of the mindset (cognitions and mental map) of managers in media companies has been underestimated, it is necessary to focus and research more on this area. The assumption here is that strategic thinking – as a hidden aspect of companies – can find its position in the interpretative approach. However, the existing literature offers no comprehensive argument about the concepts, tools, and techniques that can be employed in the interpretative approaches to evaluate and improve the managers' mental models. Therefore, this study aims to shed light on this specific topic. Chapter 2.2.2.2 will provide detailed definitions for the term strategic thinking.

2.2.2 The Theoretical Origins, Background and Development of the Concept of Strategic Mindset, Strategic Thinking and Managerial Cognition

2.2.2.1 The Existence and Generation of the Concept of Strategic Thinking

In the field of strategic management and from the perspective of a rational approach (discussed in the previous chapter), strategic planning is a tool or technique that has been used to harmonize companies' activities (Raguž/Podrug/Jelenc 2015, p. 6). From the 1970s through the 1990s, many researchers (such as Stubbart 1989; Mintzberg/Ahlstrand/Lampel 1989; Zabriskie/Huellmantel 1991; Mintzberg 1994) began to argue that the paradigm of strategic management showed insufficient improvement in the implementation of strategies. These scholars claimed that having strategic planning is not adequate or practical in an uncertain environmental context, which is why the strategic management process often failed to be realized. In this regard, Stubbart (1989, pp. 327, 329) criticized previous studies for ignoring the capacities that characterise executives' thinking and described the cognitive aspect as a 'missing link' in strategic management research. In this period, the concepts of 'strategic cognition', 'strategic leadership' and 'strategic mindset' have been used interchangeably in the literature to illustrate the importance of strategic thinking (Stubbart 1989, p. 331; Kaufman et al. 2003, p. 17; Pisapia et al. 2009, p. 42; Sloan 2016, p. 33). In this context, thinking refers to the activities of the brain in storing, processing, reasoning, and recalling information along with emotion and feeling. The outcomes of thinking are beliefs, attitudes, and thoughts (Zaltman 2003, p. XVIII). The mindset or mental model (dominant logic) as a mind map shapes our thinking process and describes the way in which we see the world, think and behave (Senge et al. 2014, pp. 235, 236; Hofert 2018, p. 4).

Schwenk (1988), Stubbart (1989), Zabriskie and Huellmantel (1991), Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel (1998) first developed the concept of strategic thinking, but the other academics have provided valuable insights into the nature of strategic thinking and made the relevant studies to become mature. The diffusion of strategic thinking was delayed in the German-speaking world because this concept was joined with the traditional notion of long-term planning (Langfristplanung). This means, that German researchers continued to use long-term planning instead of applying the new term, 'strategic thinking' (Hammer 1998, p. 23). In the early 1970s, the concept of long-term planning was replaced by strategic planning (Strategische Planung). Hammer (1998, p. 23) explained that based on the discussion in the US about the necessity of strategic thinking during this time, a content adjustment had been made in the strategic planning

context in German literature. Later, some synonyms have been also appeared, for example ‘Visionäres Denken’ [visionary thinking] (Drumm 2008, p. 644), ‘Ganzheitliches Denken’ [holistic thinking] (Hübner/Jahnes 1998, p. 87; Armutat 2018, p. 124), ‘Zukunftsorientiertes Denken’ [future oriented thinking] (Drumm 2008, p. 337) or ‘Vernetztes Denken’ [connected thinking] (Michaeli 2006, p. 382).

According to Stubbart (1989), managers’ cognitive maps guide their strategic choices and actions. This idea provided theoretical bases for more investigation into cognition topics and their role in strategic decisions (Stubbart 1989, p. 331). In their book ‘Strategic Safari’, Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel (1998, p. 170) underlined the powerful influence of the strategist’s mind over strategy formulation based on the cognitive school’s premises and assumptions. In essence, managerial decisions ultimately reflect the intuition and cognitive constructions of the decision-makers (Porac/Thomas/Baden-Fuller 1989, p. 398). The interpretation and evaluation of information may vary from one individual to another, which will also inspire dissimilar insights into one case. In that light, Morrison (1994) believed that when managers realize the difference between planning and strategic thinking, it becomes possible to return to an understanding of what the strategy-making process should be.

However, the concept of strategic thinking has been defined broadly in a wide range of studies in terms of subject matter, it remains a contentious argument amongst researchers who disagree about its explicit definition and a comprehensive understanding (Bonn 2001; O'Shannassy 2003; Gallimore 2007; Switzer 2008; Goldman 2008; Sloan 2016). Furthermore, because the terms ‘strategic planning’ and ‘strategic thinking’ are often used interchangeably in the literature and because strategic thinking has been described variously as an ability, skill, or competency, there is a need for an agreement on a compelling delineation and definition (Goldman/Scott/Follman 2015, p. 155, p. 170). The next chapter will describe the concept of thinking strategically in greater detail.

2.2.2.2 The Definition of Strategic Thinking

Reviewing the literature of strategic management shows that several definitions of strategic thinking have been proposed during the last decades. For instance, Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel (1998, pp. 126, 128) defined strategic thinking as a way of seeing ahead, behind, above, below, beside, and beyond (out of the box) to get the big picture about the business. That means adapting to ongoing convergence occurring among different media businesses by having a deep

understanding of what is going on in the other players and industries especially in telecommunication and information technology. The focus of strategic thinking is to achieve a holistic or systematic view of the different parts of a project or company. This way of thinking systematically is a part of strategic thinking. This will be discussed in Chapter 3.1.1.1.

As Zabriskie and Huellmantel (1991, p. 26) pointed out, strategic thinking is an introduction to designing the future of a company. Likewise, Spencer and Spencer (1993, p. 343) posited that in the future, strategic thinking would be a significant ability of executives to discover ideal strategic solutions by understanding trends and market opportunities. Kaufman et al. (2003, pp. 40, 41) argued that the strategic mindset is a way of thinking and visualising the results a company wants to create and achieve in the future. To do so, a media manager must strategize resourcefully and respond quickly to changes, in order to be able to adjust the company's business model and value chain continuously. According to Whitlock (2003, p. 11), strategic thinking can be seen not only as a component of managing organizational planning and change but also as a form of new leadership. Therefore, some scholars perceived strategic thinking to be a part of a strategic leader's role (e.g. Zabriskie/Huellmantel 1991; Pisapia 2009; Schoemaker/Krupp/Howland 2013). Chapter 4.2.4 provides more information about different leadership styles (such as strategic leadership) and their contributions to strategic thinking.

Furthermore, strategic thinking means playing a completely dissimilar game in comparison to competitors (Abraham 2005, p. 5). In fact, the strategic thinking skill, as embodied by the art of surprising competitors, means knowing when it is time to stop playing one game (e.g., divestment strategy) and to enter a new business territory (e.g., acquisition decision) (Dixit/Nalebuff 1993, pp. 2, 54; Küng 2007a, p. 5). This way of thinking is one of the key soft skills of managers (Andrews/Higson 2008, p. 16) that help companies to revise performances and targets and to continuously track the progress of actions and achievements in the companies (Goldman 2012, p. 35). Certainly, in the shifting and disruptive environment of the media industry, this skill is essential (Hollifield et al. 2016, pp. 104, 105). In fact, competing with large media conglomerates and the leading broadband service providers challenges media managers to meet different stockholders' values.

For example, the announcement of the strategic reorganization of Disney on March 14, 2018, is a good practice, which can be thought of as strategic thinking of Disney's executive board, especially its chairman Robert Allen Iger. Disney reported a new strategy with the aim of being active in the video-on-demand streaming business in order to consolidate the company's position for the future (The Walt Disney Company 2018). This decision was made in response to the trend of 'cord-cutting' (decreasing the number of subscriptions) and ignoring traditional

pay-TV by consumers (CNBC 2018). However, Netflix was faster in comparison to the other players in this game and could secure the leading position in the streaming market.

Some scholars have defined strategic thinking as an interactive and repetitive experimental learning process that helps managers to generate and evaluate ideas and information to form a company's unique competitive advantage (Switzer 2008; Casey/Goldman 2010; Hughes/Beatty 2011; Sloan 2016). Building on the idea that strategic thinking is a learning process - in which it is important to have knowledge about doing things and simultaneously use knowledge as a capability to master tasks and acquire skills - it can be concluded that 'competency' would be the appropriate term to describe the concept of strategic thinking (based on the discussions in chapter 2.1.4.1 and work of Spencer/Spencer 1993, p. 9; Rowe 1995, p. 16; Steptoe-Warren/Douglas/Hume 2011, p. 241; Casey/Goldman 2010, p. 266). In this regard, in the first step, it is essential for managers to acquire the knowledge and skill to develop a competency (that comes with training and long time exercises) in order to know the time to apply the methods and tools (Johansson-Sköldberg et al. 2013, p. 131). Therefore, to create accurate insights, and to promote understanding, there is a need to build a critical and practical framework for media managers in management development training programs (e.g. Brown 2016, pp. 95, 96). The focus of this study is more on individual competencies at management levels and on the strategizing process in particular. To further highlight the importance of strategic thinking and managers' cognition, the next section will emphasize the limitations of strategic planning.

2.2.2.3 The Limitations of Strategic Planning in Comparison to Strategic Thinking

As stated before in Chapter 2.2.2.1, from the 1970s into the 1990s, researchers began to criticize the approach of strategic planning and emphasize the necessity of strategic thinking in the companies (e.g. Stubbart 1989; Mintzberg/Ahlstrand/Lampel 1989; Zabriskie/Huellmantel 1991; Mintzberg 1994). In this case, Zabriskie and Huellmantel (1991, p. 26) stressed that the elements that provide the logic for strategic planning had never been questioned. Thus, to explain the boundaries of strategic planning, the researchers dedicated themselves to comparing the elements of strategic planning and strategic thinking (Mintzberg 1994; Morrison 1994; Liedtka 1998a; Zabriskie/Huellmantel 1991; Heracleous 1998; Hammer 1998; Pellegrino/Carbo 2001; Graetz 2002; Whitlock 2003; O'Shannassy 2003; Fairholm 2009; Sloan 2016). For example, Hammer (1998, p. 22) determined that strategic thinking is the basic philosophy of strategic planning. Researchers indicated that both strategic planning and strategic thinking complete

each other in the effective process of strategy-making (Heracleous 1998, p. 486; Graetz 2002, p. 457). Sullivan (1998) in his book draws a spectrum to illustrate the relation between these two terms (Figure 2.7). He argues that strategic thinking encompasses defining the mission and the vision of where the company intends to be in the future (Sullivan 1998, p. 31).

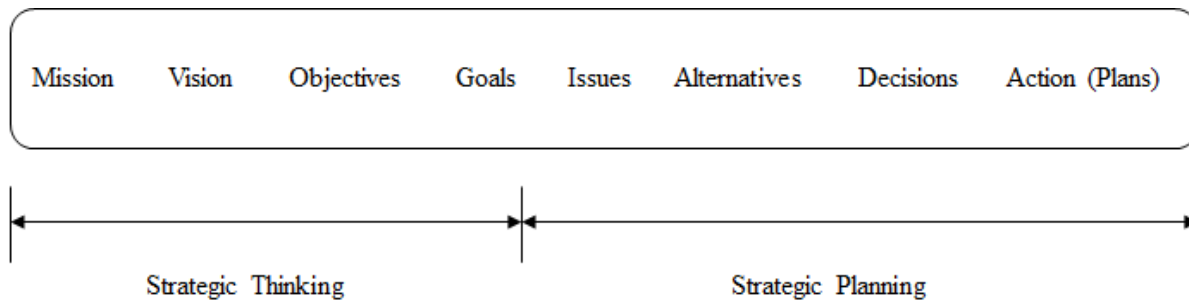


Figure 2.7: The strategy spectrum (Sullivan 1998, p. 31)

According to this spectrum, it is difficult to formulate the appropriate strategy without engaging in strategic thinking (Abraham 2005, p. 5). In contrast, strategic planning is a convergent and analytical process that focuses more on data analysis (Heracleous 1998, p. 482). Mintzberg (1994) pointed out that strategic planning is a single-loop learning process that has always been about the analysis of the environment and breaking down a goal into plans (Figure 2.7). From this point of view, a company typically starts with a rational plan that includes many implicit assumptions about the environmental forces and market needs, which in reality are constantly changing (Senge et al. 1999, p. 498; Graetz 2002, p. 456). In this regard, “strategic planning often spoils strategic thinking, causing managers to confuse real vision with the manipulation of numbers, and this confusion lies at the heart of the issue: the most successful strategies are visions, not plans” (Mintzberg 1994, p. 107).

Other researchers have also emphasized that strategic planning, in today’s unstable market, may even hinder the innovative decision-making and rapid action that is required in a competitive marketplace (Pellegrino/Carbo 2001; O’Shannassy 2003; Fleisher/Bensoussan 2003; Raguž/Podrug/Jelenc 2015). One example in the real media industry is the changes that happened in Disney’s Strategic Planning Group during recent decades (Noam 2018, p. 630). This group had five members in 1985 and was responsible for evaluating competitive threats and external risks and formulating a strategic plan. Later, the company decided to alter the tasks of this group by decentralizing the responsibilities within Disney’s four business segments to track the changes broadly in the whole of the organization and constantly (Noam 2018, p. 630). The point of this story is that the company needs a strategic plan to change, but having the strategic plan

does not mean that the company has in fact already changed. As Fleisher and Bensoussan (2003, p. 12) concluded, no analysis can be conducted in the absence of thinking and vision. Therefore, strategic planning that happens without strategic thinking is a little more than a 'to-do' list that does not help companies achieve the real desired outcomes (Whitlock 2003, p. 10). However, differentiating strategic thinking from strategic planning is not completely appropriate. In fact, strategic thinking as a divergent and synthetic thought process (Heracleous 1998, p. 482) aids all individuals involved to achieve improved strategic planning and also facilitates strategy implementation and decision-making (O'Shannassy 2003).

Similar to strategic planning, the business model may also generate some barriers in the long term, in a way that companies must consistently prove the profitability and effectiveness of their strategic innovation process (Asswad/Hake/Gómez 2016, p. 1). Although the business model aims to ensure this efficiency in its structure, insufficient weight has been given to the nature of companies (e.g. non-profit or governmental), material or energy efficiency, environmental or social influences, future foresight, and a framework to communicate changes between all stakeholders based on their demands (Asswad/Hake/Gómez 2016, pp. 7, 9). In fact, having a strategic plan or business model is a necessity for a company in normal circumstances when the possibilities are familiar and stable. In contrast, in an unpredictable environment such as the new media market (Figure 2.1), the effectiveness of an isolated strategic plan or business model is limited. Arguably, the real value of strategic thinking lies in the ability to think in a way that allows managers to be far ahead of other competitors, consider the whole business system and have time to strategize and adapt to changing conditions. The next chapter will provide compelling evidence on this matter.

2.2.2.4 A Pillar Temple Model for Strategic Management Tools and Techniques

In this modern digital world, there is a need for alignment between business processes and business strategies as a package (Vukanović 2016, p. 77). As discussed previously, there are some barriers or challenges that preclude the development of media companies toward generating competitive advantages. Undeniably, managers utilize numerous approaches and methods to formulate a strategic plan or business model or to determine their companies' positions in the industry. For example, the balanced scorecard, Boston Consulting Group (BCG) matrix, Porter's generic competitive strategies, Porter's five forces analysis, Ansoff matrix, SWOT, and value chain analysis, VRIO framework, and other techniques help managers to analyse the

scope of business and determine possible strategic activities (Fleisher/Bensoussan 2003, p. 2; Allio 2006, p. 4; Fairholm 2009, p. 5; Wright/Paroutis/Blettner 2013, p. 95). Indeed, these tools simplify complex issues and convert data into a valuable form for decision-making to take action (Fleisher/Bensoussan 2003; Oliver/Picard 2020). For example, Koch (2008) used strategic path and SWOT analysis to describe the internal logic and strategic system of high-quality German newspapers (such as: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Die Welt*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Rundschau* and *die tageszeitung*). These strategic tools could provide a structure for analysing information, interpreting problems, and generating new insight. Nevertheless, the investigation of Wright, Paroutis, and Blettner (2013, p. 92) demonstrated that there might be several shortcomings in applying these tools in real practice in terms of supporting managers in making effective decisions. To examine the strategic tools' usefulness, Wright, Paroutis, and Blettner (2013, p. 99) conducted a strategy course in a business school for 46 managers from diverse job positions. In this study, managers were asked to describe their preferred strategic tools (e.g. Porter's five forces analysis, VRIO framework, Balanced Scorecard) for analysing and making better decisions. The result of this study indicated that one of the key factors in choosing strategic tools is whether a given tool empowers the user to think from different perspectives and gives them a clear picture of the situation. In contrast, a useless tool does not guide managers in their thinking process and in evaluating companies' value and competitiveness (Wright/Paroutis/Blettner 2013, pp. 108, 112). The results revealed that SWOT, balanced scorecard and Porter's five forces analysis are more useful than the VRIO framework and Boston Consulting Group (BCG) matrix from the perspective of the managers surveyed (Wright/Paroutis/Blettner 2013, p. 110). They also mentioned that there is a need of redesigning and improving the strategic analysis tools in terms of utilization in practice (Wright/Paroutis/Blettner 2013, p. 112).

Notably, this study highlighted the point that instead of copying and modifying tools and methods, managers must use unique strategic tools, techniques, and contents that are appropriate in the context of their own companies (Wright/Paroutis/Blettner 2013, p. 95). Choosing the proper analytical tools and content to meet the media companies' goals is challenging. In fact, these tools form the managerial thinking process and way of reasoning of media managers. Therefore, according to what was discussed in Chapter 2.1, a profound understanding of the uniqueness of the media market and issues along with the organization's structure and characteristics have to be considered in designing supporting tools for managers to develop effective business strategies. Hence, the combination of business and competitive analysis with other aspects, including

market knowledge, competitive intelligence, strategic thinking competency, and practical experience are required for today's media managers to achieve competitive advantages (Fleisher/Bensoussan 2003, p. 8). In this study, the focus is on the concept of strategic thinking and the development of this competency in media companies based on their specific resources and contents.

To summarize the above discussion, a pillar temple model has been introduced (Figure 2.8). The graphic below shows that strategic thinking is the foundational element in strategic management. Moreover, it is fundamental to the tools and techniques of strategy and competitive business analysis. This model sums up the pillars and prerequisites that must be considered before strategy formulation and implementation (according to the strategic management process, Appendix 2.7, p. 213). This representation of the pillar model emphasizes the essentials of each part and pillar in influencing the whole process of strategic management in media companies. Later, Chapter 4.3.2.2 will discuss the importance of some of these pillars and tools in developing strategic thinking competency at the organizational level.

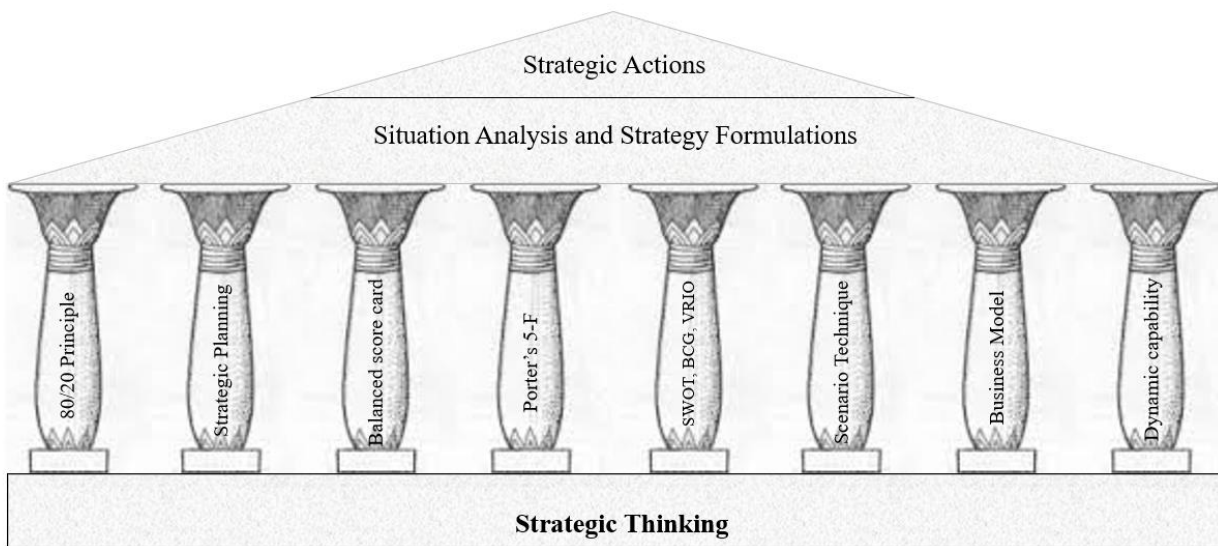


Figure 2.8: A pillar temple model of strategic management tools and approaches in media companies

Under the explanations in Chapter 2.1.1, it can be established that for media managers it is necessary not only to use rationalist tools to analyse the environment and diagnose the problems but also to consider the adaptive and interpretative approaches to ensure the appropriate solutions. In that light, media companies must rethink, reevaluate, and adjust the business model, strategies, and products to the changes in the digital world in order to formulate proper strategies and take effective actions (Küng 2017, p. 66; Villi/Picard 2019, p. 123). This will help media managers in strategizing for the future in the form of redefining media and entertainment

activities, moving forward in advertising, optimizing the portfolio, delivering the best stories, simplifying the structure, enhancing stakeholder's values, and achieving regional growth. Therefore, thinking strategically is a preliminary task for media managers in the strategic management process (Appendix 2.7, p. 213).

Taken as a whole, strategic thinking competency as a multi-dimensional construct enables individuals to organize their knowledge and skills towards a certain goal and to develop a realistic action plan based on the situation to solve problems quickly and effectively (e.g. Bergmann/Daub 2007, p. 5; North/Reinhardt/Sieber-Suter 2018, p. 37). Bearing in mind that strategic thinking is a broad and general term, it is necessary to break down this concept into its elements or components and narrow the abilities and attitudes involved, to make this competency more determinate and measurable as a competence. In that light, some researchers have sought to outline the characteristics associated with strategic thinking competency (Liedtka 1998b; Pisapia/Reyes-Guerra/Coukos-Semmel 2005; Pisapia et al. 2009; Wootton/Horne 2010). In an early work on this topic, Liedtka (1998b) introduced a well-known model of strategic thinking that contains five components: (1) a system perspective: seeing the system from different perspectives to have a rich mental model of value creation within companies concerning the interaction between different its parts; (2) intent-focused: conveying the sense of direction, discovery, and destiny with focused attention to achieve a goal; (3) thinking in time: recalling past patterns to create clear knowledge and awareness of the present in determining and predicting the future of the market; (4) intelligent opportunism: searching for new and alternative strategies and options; and (5) hypothesis-driven: being able to develop novel hypotheses and test them efficiently (Liedtka 1998b, pp. 122, 123).

However, some of these elements are more accurately characterized as individuals' actions rather than components or attitudes. Other researchers have also mixed the components, actions, and skills to explain what exactly happens behind the process of strategic thinking. In a very comprehensive work, Pisapia, et al. (2005, 2009, and 2011) described three dimensions involved in strategic thinking: (1) system mindset, (2) reframing mindset, and (3) reflecting mindset. The literature review shows that this classification represents the most inclusive research in this field of study. However, there is still no common agreement on the competencies and key components of strategic thinking competency with considering the perspectives of another field of studies (Steptoe-Warren/Douglas/Hume 2011, p. 246). The next chapters aim to highlight and explain each part of the classification by Pisapia et al. (2005, 2009, and 2011) in order to provide basic knowledge about the main components of strategic thinking. This will later help

to construct a comprehensive model that unveils the indicators and dispositions involved in the process of strategic thinking.

3. The Relevance of Strategic Thinking as a Novel View on Strategy Formulation and the Implementation Process for Media Companies

3.1 The Cornerstones of Strategic Thinking from the Perspective of Strategic Management Researchers

3.1.1 The Constitutive Elements of Strategic Thinking - Pisapia's Classification

3.1.1.1 System Mindset

The assumptions of system mindset as a dimension of strategic thinking have their roots in the general system theory, which emphasizes the organization as an open system in which the parts tend to adapt the system to its environment (Stacey/Mowles 2016, p. 132). Drawing on the fundamental insight of this theory at the individual level, system thinking refers to a leader's ability to see the organization as a whole with its interconnected pieces (Senge et al. 2014, p. 89). Metaphors such as 'big picture' or 'helicopter view' also reflect this way of thinking (Mintzberg/Ahlstrand/Lampel 1998, p. 126). Other researchers have given it different names, such as 'system perspective' (Liedtka 1998b, p. 122), and 'heuristic thinking' (Halevy 2016, p. 25). In German, system thinking has been rendered as 'Ganzheitliches Denken' (Hübner/Jahnes 1998, p. 87; Armutat 2018, p. 124), or 'Vernetztes Denken' (Michaeli 2006, p. 382).

Apart from Pisapia et al. (2005, 2009, and 2011), other researchers have focused on the system mindset as a part of strategic thinking (e.g. Liedtka 1998b; Zabriskie/Huellmantel 1991; Bonn 2001; O'Shannassy 2003; Wootton/Horne 2010). From these scholars' points of view, system thinking focuses on seeing the system from diverse perspectives to have a clear mental picture of the complete system with consideration of the interactions between its different parts. In particular, to have a stronger perceptive of business and basic system properties, managers must be able to understand the complexity of the system and to see the interrelationships among the detail (Senge et al. 1999; Liedtka 1998b; Pisapia 2009; Ben-Zvi-Assaraf/Orion 2010; Steptoe-Warren, Douglas/Hume 2011; Dawidowicz 2012; Arnold/Wade 2015; Senge et al. 2014). Thus, system thinking emphasizes the whole situation with consideration of how the change in any part of the system affects all the other parts (Dunne/Martin 2006, p. 518; Wootton/Horne 2010, p. 24). In the following, Table 3.1 summarizes the system thinking competencies by considering previous perspectives, to build a concrete explanation of this concept.

Author	System Thinking Competencies
Pisapia et al. (2009)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seeing systems holistically 2. Understanding the interrelationships among different parts of a system that form the behavior of the whole system
Ben-Zvi-Assaraf & Orion (2010)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recognizing the mechanisms and processes of a system 2. Identifying the relationships among a system's components and dynamic interactions within the system 3. Organizing the systems' processes and their interactions within a framework of relationships 4. Understanding of the hydro-cycle system 5. Making generalizations about a system and finding the patterns 6. Recognizing hidden dimensions of the system and employing predictions
Arnold & Wade (2015)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Using synergistic analytic skills to improve the capability of recognizing the system's parts 2. Predicting behaviors, and devising modifications to produce desired effects

Table 3.1: System thinking competencies (Based on the work of Pisapia et al. 2009, p. 49; Ben-Zvi-Assaraf/Orion 2010, p. 1255; Arnold/Wade 2015, p. 673)

This table shows that some similarities exist among all the characteristics. It can be established that the manager who thinks systematically can understand and consider the non-linear interactions within a whole system and predict the impact of changes to the patterns and interrelationships (Pisapia et al. 2009, p. 49; Ben-Zvi-Assaraf/Orion 2010, p. 1255; Arnold/Wade 2015, p. 673). According to Dunne and Martin's (2006, p. 518) point of view, system thinking is an imagination of a managerial problem in the form of models and actions rather than focusing on events alone. Thus, to find effective solutions to problems (e.g. private data, individual privacy, content piracy, and digital deceptions) and to cover the diverse needs of stockholders completely, media managers must think systematically. Liedtka (1998b, p. 122) posited that without this integrative understanding, it is not feasible to improve systems' outcomes (organizational outputs) for the end customer.

In summary, considering the problem entirely and thinking systematically enables managers at all levels to recognize the forces of changes, identify hidden influential elements, and position the company more advantageously within an ecosystem. Similarly, such thinking helps them to recover new ideas and develop visualization and creativity, and to see the complex and underlying structure of situation from multiple perspectives (Mintzberg/Ahlstrand/Lampel 1998; Liedtka 1998b; Bonn 2001; O'Shannassy 2003; Pisapia et al. 2009, Wootton/Horne 2010). Thus, it is vital that media managers be able to grasp the organizational structure completely

and consider its interactions with the environment continuously as a system (Hollifield et al. 2016, p. 154).

3.1.1.2 Reframing Mindset

Researchers in the field of strategic management has articulated that in order to rethink or re-define complex problems and create alternatives (commonly called ‘reframing’), managers must evaluate a situation by applying numerous lenses simultaneously (Pisapia, Reyes-Guerra, Coukos-Semmel 2005; Dufour/Steane 2014; Sloan 2016). In other words, managers who have a reframing mindset can shift their attention through multiple viewpoints to build practical and innovative insights and alternatives for certain actions (Pisapia et al. 2009, p. 48). In this regard, framing (mental modeling or mapping) is a systematized cognitive technique of identifying a multifaceted set of behavioural patterns. In fact, the frame or belief schemata influence the way of thinking. For example, political frames guide an individual’s point of view and interpretations about political situations (Sloan 2016, p. 105). In strategic thinking, having different frames in one’s mind, and changing the cognitive map continuously (reframing the mindset) with consideration of the influence of biases, feelings, attitudes, and judgments play a critical role in strategizing. Reframing (shifting the mental default, dominant logic) thereby allows media managers to plan different strategies and design innovative ideas to address the fragmentation of their stockholders’ needs and media consumption habits (e.g. Ferguson 2006, p. 317).

To attain multiple viewpoints, managers must not only focus on details (zoom in: closed-loop thinking); they must also stand back (zoom out: dynamic thinking) and view the bigger picture (Kanter 2011, p. 112). Cabane and Pollack (2017) used a metaphorical concept, ‘breakthrough thinking’, to explain the reframing mindset. Breakthrough thinking is the ability to alternate between diffused and focused modes of thinking. This shifting and restructuring the frame of mind also means to be able to be intensively immersed in a problem before ceasing to focus on it any further (Cabane/Pollack 2017, pp. 12, 13). This allows individuals to shift from diverse frames (perspectives) and break with their cognitive domain to form a new mental model (Normann 2001, p. 252). Chapter 4.3.2.1.4 will focus more on this point.

To be more precise, from a scientific point of view, reframing one’s mindset includes questioning assumptions, recognizing context, defining critical issues, approaching old circumstances in novel ways, redefining the borders of the system, and interpreting and rearranging the new information to form a different frame in one’s mind (e.g. Normann 2001; Pisapia et al. 2009).

Even what a company cannot do could potentially open new business perspectives for media companies. For example, entering a new market and unfamiliar industry (except creative and media industry) was beyond the imagination of traditional newspapers for a long time. By thinking strategically, many publishing companies were able to recognize that numerous opportunities existed in expanding the scope of their business to outperform rivals. For example, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung GmbH* (FAZ 2019) sought to diversify its business strategies in different areas such as consulting, corporate publishing, communication analysing, video content marketing (*F.A.Z.IT Communication, F.A.Z.-Institute, F.A.Z.-Fachverlag*). Another example is *Schibsted* (Norwegian Media Houses); in 2005, the company's vision was to be "the most attractive media group in Europe, through people who dare, challenge and who create" (Aris/Bughin 2009, pp. 349, 350). Nowadays, the company's mission has changed completely into a broader one, which is inspiring people in their daily lives (Schibsted 2020). *Schibsted* is now the largest media group in Scandinavia that provides leading online marketplaces and technology ventures in more than 20 countries. It also puts investment in the cryptocurrency exchange platform and fashion market in recent years. This continuous reframing of media companies' thinking has helped them to expand beyond the traditional territory of content creation.

To illustrate a manager's approach in a reframing mindset, some researchers used Picasso's cubism painting style to highlight the importance of different viewpoints in creating novel ideas (Dufour/Steane 2014, p. 222). This usage of multiple frames (called a cubism way of thinking) empowers leaders to break out of their traditional perspectives, uncover extraordinary opportunities, and subsequently add value to the whole process of strategic thinking (Pisapia et al. 2009, p. 48). In fact, in order to build a better understanding of the strategic activities, and to manage the risk generated by products' high failure rate, and the industry's high first-copy costs, it is essential for media managers to use multiple lenses and diverse analyses (Küng 2007b, p. 36).

3.1.1.3 Reflective Mindset

As a basic mental process, reflection incorporates activities such as scanning the situation, reviewing the problems, applying the knowledge gained to the situations, looking back on the action and creating alternative moves, generating possible predictions, employing retrospection, and restructuring the assumptions and values by considering personal experiences and prior successes (Dewey 1997; Pisapia/Reyes-Guerra/Coukos-Semmel 2005; Ben-Zvi-Assaraf/Orion 2010; Casey/Goldman 2010; Goldman 2012; Moon J.A. 2013; Senge et al. 2014;

Sloan 2016). In educational research, reflection has been considered as a critical skill that helps individuals develop their problem-solving abilities (e.g. Hwang 2003; Moon J.A. 2013; Sloan 2016). In that light, thinking reflectively is about learning from prior experiences in such a way that a strong decision for upcoming changes can be generated (Wootton/Horne 2010, p. 20). The researchers in the field of management propose that repeating this process helps managers to make reasonable decisions through observations and information as a guideline for future activities (Pisapia et al. 2009; Wootton/Horne 2010). Goldman (2012, p. 28) asserts that questioning and reflecting plays a basic role in conceptualizing the future and finding strategies to work toward companies' long-term objectives. The strength of such an approach is in recalling past patterns to achieve clear awareness of present problems in determining and predicting the direction of a new business market (Liedtka 1998b, pp. 122, 123; Wootton/Horne 2010, p. 20). The literature review indicates that the reflective mindset is related to the terms 'reframing', 'design thinking' (Wootton/Horne 2010, p. 135), and 'critical thinking' (e.g. Moon J.A. 2013; Sloan 2016). Furthermore, critical reflection plays an essential role in transforming experience into learning (Sloan 2016, p. 81). This will be discussed further in the following chapters by emphasizing double-loop learning in constructivist learning theories.

Print publishers, for example, must think in a broader context and learn from past misfortunes in order to re-examine their business models and focus on their potential in value creation and providing various services (Villi/Picard 2019, p. 129). This has been reflected in *BILD*'s vision in terms of working as a primary multimedia medium by rethinking the mission of its brand (Gäßler/Kramer/Pätzmann 2018, p. 13). The company's strategies in adapting quickly to the digital world by providing text in combination with videos (moving images, audio files) and introducing online apps, made *BILD* a pioneer in the publishing market (BILD 2020). As the most famous German national daily newspaper, *BILD* (published by Axel Springer SE), sold more than 1.23 million copies in the second quarter of 2020, attaining top ranking on Statista. Indeed, this newspaper differentiates itself from other traditional newspapers by giving users the chance to select content through different channels (e.g. smartphone app). Moreover, its forums and blogs allow readers to lead discussions, which was not popular in other daily newspapers (Gäßler/Kramer/Pätzmann 2018, p. 12).

It can be concluded, that even though, Pisapia et al. (2005, 2009, and 2011) provided a comprehensive framework of strategic thinking, the perspectives of other disciplines (e.g. cognitive psychology, educational studies, and entrepreneurship) that could contribute to a better understanding of the strategic thinking competency and its dimensions are still lacking. Moreover, the similarities between definitions further increase the need for a stronger explanation and

interpretation. In the following chapters, this study will consider the concept of strategic thinking in a broader context and from the perspectives of a wide range of disciplines.

3.1.2 Strategic Thinking and Relevant Concepts

As discussed previously, studies have confirmed that there is a significant positive relationship between strategic thinking competency and cognitive ability (Dragoni et al. 2011, p. 846; Calabrese/Costa 2015, p. 1; Fehr/Huck 2016, p. 715). Thus, placing strategic thinking within a cognitive science framework is important to specify assumptions in detail, rather than relying on abstract declarations about mental models and mindsets. The most noticeable aspect of the related research pertains to management and business studies and focuses on strategic thinking without mentioning the other related concepts that exist in separate fields of study. As discussed before, management studies highlighted the increasing need for strategic thinking competency in companies, while psychological research and the literature of applied psychology focused more on the factors that influence the process of strategic thinking. Nevertheless, there is a lack of studies that adopt several perspectives simultaneously (Steptoe-Warren/Douglas/Hume 2011, pp. 238, 239).

Therefore, it is necessary to determine the dissimilarities of strategic thinking in comparison with the other concepts not only within the strategy field (Liedtka 1998b, p. 121) but also in other fields of research such as applied psychology, educational studies, entrepreneurship, organizational cognitive neuroscience, organizational behaviour, and learning. For example, applied psychology studies seek to improve people's mental health by providing psychological methods that help individuals solve problems. Figure 3.1 represents the position of strategic thinking studies among these sub-fields. This fundamental understanding of the origin of assumptions in strategic thinking helps us to describe and classify critical components and features of the strategic mindset using diverse perspectives on this topic and makes it easier to find applicable techniques for learning and practicing this competency, which will be a topic of Chapter 4.

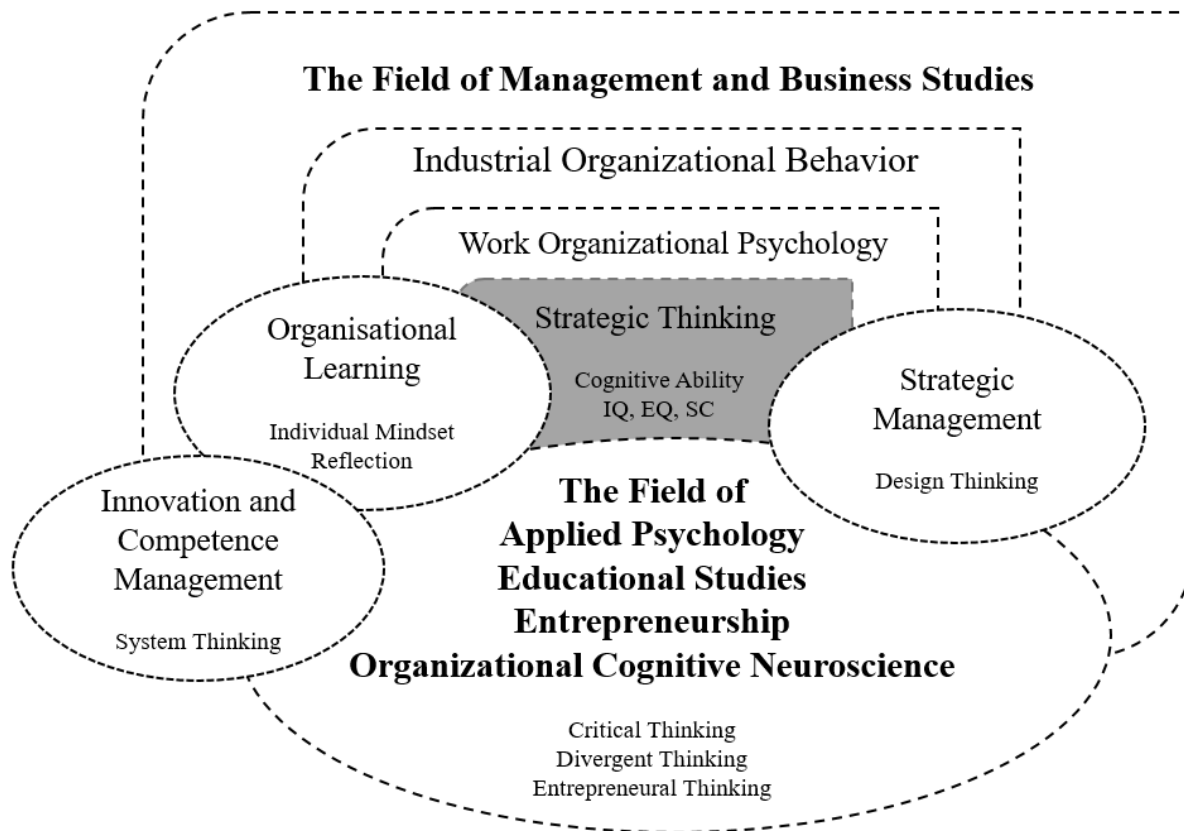


Figure 3.1: Mapping the overlapping boundaries of strategic thinking as an interdisciplinary concept concerning the interrelations of different sub-fields (Based on the work of Bergmann/Daub 2007; Lee/Senior/Butler 2012; Butler et al. 2016; Chuah/Law 2020)

As explained in previous discussions, the concept of strategic thinking began to be highlighted in the field of management and business studies in the 1980s. It has been studied in strategic management related to industrial-organizational behaviour and work-organizational psychology. Similarly, the necessity of strategic thinking competency and leadership has contributed to organizational learning studies, as these are rooted in individual cognition, mental models, and learning (Hwang 2003, p. 94; Senge et al. 2014, p. 235). Strategic thinking in this context works as a facilitator of the process of decision-making and accelerator of the transformation of the old pattern of thinking into the change (Chuah/Law 2020, p. 7). Moreover, dialogue-oriented reflection and system thinking have been assumed as the fundamental factors in the discussion of the field of innovation and competence management (Bergmann/Daub 2007, pp. 35, 238).

Furthermore, because the success of strategic thinking is associated with certain measurable dispositions and capabilities (such as abstract thinking, mental elasticity, tolerance of risk, and ambiguity) (Bates/Dillard 1993, p. 103), it can be inferred that this competency is embedded in the field of organizational cognitive neuroscience. The focus of this field is to determine how

the conceptual and mental processes of managers and the way they are thinking may explain their behaviours and effective actions (Butler et al. 2016, p. 542). In this regard, the concern of organizational cognitive neuroscience is to understand not only the activities and functions of the brain but also the relevance and “interactions between those biological systems and cognition itself” in the context of organizational behaviour (Lee/Senior/Butler 2012, p. 924). Furthermore, from the neurological sciences’ perspective, strategic thinking as an executive cognitive function includes novel and complex tasks in the brain, such as problem-solving and decision-making (Murman 2015, pp. 112, 113).

To have a particular focus on domain skills and the dimensions of strategic thinking competency, it is necessary to take the perspective of other disciplines and consider the other related terms in different sub-fields. Such terms include cognitive ability, Intelligence Quotient (IQ) (e.g. Dragoni et al. 2011; Colman, 2015), Emotional Intelligence (EQ) (e.g. Graetz 2002; Zaccaro/Torres 2020), Strategic Cognition (SC) (e.g. Schwenk 1988; Narayanan, Zane/Kemmerer 2011), Strategic Intelligence (SQ) (e.g. Service 2006; Wootton/Horne 2010), Competitive Intelligence (CI) (Kahaner 1997; Michaeli 2006), system thinking (e.g. Pisapia et al. 2009; Ben-Zvi-Assaraf/Orion 2010; Arnold/Wade 2015), strategic leader (e.g. Zabriskie/Huellmantel 1991; Pisapia 2009; Schoemaker, Krupp/Howland 2013), divergent thinking (e.g. Ashton-James/Chartrand 2009; Dippo/Kudrowitz 2013; Addis et al. 2016), entrepreneurial thinking (e.g. Ireland/Hitt/Sirmon 2003; Nandram/Sansom 2006; Mathisen/Arnulf 2014; Krueger 2015), critical thinking (e.g. Ennis 1993; Menkes 2005; Abrami, et al. 2008; Chaffee 2011), and design thinking (e.g. Liedtka/Ogilvie 2011; Liedtka/King/Bennett 2013; Micheli et al. 2019). Although each of these concepts has been used in diverse frameworks and research backgrounds, there are some connections among all terms (see Figure 3.2). In the next step, this study will shed more light on each concept and will clarify their contributions to the topic of this study.

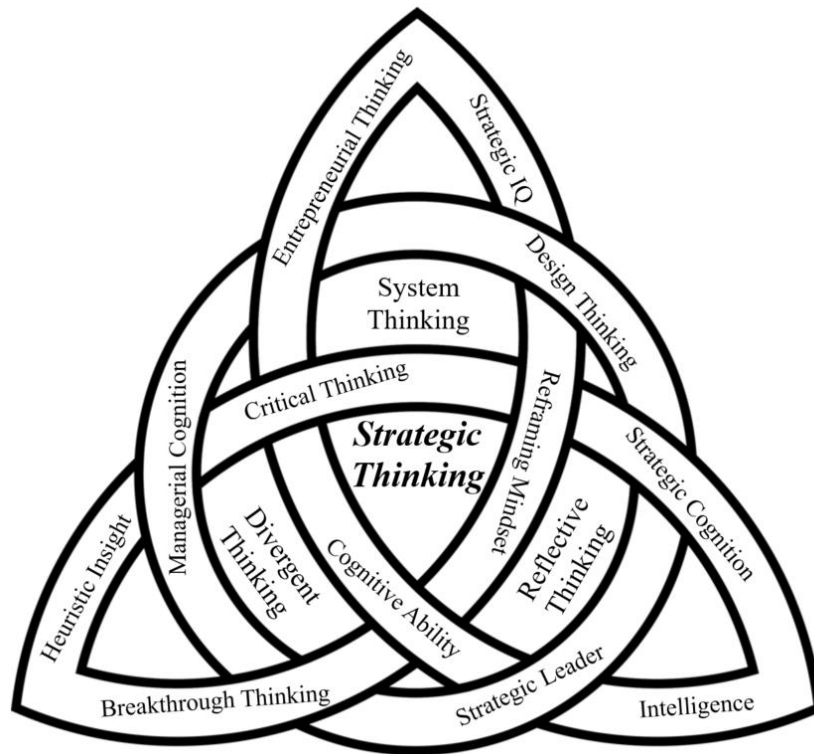


Figure 3.2: The interwoven concepts contributing to strategic thinking

3.2 Mapping the Overlapping Boundaries of Strategic Thinking Among Different Fields of Study

3.2.1 Cognitive Ability, Intelligence, and Strategic Cognition

Over the past several decades, the concept of cognitive ability in general, strategic, and managerial cognition, strategic and competitive intelligence, and strategic thinking in particular, has attracted the growing interest of researchers (e.g. Michaeli 2006; Service 2006; Wootton/Horne 2010; Narayanan, Zane/Kemmerer 2011; Dragoni et al. 2011; Colman, 2015). In this regard, the role of individual differences (e.g. age, gender, personality traits, previous experiences, and individual educational background) and psychological characteristics (e.g. cognitive ability and methods of gathering information) in the process of decision-making were topics that attracted the attention of many scholars in different field of studies (Hunt et al. 1989; Stubbart 1989; Schmidt/Hunter 1998; Gallén 2006; Dragoni et al. 2011). For example, from the perspective of applied psychology, Schmidt and Hunter (1998) looked at the relationship between various measures of individual differences and their effects on job performance by considering more than 85 years of research in personal selection. They found that evaluating the general mental and cognitive abilities of individuals are the strongest predictors of performance in a range of

different jobs (Schmidt/Hunter 1998, pp. 264, 265). Similarly, drawing on the fundamental premises of the cognitive school in strategic management, the strategy formulation depends on the perceptions and interpretations of the existing world by strategists and managers (Mintzberg/Ahlstrand/Lampel 1998, p. 170).

The work of Dragoni et al. (2011, p. 835), published in the *Journal of Personnel Psychology*, defined cognitive ability as a individuals' general intelligence. They described managers with higher cognitive ability as people who have the capability to acquire job knowledge quickly and adapt themselves to changes and challenges in the tasks better than others. Such individuals can also discover abstract issues and solve problems faster (Dragoni et al. 2011, p. 835). Dragoni et al. (2011, p. 846) concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between cognitive ability and strategic thinking competency. Likewise, the outcomes of the study by Fehr and Huck (2016, p. 715) proposed that cognitive ability is an essential component for strategic thinking in unique situations. It also becomes increasingly apparent that the cognitive process of hypothesis formation has similarities to managers' strategic thinking (Calabrese/Costa 2015, p. 1). Likewise, researchers considered 'intelligence' a synonym for 'cognitive ability' (Dragoni et al. 2011; Colman, 2015). However, some studies showed that the IQ (Intelligence Quotient) scores are not completely related to the processes that are engaged in cognitively complicated forms of reasoning, perception, and problem-solving in practical situations (Ceci/Liker 1986, p. 264; Menkes 2005, p. 1; Ahmed et al. 2016, p. 66). It has also been emphasized that "high IQ alone does not guarantee that a person can be an outstanding employee" (Ahmed et al. 2016, p. 66). This is because IQ tests emphasize the dominant cognitive skills needed to be successful in school, not in business (Menkes 2005, p. 1).

Graetz (2002, p. 460) indicated that having a high degree of emotional intelligence (EQ) is an indicator of superior management ability. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to be aware of one's emotional state and that of others, as well as managing emotional responses in different situations (Zaccaro/Torres 2020, pp. 327, 328). The characteristics of managers with high EQ are strong interpersonal skills, openness to change, high level of commitment, and enthusiasm, a deep understanding of business, the ability to inspire and lead followers, and skill in building networks and collaborative relationships (Graetz 2002, p. 460). With these definitions, it is apparent that emotional intelligence can be a predictor of strategic thinking competency. Nevertheless, there is still no empirical study to confirm this relationship.

Competitive Intelligence (CI) is another term that has similarities to the concept of strategic thinking. Competitive Intelligence has been defined as a systematic process of collecting and analysing information about markets, competitors, and technologies that gives decision-makers

a rich understanding of the business environment (Michaeli 2006, p. 3). This helps managers to be proactive and forecast the competitor's actions (Kahaner 1997, p. 30). However, this research area remains undeveloped. Likewise, strategic intelligence (SQ) has been characterized in the same way and is a synonym for competitive intelligence. Nevertheless, the literature on this topic is rare. For example, Service (2006, p. 1) indicated that strategic intelligence "is about using a realistic situational understanding to develop a strategy that is appropriate, and fits, but most importantly one that works". Researchers indicated that by thinking about changes through the TEMPLES model (in technology, economy, markets, politics, law, ethics, and society), it is possible to gather strategic intelligence (Wootton/Horne 2010, p. 41). In this regard, strategic thinking competency is a combination of collecting competitive and strategic intelligence (CI and SQ) to generate strategic value (Pellegrino/Carbo 2001, p. 375).

Similarly, in Strategic Cognition (SC), academics have attempted to clarify the way the cognitive processes of managers work in a companies' specific context and examine their effects on strategic choices (Narayanan/Zane/Kemmerer 2011, p. 307). Schwenk (1988, p. 43) noted that multiple heuristics and biases affect strategic cognition and decision-making. From his point of view, individuals' cognitive deficiencies establish predispositions and limitations in the development of strategic assumptions, which also causes simplification of strategic plans (Schwenk 1988, p. 45). For example, confirmation bias traps individuals in searching for confirming evidence regardless of considering the quality of evidence (Kahneman 2011, p. 81). Therefore, to avoid or reduce the unconscious biases in strategizing and policy-making, it is critical to consider the cognitive frame or dominant logic in the process of decision making. Because strategic cognition as a mental process is involved in strategy creation and implementation (Calabrese/Costa 2015, p. 6), it can be concluded that strategic cognition could be related to strategic thinking competency (see Figure 3.1).

From the above discussion, it is clear that the different cognitions of individuals influence the thought and reasoning process. The studies concluded these are insufficient for understanding the trends and market opportunities in the media industry, generating spontaneous strategies, developing a realistic action plan continuously, and forecasting the future business of companies, which are the requirements of thinking strategically. In this regard, future-oriented thinking is the task of cognitive development in companies (Drumm 2008, p. 337). Nevertheless, it is questionable whether the competency of strategic thinking can be explained, evaluated, and advanced. The following chapters will add fundamental knowledge from other disciplines to make the concept of strategic thinking and its dispositions more understandable.

3.2.2 Critical Thinking

Studies in the field of education and behavioural psychology sought to identify teaching strategies that encourage the students (e.g. in Business schools) to question their biases and assumptions and to consider different viewpoints in making decisions (Facione 1990; Ennis 1993; Ruff 2005; Abrami et al. 2008; Desai/Berger/Higgs 2016; Kuhn 2018). More centrally, critical thinking as a vital skill in the learning process has been studied with the aim of discovering methods that increase individuals' abilities to approach and examine problems more efficiently (Ennis 1993; Menkes 2005; Meisel/Fearon 2006; Abrami et al. 2008; Chaffee 2011). The National Association of Colleges and Employers - center for career development and talent acquisition - emphasized critical thinking as one of the most important competencies that college graduates need to improve in order to successfully enter the job market (NACE 2018).

Most of the definitions provided in the education and behavioural psychology studies focused on critical thinking as a cognitive engine that empowers individuals to adapt themselves effectively to an ever-changing world and guides them to thoughtful strategy-making and effective problem-solving (Facione 1990, p. 2; Ruff 2005, p. 23). The researchers posited that critical thinkers are people who try to change their way of processing information and their way of viewing the world, which supports the assumptions of reframing thinking. Alternatively, Richmond (1993, p. 122) considered systems thinking to be an aspect of critical thinking, meaning that to gain a stronger view of the situation, a critical thinker must think systematically (Dewey 1997, p. 11). From the management studies' perspective, Menkes (2005, p. 4) highlighted that the multiple perspectives applied in critical thinking enable managers to discover probable unplanned consequences (e.g. people's reactions) of different action plans. According to Meisel and Fearon (2006, p. 154), a combination of effective dispositions (e.g. a wish to stay well informed) and cognitive skills work as a fundamental element of critical thinking. In essence, critical thinking is a kind of reasonable reflective thinking to learn from the past (Ennis 1993, p. 180). Based on the above discussion, it is clear that critical thinking has similarities to strategic thinking (reflecting, reframing, system mindset).

Other scholars have attempted to conceptualize critical thinking abilities by defining some qualities and dispositions related to this concept. Table 3.2 shows a summary of these qualities based on a review of related literature. According to Table 3.2, a critical thinker is a thoughtful, passionate, open-minded, insightful, curious, disciplined, and strategic thinker who has a high degree of self-confidence and self-awareness (based on American Philosophical Association

1990; Ennis 1993, p. 180; Menkes 2005, p. 4; Meisel/Fearon 2006, p. 154; Abrami, et al. 2008, p. 1104; Chaffee 2011, p. 12).

Dispositions of Critical Thinking	Description of abilities
Truthful and Passionate	The intellectual honesty in facing personal biases and having a passion for understanding
Open-Minded	The ability to be tolerant towards new ideas and different perspectives, to be flexible and fair-minded in the evaluation, and listen to opposing viewpoints
Intelligent/ Strategic Thinker	The ability to be mentally active to be aware of potential problems and challenges, search for relevant information through analysis, ask appropriate questions within the context, clearly define the terms, anticipate possible outcomes, and identify people's underlying plans and assumptions
Disciplined	The ability to be orderly, planned, and motivated
Self-Confidence and Self-Aware/ Independent Thinker	The ability to trust in own thought processes and to be aware of own prejudices, to draw reasons and conclusions thoughtfully, to lead others in decision-making instead of only going along with the crowd
Inquisitive/ Curious and Knowledgeable	The intellectual curiosity and being well informed instead of being satisfied with superficial explanations and information
Careful in Making Judgments/ Skilled Discussants	The ability to engage in purposeful judgment to determine the quality of an argument based on the evidence and to decide at the right time by considering the complexity of the problem and credibility of sources
Creative/ Insightful	The ability to break out the established patterns of thinking, get into the heart of the issue, and see simultaneously the forest as well as the trees (big picture)

Table 3.2: The dispositions of critical thinking (Based on American Philosophical Association 1990; Ennis 1993, p. 180; Menkes 2005, p. 4; Meisel/Fearon 2006, p. 154; Abrami, et al. 2008, p. 1104; Chaffee 2011, p. 12)

These dispositions and abilities provide a standard framework for understanding and evaluating the qualities of human cognition in terms of critical thinking (Abrami, et al. 2008, p. 1103). To have a clear representative view, Figure 3.3 illustrates the components associated with this kind of thinking by considering the similarities between the dimensions of strategic thinking. Later in Chapter 4, these dispositions provide a fundamental argument for learning strategic thinking competency.

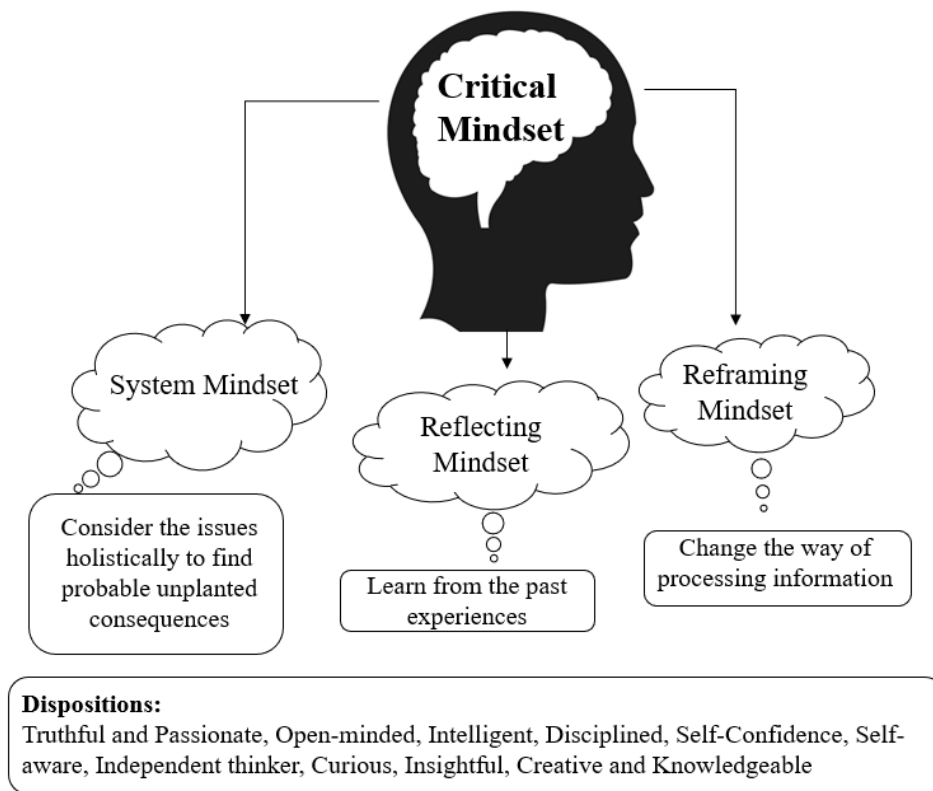


Figure 3.3: The main components of critical mindset and its dispositions (Based on the work of Ennis 1993, p. 180; Menkes 2005, p. 4; Meisel/Fearon 2006, p. 154; Abrami, et al. 2008, p. 1104; Chaffee 2011, p. 12)

3.2.3 Divergent Thinking

Akin to critical thinking, divergent thinking has been cited in educational research and applied psychology with the focus mostly on the creative abilities of students in terms of solving problems. Researchers have defined divergent thinking as an ability to pursue diversity in solving a problem to create divergent possible solutions to multi-layered problems by merging contrasting forms of information in a novel way (Ashton-James/Chartrand 2009; Gibson et al. 2009; Dippo/Kudrowitz 2013; Zhang/Gino/Margolis 2014; Addis et al. 2016). According to Ashton-James and Chartrand (2009, p. 1036), divergent thinking is related to the ability to shift between mental perspectives and categories. This may refer to the reframing mindset, which has been discussed in Chapter 3.1.1.2. Researchers have identified differences between divergent thinking and convergent thinking (Gibson et al. 2009, p. 162; Ashton-James/Chartrand 2009, p. 1036). In convergent thinking, individuals search for similarities and patterns to narrow the possible solutions and find the right answer. In contrast, in divergent thinking, individuals

consider the problem from diverse perspectives and formulate distinct concepts to create effective solutions for poorly defined, and multidimensional problems (Ashton-James/Chartrand 2009, p. 1036; Gibson et al. 2009, p. 162; Dippo/Kudrowitz 2013, p. 427). For example, considering cross-media content production in media companies is a form of divergent thinking.

In the field of management studies, Sloan (2016, p. 102) observed that a successful strategist employs divergent thinking in the decision-making process. Garratt (2005, p. 34) considered this way of thinking as a cognitive activity, which is the central duty of boards of directors. Especially in intimidating situations and under time pressure, when unstable conditions force the media managers to formulate rigid and less creative strategies, it is necessary to consider the whole process to find reasonable options. This flexibility in making decisions is recognized as divergent thinking (Halevy 2016, p. 24). In general, Van de Kamp, Admiraal, and Rijlaarsdam (2016, pp. 545, 546) believe that divergent thinking contains three major clusters: association, combination, and abstraction (see Table 3.3).

Divergent Thinking Clusters	Description of The Abilities
Association	The creation of a series of ideas through memory retrieval (reflective thinking)
Combination	The analysis and (de)composition of ideas, objects, and functions (reframing)
Abstraction	Structuring, deconstructing, reconstructing, and transforming (conceptualising)

Table 3.3: Divergent thinking classes

(Based on the work of Van de Kamp/Admiraal/Rijlaarsdam 2016, pp. 545, 546)

According to this classification, in association, a chain of ideas can appear automatically in the mind, based on previous experiences and what has been learned before (Van de Kamp/Admiraal/Rijlaarsdam 2016, p. 546). This supports the assumptions in reflecting thinking, discussed in 3.1.1.3. In that light, studies illustrated a positive relationship between memories of personal experience and divergent thinking (Madore/Jing/Schacter 2016, p. 976). In the following, the combination cluster covers cognitive activities such as adjusting, merging, recombining, and reconnecting to create new patterns in the mind (Van de Kamp/Admiraal/Rijlaarsdam 2016, p. 547). Here, the different forms of information should be compared and combined in a fresh way to produce novel scenarios. Furthermore, by reconstructing and generating a new structure in the abstraction cluster, new knowledge can be created (Van de Kamp/Admiraal/Rijlaarsdam 2016, p. 547). This class of divergent thinking indicates a higher ability in conceptualization, which is the main factor in strategic thinking, and breakthrough thinking (cubism mindset).

As discussed in Chapter 3.2.1, personality and intelligence influence strategic thinking competency. Many researchers have sought to understand the details of divergent thinking. McCrae (1987), in a study with a sample of 268 participants, explored the relationship between divergent thinking and personality characteristics. The result of this work found that divergent thinking is associated with openness to experience which means that managers who are curious and take more risks may have a divergent mindset. Likewise, some researchers believe there is a positive relationship between intelligence (high IQ) and divergent thinking (Holling/Kuhn 2008, p. 284). In Figure 3.4, according to previous discussions, the key representative components of divergent mindset and the dispositions have been summarized.

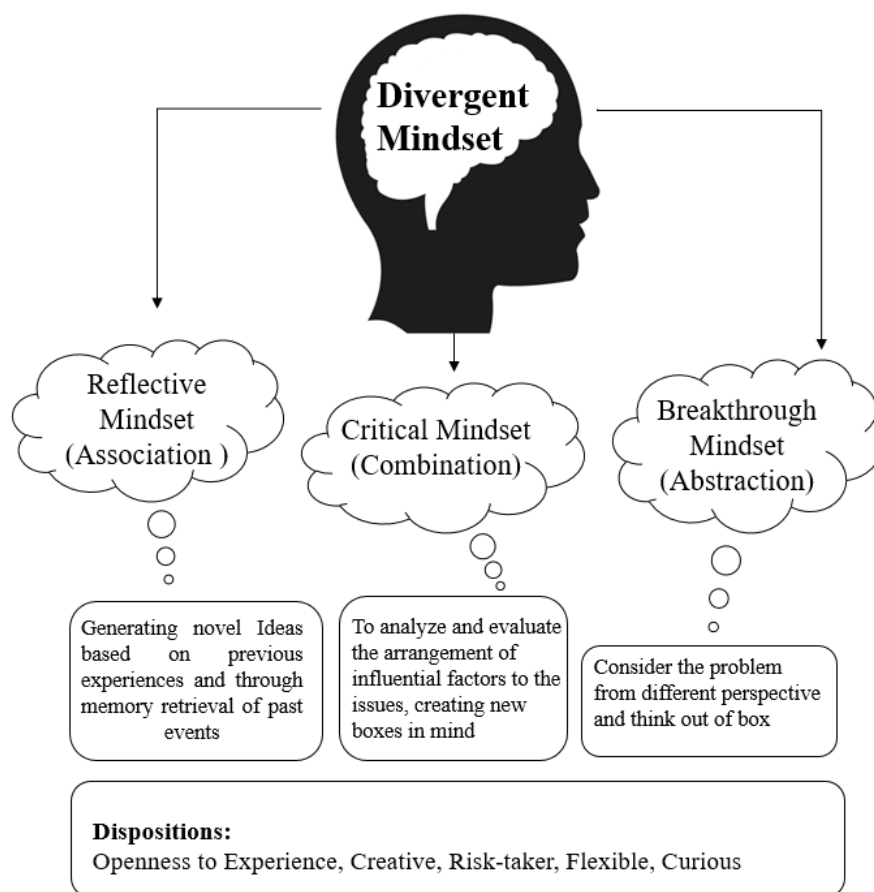


Figure 3.4: The main components of divergent mindset and its dispositions (Based on the work of Ashton-James/Chartrand 2009; Gibson et al. 2009; Dippo/Kudrowitz 2013; Van de Kamp/Admiraal/Rijlaarsdam 2016)

3.2.4 Entrepreneurial Thinking

Some researchers identified the mental frame (dominant logics) as an important element in the process of opportunity recognition in entrepreneurship studies (Cuervo/Ribeiro/Roig 2007; Mathisen/Arnulf 2014). In that light, the entrepreneurial mental model has been defined as a set of ingenuity, creativity, opportunity-driven, and flexibility (Hnátek 2015, p. 334). Similarly, Krueger (2015, p. 14) considered an entrepreneurial mindset as a concept that is reflected in entrepreneurial behaviour. Therefore, some research focused on the importance of cognition processes and entrepreneurial behaviours (e.g. Carsrud/Brännback 2009; Sánchez/Carballo/Gutiérrez 2011). However, a few studies also made an effort to assess the entrepreneurial thinking procedure in detail (e.g. Sarasvathy 2005; Zahra/Nambisan 2012; Mathisen/Arnulf 2014; Krueger 2015). For example, Krueger (2015, p. 14) noticed that the entrepreneurial mindset has four dimensions: (1) acting by considering the future and being market-oriented, pro-active, self-motivated, and innovative; (2) being adaptable to adversity and optimistic; (3) having goal-directed behaviour and tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty; and (4) striving for value creation. This means that individuals with an entrepreneurial mindset are constantly seeking high-potential opportunities (e.g. Ireland/Hitt/Sirmon 2003; Nandram/Samsom 2006).

From Sarasvathy's (2005) point of view, effectual reasoning is important in entrepreneurial thinking. The principles related to effectual reasoning include spontaneity vs. planning, risk-taking, and creativity (Martin et al. 2017, p. 5). In that light, the effectual reasoning process does not begin with establishing a specific goal or formulating a formal strategic plan. In fact, the plans take shape through the process of actions over time (Sarasvathy 2005; Zahra/Nambisan 2012). In this regard, without planning the whole parts of the business and by considering imagined ends, the entrepreneur creates the future (Sarasvathy 2005, p. 3; Litan 2015, p. 6). This could destabilize the reasoning process and the formulation of vision (Martin et al. 2017, p. 6). Producing the intended results in effectual reasoning represents a different approach to causal reasoning which assumes the future could be predictable by defining the market needs and predetermined goals to maximize return and estimate avoidable losses (Sarasvathy 2005, p. 3). From the scholars' perspective, entrepreneurs' insights influence the way they search for fresh products or new services in the market. This unique way of thinking helps entrepreneurs efficiently deal with a wide range of uncertainties and search for novel opportunities (e.g. Ireland/Hitt/Sirmon 2003; Cuervo/Ribeiro/Roig 2007). Thus, Deuze and Prenger (2019, p. 21) emphasized the entrepreneurship mindset as one significant trend that must be taken into account in the process of developing visions for companies. An empirical study, conducted by

Jelenc and Pisapia (2016, p. 75) revealed a significant relationship between the strategic thinking competency of individuals and their entrepreneurial behavior and dispositions. To be more precise, researchers claimed that since strategic thinking (exploration) and entrepreneurial activities (exploitation) influence one another in a cycle that generates the innovative idea, it is necessary for successful individuals to make adept use of both forms of reasoning (Sarasvathy 2005, p. 3; Zahra/Nambisan 2012, p. 219). Therefore, depending on the conditions, at different times, managers may employ different ways of thinking in an ambidextrous company (Sarasvathy 2005, p. 2). In fact, successful strategic media managers must think entrepreneurially in order to continually adjust the company to environmental changes (Küng 2007, p. 10). This may be referred to as ‘mental agility’ or an ‘agile mindset’, which is a key competence of leadership in a time of digitalization and adaptation (see Figure 3.5). The agile mindset is about sensitivity, change, and reflection (Hofert 2018, pp. 13, 27), which means that media managers should recognize early warning signals and consider different scenarios to rescue companies from failure (Petry 2019, p. 54). In fact, as the main idea of strategic thinking, agility prepares managers for proactive actions as early as possible by enabling them to think in diverse circumstances (Armutat 2018, p. 112). This means thinking about conducting agile projects, which exemplify the values and principles of companies in form of clear form of people interactions, documentation, self-lead organization, feedback, collaboration, which leads to behavioral change in responsibilities and commitment and empowering the individuals.

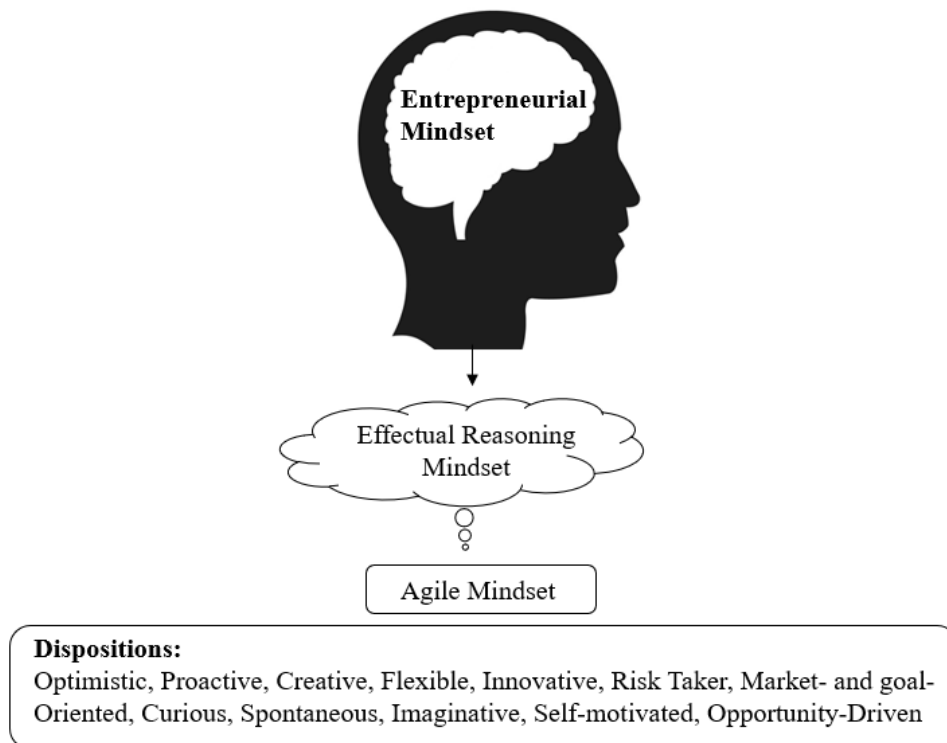


Figure 3.5: The main components of entrepreneurial mindset and its dispositions

3.2.5 Design Thinking

According to researchers, ‘design mindset’ or ‘design thinking’, which is often equated with innovation and creativity, is a method of approaching managerial problems, iterating ideas, and prototyping information in a way that designers approach subjects and make sense of their tasks (Dunne/Martin 2006; Rylander 2009; Liedtka/Ogilvie 2011; Johansson-Sköldberg et al. 2013; Liedtka/King/Bennett 2013; Orthel 2015; Micheli et al. 2019). For example, Dunne and Martin (2006, p. 518) noted that design thinking refers to three kinds of reasoning: abductive, deductive, and inductive. Figure 3.6 illustrates the cyclical relationship between these types of reasoning. According to this cycle, a designer generates ideas through a deep understanding of the scheme, which is referred to as an ‘Abduction’. Here the focus is on identifying who the design is aimed at (e.g. key stakeholders of the business). In the next step, ‘deduction’, it is essential to search for the logical consequences that may result from the ideas created in the abduction stage. To do so, the individual must think in models (convergent and divergent thinking) to generate potential hypotheses. The process of forming a descriptive hypothesis seeks to forecast the possible outcomes. Then, by testing the ideas in practice (in form of prototyping), the designer makes an effort to generalize the results in an ‘induction’ process by thinking systematically and reframing (Dunne/Martin 2006, p. 518). This could be possible in form of running the marketing survey, distributing questionnaires, or doing a pilot project related to primary ideas (rapid visualizing). In Induction, the feedback obtained from experiments will validate the original hypothesis. If the results are not reliable or applicable, there is a need to search for a new idea and start again from the first step (Abduction). This cycle has many similarities with the model of learning to think strategically introduced by Casey and Goldmann (2011). In this model, the process of strategic thinking contains four activities: scanning, questioning, conceptualizing, and testing. This will be the topic of Chapter 4.1.2.

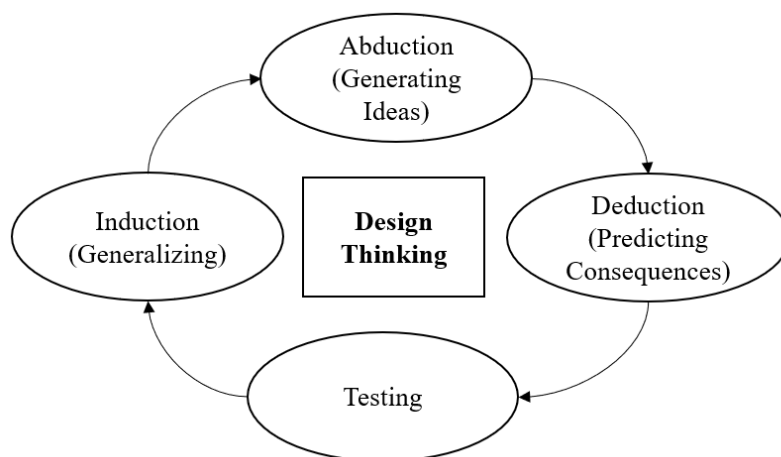


Figure 3.6: The cycle of design thinking (Dunne/Martin, 2006, p. 518)

Arguably, design thinking as a visual mindset can support the process of making abstract ideas practical and ultimately helps managers to draw logical arguments to maximize their organization's business growth (Liedtka/Ogilvie 2011, p. 6; Cabane/Pollack 2017, p. 17). In contrast to analytical reasoning, design thinking does not search for rules to solve problems (Orthel 2015, p. 1). In fact, the purpose of design here is "to envision what might be, but is not yet" (Rylander 2009, p. 5). It is therefore not surprising that in dynamic industries prone to rapid evolution, this way of approaching and analysing become popular in many companies (Micheli et al. 2019, pp. 124, 125).

A study by Micheli et al. (2019, p. 127) sought to understand which attributes or dispositions describe a design thinker by initially searching for the word 'design' and 'think' in the titles and abstracts of 32,232 documents in academic databases. They identified some codes that express the concept of design thinking, such as: discovering opportunities, reframing, reflective practice, holistic approach, synthesis, systems thinking, risk-taking, and divergent and convergent thinking (Micheli et al. 2019, pp. 132, 133). Based on previous discussions on strategic thinking components, there are also similarities between the design mindset and strategic mindset. Figure 3.7 shows the components of the design mindset and the relevant dispositions. In keeping with these explanations, Chapter 4.3.2.2.2 will discuss the implications of design thinking tools in the process of promoting strategic thinking competency. The next chapter will summarize the main components that play an important role in the context of strategic thinking based on all previous arguments.

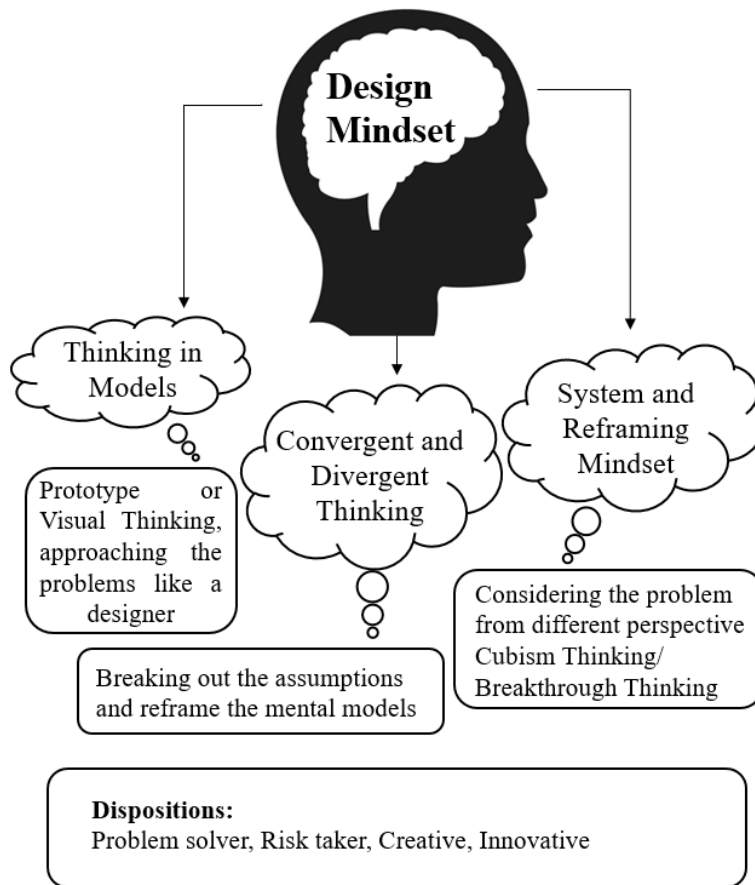


Figure 3.7: The main components of design mindset and its dispositions

3.3 Classification of the Decisive Components of Strategic Thinking Competency by Considering the Perspectives of Cross-Disciplinary Research

According to the previous discussions, it can be concluded that, due to the powerful effect of strategic thinking on a company's future (Sloan 2016, p. 26), it is vital to de-code the concept of strategic thinking for media managers who want to understand it and improve their competency through a strategic learning process. As mentioned at the beginning of Chapter 3, the competency of strategic thinking covers not only the knowledge about this concept in itself but also the skills and motivations that are required to master this competency. Knowing about the components involved in strategic thinking helps managers at the first stage to understand the process behind this way of thinking, interpreting, and reasoning. Next, gaining this basic knowledge will accelerate the processes of learning and developing the strategies that help media managers to advance their skills.

As discussed before, studies on strategic thinking (strategic mindset) have emerged within different dialogues and discourses, with diverse research themes that address different needs and performances of companies. The review of the literature demonstrates the existence of common perception components underlying the constructions of the concept of strategic thinking and other related concepts in different fields of study. For example, the role of the system mindset in the process of decision-making has been explored in various disciplines such as business, education, and public policy studies (e.g. Senge et al. 1999; Hung 2008; Ben-Zvi-Assaraf/Orion 2010; Dawidowicz 2012; Arnold/Wade 2015). Based on the discussion in 3.1.2.1, having a big picture (a holistic view), recognizing the company as a whole in a broader context, and simultaneously seeing the parts (projects) of companies are the most vital aspects of system thinking. In this regard, based on theoretical background and above-provided definitions, the system mindset demonstrates three ways of thinking (Senge et al. 1999, p. 137; Hung 2008, p. 1100): (1) closed-loop or feedback loop thinking, which refers to thinking in non-linear processes in which the casual relationships and effects (interact and interconnection) amongst the parts are crucial in a system mindset; (2) dynamic thinking, which refers to considering time as an important future of a system; determining the oscillations and delays in past, present, and future play a decisive role here (Liedtka 1998b, pp. 122, 123); and (3) thinking in models, which is the ability of model-building (simulation) and finding critical variables in a whole system. In essence, all these ways of thinking contribute to the elements of critical, design, and strategic mindsets.

Furthermore, according to the previous discussion, the divergent, reflective, and reframing mindsets could be other significant components of strategic thinking (Heracleous 1998, p. 481). As Helvey (2016, p. 9) stated, managers continuously contemplate the various business alternatives and the outcomes of each decision in the strategic thinking process to create value for stockholders. In that light, Moon B.J. (2013) indicated that thinking strategically is necessary to solve strategic problems and find competitive options. In this way of thinking, convergent and divergent mindsets work together to break out of assumptions and reframe mental models (Moon B.J. 2013, p. 1669). In fact, the process of strategic reasoning and divergent thinking occurs first by looking at the business broadly and escaping the confines of assumptions (break-through thinking) to expand the vision and imagine the ends. Then, it is important to think in a convergent way to reduce the options and choices to make decisions and generate achievable goals (Liedtka/King/Bennett 2013, pp. 4, 5). This restructuring and questioning of the assumptions in mind are also addressed in a strategic and cubism way of thinking.

Bear in mind that the concept of critical thinking has found its way into the management literature; it is interesting to note that most of the discussion has addressed the same cognitive patterns and components as those in the strategic thinking process (Ennis 1993, p. 180; Dewey 1997, p. 11; Menkes 2005, p. 4; Ruff 2005, p. 45; Meisel/Fearon 2006, p. 154; Abrami et al. 2008, p. 1104; Chaffee 2011, p. 12). In this case, a critical thinker needs to master four skills: analysing, interpreting, evaluating, and predicting (Abrami et al. 2008, p. 1104). Likewise, the literature of strategic thinking has considered the value of these skills, especially in the classification of the components of strategic thinking. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 3, the entrepreneurial mindset and effectual reasoning are fundamental to strategic thinking. This has also been discussed in ‘Strategy Safari’, written by Mintzberg et al. (1998) from the entrepreneurial school’s perspective. In essence, entrepreneurial thinking is necessary for media managers to understand the dynamic changes today and create new opportunities (Artero/Manfredi 2016, p. 54). In this point of view, mental agility (an early recognition of the warning signals and considering different scenarios) is part of a manager’s responsibility (Petry 2019, p. 54). This entrepreneurial orientation has been emphasized as a part of strategic renewal for media companies (Achtenhagen 2020, p. 7) because entrepreneurs’ engagements are consistent with agility (Petry 2019, p. 103).

The empirical study conducted by Jelenc and Pisapia (2016) also recognized that there is a significant relationship between the strategic thinking competency of individuals and their entrepreneurial behaviour and dispositions (e.g. innovativeness, pro-activeness, risk-taking) (p. 75). For this reason, through corporate venture capital activities, many large pioneering media companies seek to build partnerships with start-ups in order to gain access to original and innovative ideas (e.g. Petry 2019, p. 106). For example, the launching of an incubator, *ProSiebenSat.1 Accelerator*, by a large German TV broadcaster (ProSiebenSat.1 Media SE) pursues the same goal (Hess et. al 2016, p. 127). Likewise, *Marvel* purchased the start-up Cavium, which worked on video and security processors and product chips to find engineering solutions for its own company. In this deal, Syed Ali (Cavium’s chief executive and founder), as a successful entrepreneur, became a member of Marvel’s board to help them in making strategic decisions (The New York Times 2017). Similarly, with supporting innovative start-ups, Media Lab Bavaria (founded in 2015) or Greenhouse Innovation Lab (as a part of *G+J* and *Mediengruppe RTL*) aims to help media companies discover, pitch, and develop possible prototypes (Media Lab Bavaria 2020; Greenhouse Innovation Lab 2020). In this regard, media companies such as *New York Daily News* Innovation Lab and NYC Media Lab facilitate the collaboration between start-ups and big companies. On the other hand, most traditional and long-

established media companies underestimate the expertise and winning knowledge that can be generated by new ventures (e.g. Zahra/Nambisan 2012, p. 226). In this regard, focusing on improving the strategic thinking competency of media managers in these companies may be a solution to generate novel strategies. Regarding previous discussions, it can be concluded that different mindsets are related to the competency of strategic thinking. Taken together, the key components of strategic thinking are design, entrepreneurial and critical thinking (system and divergent thinking). Figure 3.8 shows the relationship between all kinds of thinking. The purpose of this model is to allow managers to observe the complex process of strategic thinking and to capture the full spectrum in a summarized schematic picture.

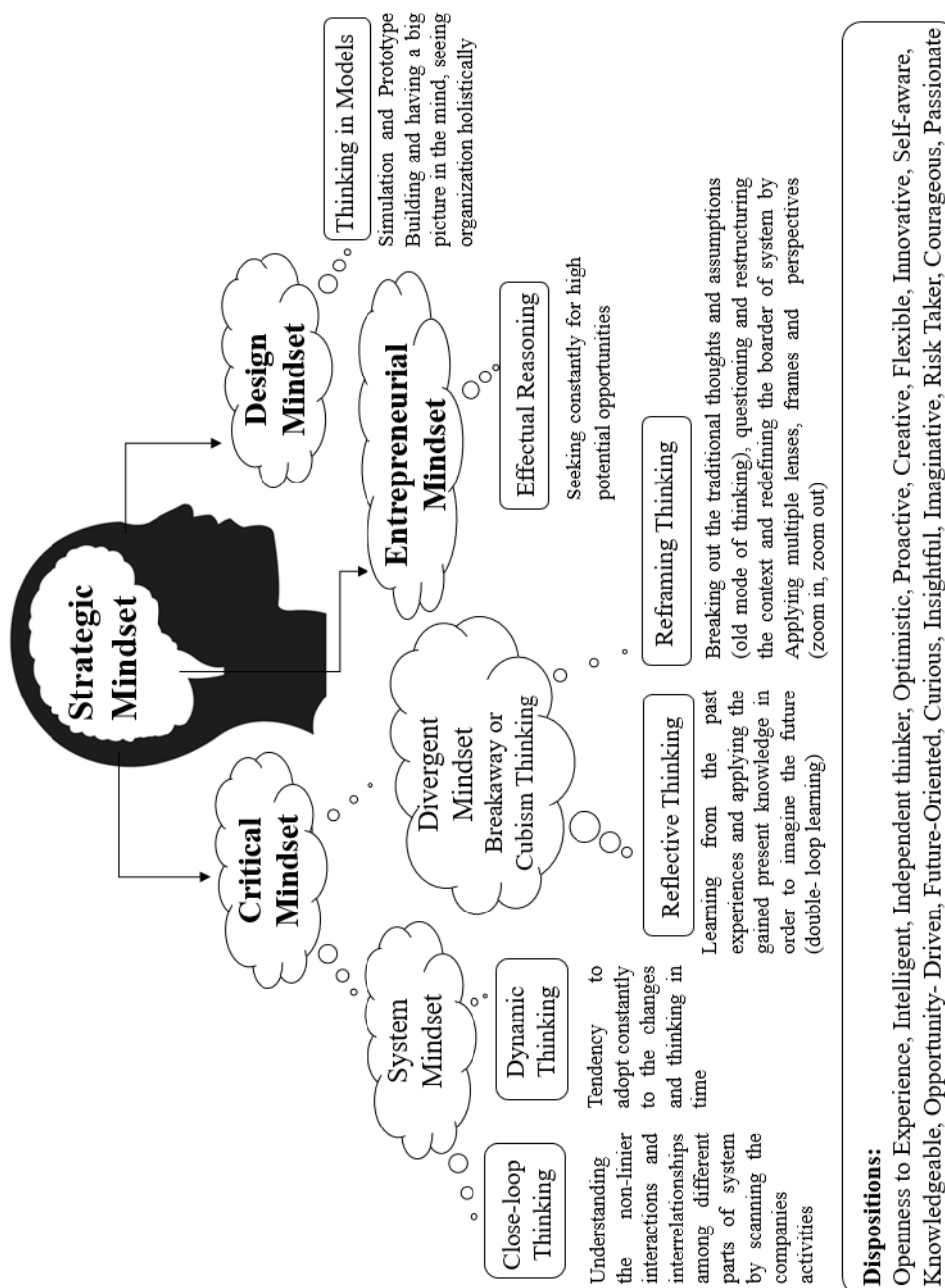


Figure 3.8: The main components of the strategic mindset with its dispositions

In keeping with these explanations, as observed in the other research areas and fields of study, critical, design, and entrepreneurial thinking as the main component of strategic mindset aims to establish a connection among all parts of a complex ecosystem. Table 3.4 illustrated the strategic mindset and its possible dispositions by considering a multidimensional perspective. Based on the previous discussion, it can be concluded that in all ways of thinking the focus is on the same attributes and components. This table helps to represent a more detailed single model and establish a stronger hierarchical-based understanding of the main components of the strategic mindset and the dispositions of the strategic thinker. It serves as the basis for exploring better the learning methods to enhance the way of thinking. The strength of such an approach is to clarify that strategic thinking as a reflective process includes a particular set of complex cognitive capabilities such as conceptual (visual), nonlinear, divergent, intuitive, lateral, implicit, creative, critical, and entrepreneurial mindsets (Graetz 2002, p. 458; Hughes/Beatty 2011, p. 45; Goldman 2012, pp. 26, 27; Sloan 2016, pp. 36, 37).

Articulating and defining the strategic mindset in transferable aptitudes and skills will help media companies not only to find managers with the competency of strategic thinking but also to motivate such managers to improve and change their mental models (Bates/Dillard 1993, p.103). Therefore, to learn the competency of strategic thinking, individual characteristics, and dispositional factors (such as being open to experience, an intelligent, independent thinker, self-aware, optimistic, proactive, creative, adaptive, flexible, innovative, opportunity-driven, future-oriented, curious, insightful, imaginative, risk-taker, courageous and passionate) must be considered. These dispositions and their role in learning strategic thinking form the topic of the following sections (Chapter 4).

The Key Components of Strategic Mindset		Authors and citations		
1. Critical Mindset Analysing, reasoning, conceptualizing, evaluating, interpreting, synthesizing the information, and comparing different approaches critically <u>Dispositions:</u> Truthful, Passionate, Open-minded, Disciplined, Self-Confident, Self-aware, Insightful, Creative, and Knowledgeable	System Mindset Having a big picture (a holistic view), considering the organization as a whole in a broader context while examining how different parts are connected, and influence one another <u>Dispositions:</u> Non-linear and independent Thinker, Creative and Flexible	Hübner/Jahnes (1998, p. 87); Liedtka (1998b, p. 122); Mintzberg/Ahlstrand/ Lampel (1998, p. 126), Senge et al. (1999, p. 137); O'Shanassy (2003, p. 55); Michaeli (2006, p. 382); Dunne/Martin (2006, p. 518); Hung (2008, p. 1100); Pisapia/Reyes-Guerra/Coukos-Semmel, 2005; Pisapia et al. (2009, 2011); Ben-Zvi-Assaraf/Orion (2010, p. 1255); Wootton/Horne (2010, p. 24); Liedtka/Ogilvie (2011); Moon B.J. (2013, p. 1700); Arnold/Wade (2015, p. 673); Garratt (2005; p. 27); Wootton/Horne (2010, p. 24); Steptoe-Warren, Douglas/Hume (2011, p. 240); Kanter (2011, p. 112); Halvey (2016, p. 25)		
	Divergent Mindset <u>Dispositions:</u> Openness Creative, Risk-taker, Flexible		Reflective Mindset Learning from past experiences by asking questions constantly <u>Dispositions:</u> Thoughtful, Curious	Ennis (1993, p. 180); Dewey (1997, p. 13); Liedtka (1998b, p. 122); Pisapia et al. (2009, p. 48); Wootton/Horne (2010, p. 20); Casey/Goldman (2010, p. 122); Moon J.A (2013, p. 4); Senge et al. (2014, p. 16); Sloan (2016, p. 81)
			Reframing Mindset Breaking out the established patterns of thinking in a novel way to consider diverse aspects <u>Dispositions:</u> Innovative, Curious	
2. Entrepreneurial Mindset (Agile Mindset) Seeking constantly for high potential opportunities <u>Dispositions:</u> Optimistic, Proactive, Creative, Flexible, Innovative, Risk Taker, Market- and goal-Oriented, Curious, Spontaneous, Imaginative, Self-motivated, Opportunity-Driven		Zabriskie/Huellmantel (1991, p. 26); Ireland/Hitt/Sirmon (2003, p. 968); Sarasvathy (2005, p. 3); Zahra/Nambisan (2012, p. 219); Litan (2015, p. 6); Krueger (2015, p.14); Hnátek (2015, p. 334); Jelenc/Pisapia (2016, p. 75); Martin et al. (2017, p. 6)		
3. Design Mindset (Thinking in Models) Approaching the problems like a designer <u>Dispositions:</u> Problem solver, Risk-taker, Creative, Innovative		Dunne/Martin (2006, p. 518); Rylander (2009, p. 7); Liedtka/Ogilvie (2011, p. 6); Liedtka/King/Bennett (2013, p. 8); Johansson-Sköldberg et al. (2013, p. 131); Orthel (2015, p. 1); Micheli et al. (2019, pp. 124, 125)		

Table 3.4: Key components of strategic thinking from the perspective of different filed of studies and similar terms

3.4 Understanding What Strategic Thinking Is *Not*

Researchers consider a strategic manager to be a person who can think strategically (Ireland/Hitt 1999, p. 43) and who has entrepreneurial skills to recognize new opportunities in the future markets that their company can invest resources in (Zabriskie/Huellmantel 1991, pp. 26, 30). Researchers also pointed out that strategic managers must strengthen their intuition by scanning changes in environments, considering the possible effects of these changes on tomorrow's businesses, and reacting strategically to the market shifts (Schoemaker/Krupp/Howland 2013, p. 2). This is in contrast with the task of operational managers who are specialists in setting short-term goals and in managing existing resources to achieve goals in today's markets. In that light, a distinguishing characteristic of strategic managers – and thus, strategic thinkers – is that they are superior to others at creating and communicating the intent, vision, and direction of companies. In fact, in strategic thinking, a manager searches for new opportunities for growth in the future markets of the company (Zabriskie/Huellmantel 1991, pp. 26, 30). Thus, long-term planning is one of the cornerstones of thinking strategically (Allio 2006, p. 4; Zahra/Nambisan 2012, p. 220). For example, The Walt Disney Company's decision in 2017 to acquire BAMtech media (A startup with a focus on live streaming technology) was aimed at supporting the company's future plan to launch its own video streaming service, Disney+, which was realized later on November 19, 2019. This kind of proactive strategy with a view to future possible positions for a media company is the result of thinking in a strategic way.

Given the complexity of the topic, strategic thinking does not automatically mean that individuals must think only in the long term. In fact, it means that the structure of the potentials – with them the desired positions of the company should achieve in the future – will generally be managed only over long periods (Hübner/Jahnes 1998, p. 87). In the past, the time horizon for strategic planning was five to ten years; today, due to faster and more dynamic changes in the environment, the time horizon has been reduced to about two to five years, which includes frequently considering the changes in the current business and the future market (Steiger/Lippmann 2013, p. 289). Arguably, as Kabacoff (2014) reported, the focus of strategic planning is on an isolated process that might occur in one year; however, an effective strategic manager thinks and acts strategically on a daily basis. It can be concluded that the aim of strategic planning is to generate a plan, whereas, in strategic thinking, the adoptive approach of the process of creating a long-term vision is important (Sloan 2016, p. 34). In essence, strategic thinking is about leveraging intuition and creativity to formulate a united perspective and a coherent vision

(Mintzberg 1994, p. 108; Morrison 1994, p. 1), which are consequently related to leader effectiveness (Dragoni et al. 2011, p. 835). In fact, it is complicated for media managers who have difficulty in envisioning the potential of the market to formulate an effective business plan for media companies that underpin the future of business. For example, the interview with a general manager of NYT Licensing & Print Innovation reveals a doubtful justification of the challenges and even opportunities confronting the future of the media business model in newspaper companies. One interview question asked how artificial intelligence, algorithms, and robotic and communication technologies will challenge the business of NYT. The general manager's answer indicates that there is uncertainty in predicting the possible impacts of new technologies on the performance of the company (Neves 2018, p. 149). This kind of thinking is not inherently oriented toward strategic mindsets. According to the definition of strategic thinking, managers must be aware of the consequences of the changes on their businesses by considering various options and scenarios, that may affect the future of competition.

Another example is the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), one of Australia's largest national media organizations with an estimated budget of AUD 4.03 billion for the year 2020/2021 (Australian Government 2021). The analysis of the strategic priorities of ABC for different years revealed a slight change in the vision of this company during the time from 2013 to 2025 (see Appendix 3.1, p. 214). This means their media managers grappled for a long time with modifying the company's direction due to volatile transformations in the broadcasting business that deteriorated the company's adoption. Dealing with budget cuts of AUD 84 million in 2020 forced managers at ABC to set off 250 employees (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2020). This might reflect a failure of considering the long-term survival of the business as a whole and highlighted the absence of strategic thinking.

Building from the idea that strategic planning is not the same as strategic thinking (based on the discussions in Chapter 2.2.2.3), it is necessary to stress what 'non-strategic thinking' fundamentally means. To better distinguish the differences between thinking strategically and non-strategically, it is essential to define the necessary criteria. Some of the distinctive criteria are goal and success orientation, requirements or qualifications for the decision-makers, reasons for uncertainty, planning scope, and methodical focus (Hammer 1998, p. 24). Table 3.5 describes these differences in greater detail. According to this table, considering the long-term survival of the business is the prerequisite of strategic thinking (Hammer 1998; D'Aveni 2010; D'Aveni/Dagnino/Smith 2010; Goldman/Scott 2016, p. 271). This helps media managers to formulate companies' policies and corporative strategies while simultaneously and continuously questioning the present competitive advantages. In contrast, relying on short-term success

and paying attention only to rising annual earnings and positive financial statements will hamper dynamic decisions and mislead the media managers in finding initiative plans for the future. For example, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, in response to critics about the damaging disclosures of users' data, said: "We didn't take a broad enough view of our responsibility, and that was a big mistake" (The Guardian, 2018). Moreover, in strategic thinking current disadvantages must be accepted in favor of greater future benefits. For example, the decision of Robert Iger (Disney chair and CEO) in 2006 to purchase Pixar for USD 7.4 billion seemed a very strange choice to many people in the industry at that time (HBR 2016). However, the ultimately profitable acquisition reflects how Iger's constant searching for new options, trade-offs, and thinking broadly and strategically underpinned the future of Disney's success.

Distinctive Criteria	Non-strategic Thinking	Strategic Thinking
Goal orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fulfilling short-term goals - Investing in existing resources - Ignoring the transient nature of competitive advantages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Considering long-term survival of the business as a whole - Emphasis on achieving high-level goals (company policies)
Success orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Making decisions based on advantages and disadvantages of the moment; priority on current success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unremitting questioning of the present competitive advantages
Requirements for the decision-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being satisfied due to current positive evidence and justification - Using relatively simple methods of problem-solving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existing high level of abstraction and initiative - Using complex and comprehensive problem-solving methods
Reasons for uncertainty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gathering data and utilizing information with focus only on the near future - Primarily concentrating on the previously acquired databases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contemplating the missing information regarding analysed organizational behaviour and its environment - Continuous innovation and transformation
Planning scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having isolated partial plans based on previous business developments - Overlooking global concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focusing on dynamic processes in pursuit of a coherent vision - Moving into different business territories
Methodical focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disregarding long-term requirements and flexibility in decision-making - Misrepresenting the possible consequences in future (cross-sectional) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using financial analysis and customer data, Determining desired outcomes - Surprising the competitors (dynamic maneuvering) by having multiple strategies

Table 3.5: Strategic thinking and non-strategic thinking (based on the work of Hammer 1998; D'Aveni 2010; D'Aveni/Dagnino/Smith 2010; Goldman/Scott 2016).

Focusing on dynamic processes in pursuit of a coherent vision is fundamental for thinking strategically (Hammer 1998; D'Aveni 2010; D'Aveni/Dagnino/Smith 2010; Goldman/Scott 2016, p. 271). Based on the specific characteristics of the media industry and the uniqueness of issues confronting media managers (discussed in Chapter 2.1.3), media companies must avoid being dogmatic. For example, Randall Stephenson, CEO of AT&T, has been criticized for his merger and acquisition decisions in 2019. The pressures have been raised because the engaged stakeholders believed in the absence of strategic thinking in these decisions which ignored the impact of regulations (CNBC 2019). Even though the decision of Randall Stephenson in the acquisition of DirecTV in 2015 and Time Warner in 2016 turned AT&T from a traditional cable and satellite company into a digital media conglomerate (see Table 2.3 attachment), he was ultimately replaced by John Stankey (former CEO of WarnerMedia) in July 2020. Later, on May 16, 2021, AT&T reported the plan of separating from the WarnerMedia division and merging it with Discovery Inc. as a TV group, in which AT&T shareholders will receive a 71% stake of the newly merged company. In this case, the shareholders will get their old telecommunications company back. Therefore, the company can fully concentrate on growing the actual core business related to fiber optics and accelerating the 5G rollouts (Wallstreet 2021). In this case, future analysis methods are needed to evaluate the possible consequences of this decision.

For example, to ensure the ongoing, relevant, accessible, and beneficial content and records in the future, media managers need to re-evaluate the archiving policies continuously (e.g. Ringel/Woodall 2019). This requires changing plan scope and methodical focus on the existing resources and continuous questioning of the present competitive advantages (thinking strategically) to increase the potential of media companies in competing with giant online content aggregators. In the case of archiving, Ringel and Woodall (2019, pp. 59-61) suggested different strategies and alternatives (dynamic maneuvering) for digital storage such as using blockchain software, the decentralized web (DWeb), and digital object identifiers (DOI). Using the decentralized web as peer-to-peer distributed storage systems will narrow the influence of large platforms in terms of pushing most traffic to online news sources. Such revising and refining of the company's strategic moves will end the practices of media managers employing isolated partial plans based only on previous business developments. In fact, repeating the same business strategies and actions with the expectation of new outcomes is simply strategic insanity (e.g. Benito-Ostolaza/Sanchis-Llopis 2014, p. 785).

3.5 The Importance of Strategic Thinking for Media Companies

3.5.1 Ensuring Strategic Thinking Competency at Different Levels

3.5.1.1 Dissimilar Roles of Strategic Thinker

This part of the study focuses largely on the matter of how media companies can increase the efficiency of decision-making and strategic choices through the competency of strategic thinking. A review of literature along with a content analysis will support the arguments of this section.

Traditionally, the top management team, board of directors, and the chief executive officer (CEO) have been known as the chief strategists in the company who oversees strategy design or formulation and direction (Senge et al. 1999, p. 496; Hill/Jones 1992, p. 134; O'Shannassy 2003, pp. 56, 60). Today this is no longer the case. In comparison to the past, the role of strategic planners and middle managers as the supporters who coordinate with the CEO on the strategic planning process is more flexible today. Such managers now work as facilitators with a greater interactive and supportive role in a company. In fact, they are responsible for concretizing and catalyzing strategic issues and reviewing the solutions of strategic problems by considering the financial and operational aspects of each solution (O'Shannassy 2003, p. 63; Noam 2018, pp. 641, 642). Internal professional consultants also work on the advancement and implementation of operational strategies to solve users' most critical problems based on their companies' vision. Similarly, external consultant companies (such as BCG or McKinsey) exert a significant influence on the process of strategy formulation by assisting the managers in the diverse projects (O'Shannassy 2003, p. 64; Noam 2018, p. 642). Senior marketers in R&D departments with marketing teams also seek to help top managers make better decisions about the strategic intent of the company (e.g. Wootton/Horne 2010, p. 36). Moreover, public relations or social media, content, and community managers as organizational representatives can improve collaborative relationships with stakeholders by involving themselves in activities such as reflecting the true needs of the market to deal with threats (e.g. Moretti/Tuan 2015, p. 160; Neill/Lee 2016, p. 13).

Furthermore, during the decision-making process and strategic discussions, human resource development professionals should also be present at the table of decision-making (Goldman 2012, p. 36; Goldman/Scott/Follman 2015, p. 169). In some media companies or businesses – for example, small or medium-sized enterprises – the manager, the marketer, and the entrepreneur may be the same person (e.g. Noam 2018, p. 641). Therefore, based on the model of the components of strategic thinking, it can be concluded that a strategic thinker as a multi-tasker is not only a strategist or planner but also a designer and entrepreneur (see Figure 3.9). This

means that a proficient strategic thinker sees opportunities like an entrepreneur and goes beyond conventional boundaries to plan and design the future of the business (Abraham 2005, p. 6).

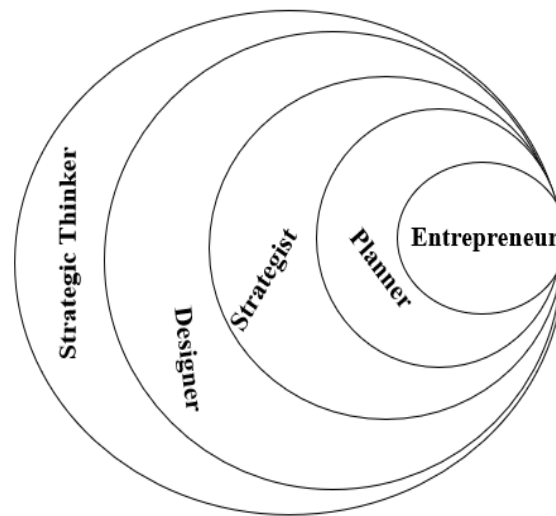


Figure 3.9: Different roles of strategic thinkers in media companies

In fact, managers must not only explore and analyse the environment to identify potential opportunities but must also have the capability to exploit and generate new opportunities (just as entrepreneurs). Regarding this model, discovering, predicting, prototyping, and creating the future happens during the process of a different way of thinking (critical, divergent, and design). Accordingly, the strategic actions here are observing the environment and the market, giving meaning to the goals, and thinking strategically to generate new ideas with specific ends and plans (Zabriskie/Huellmantel 1991; Loehle 1996; Liedtka 1998; O’Shannassy 1999). As discussed in Chapter 2.1.3, a media manager at any level of any company can take on all of the above roles nowadays and participate in the process of providing insights and formulating strategy (e.g. Hollifield et al. 2016; Artero/Manfredi 2016; Bowman 2016; Greck/Franzetti/Altmeppen 2017; Albarran/Moellinger 2017). Because media managers’ decisions pursue different values (economic and societal), such as investments in profitable projects, criticizing the government, producing scandal stories or censoring facts, reporting innovative news contrary to cultural norms, or controlling digital marketing – all of which have remarkable consequences in public spheres– (Altmeppen/Hollifield/van Loon 2017, p. 4), it is vital to consider the power and the competency of media managers in handling companies’ strategies.

3.5.1.2 Strategic Committee and Management Positions

In summary, some scholars believe that the competency of strategic thinking exists in most companies (Pellegrino/Carbo 2001, p. 378); nevertheless, companies typically have difficulties identifying and selecting great strategic thinkers because they occupy lower positions in the management hierarchy (e.g. Bonn 2001). Most often the problem is that the management board in companies is the only responsible group that breaks goals into plans, while subordinate employees carry them out (Bates/Dillard 1993, p. 103). Managing conflict arising from this situation and alignment (coordination) across units is challenging (HBR 2015). To solve this problem and to obtain a schematic perspective, the approach of inter-functional or multilevel planning (IMP) organizational relationship can be particularly relevant for a media company (Bates/Dillard 1993, p. 105; Bonn 2001, p. 67; Noam 2018, pp. 641, 643). Figure 3.10 presents this approach in a classic structure.

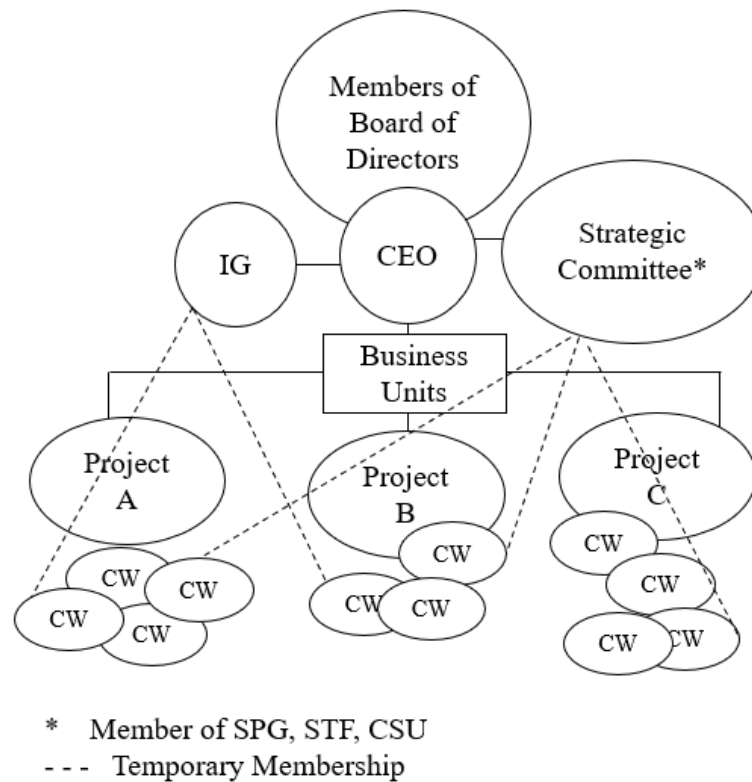


Figure 3.10: Organizational relationship between different members and groups in a company (Bates/Dillard 1993, p. 105; Bonn 2001, p. 67; Noam 2018, pp. 641, 643)

In this approach, the company must provide a situation in which the managers and employees from different levels in the hierarchy get the chance to get together and share their opinions in a ‘strategic planning group’ (SPG) (Bates/Dillard 1993, p. 105). Later, Bonn (2001, p. 67) and

Noam (2018, p. 642) termed this committee a ‘strategic thinking forum’ (STF) and ‘corporate strategy unit’ (CSU), which reports directly to the CEO. According to Figure 3.10, the members of the committee are selected from different disciplines (such as marketing, finance, and R&D) for diverse projects (such as launching a new online magazine or searching for technology-enabled start-ups) and from various levels in a company. As creative workers (CW), these employees have a dual responsibility. They are responsible not only for interacting on daily operational decisions but also for exploring issues that will be important for the company within the next years. In this point of view, they have a specific task to implement or support the strategy. The members of an incubator group (IG) support the strategic committee by providing input and discussions of the relevant issues in the strategy process. This can be easily subsumed under the responsibilities of the research and development department (R&D). Membership in both groups is flexible, and if members show unwillingness or incapability to develop strategic thinking, they will be reshuffled (e.g. Bates/Dillard 1993; Bonn 2001).

Kaplan and Orlikowski (2013) believe this work of different actors in strategy-making can provide strategically effective decisions by interpreting and understanding the past (rethinking the routines), present (reconsidering current concerns), and future (deconstructing and reimagining the strategic accounts). This negotiation and divergent interpretations are exactly what happens during the process of strategic thinking and collective decision-making in the strategic committee. An example is an independent committee created by the board of directors at Yahoo to work with top management to discover strategic alternatives to develop the strategic plan and company goals (Noam 2018, p. 641). In this regard, the ‘professional board’ of directors considers interpersonal relationships (internal and external stakeholders) and facilitates tough-minded discussions among the members of this group (Jamshidy et al. 2014, p. 58). Likewise, Comcast has established a ‘strategic and financial planning group’ that assigns the task of discovering new growth opportunities (Noam 2018, p. 643). This engagement in the strategic formulation is valuable to diminish the effects of biases on the decision-making process.

To play a stronger role in planning and strategizing, the professional board of directors must be in constant contact with members of the CEO’s staff (Jamshidy et al. 2014, p. 61). For example, in Bertelsmann SE & Co. KGaA, the employees propose five members to assist the Group Management Committee (GMC), which is responsible for supporting the executive board in terms of strategy development (Bertelsmann Annual Report 2018, p. 7). Similarly, the task of the Strategy Group at News Corporation is to detect and evaluate potential investments, acquisitions, and strategic changes to increase revenues and profitability as well as support organization strategies (News Corporation Co. 2018, p. 13). These kinds of structures aim to help

senior executives view strategic issues from different perspectives (Bonn 2001, p. 67). Moreover, they can also facilitate the recognition of individuals with latent strategic thinking capability and give them opportunities to apply their skills. The benefit here is that the employees feel engaged in the process of strategic management, innovation, and problem-solving in the company (Hamel 2006, pp. 1, 2). Therefore, strategic thinking can be developed in a collective decision-making process where joint understanding takes place in a strategic committee.

According to the above arguments, it is clear that strategic thinking is not a competency found only among top managers (Zahra/Nambisan 2012, p. 221). Certainly, it would be ideal if every individual at different levels in companies had this chance to think about the whole business and to be engaged in the process of decision-making and strategic thinking (Hwang 2003, p. 100; Drumm 2008, p. 568). In essence, by giving all employees the opportunity to take part in the process of strategy and vision formulation, media companies can achieve greater levels of collective decision-making. In media companies, it is necessary to emphasize the role of creative workers as a significant resource for innovation and intellectual capital to foster the growth of strategy ideas (Schüller 2015, p. 68). Nevertheless, in reality, due to atypical employment, not all creative workers can be present at the table of decision-making and be involved in the process of strategic formulation (Simester 2016, p. 95). Therefore, the board of directors and CEOs who engage in long-term strategy are eventually responsible for approving their companies' missions and policies (Noam 2018, p. 641). For example, in some TV companies, the editor or program manager is usually not responsible for deciding on the implementation of a TV format (Schüller 2015, p. 174). Fundamentally, CEOs and the top managers as central members of a company's 'dominant coalition' have a great influence on the company's strategic direction and performance (Nadkarni/Herrmann 2010, p. 1050; Herrmann/Nadkarni 2014, p. 1318; Artero/Manfredi 2016, p. 53; Noam 2018, p. 641).

Additionally, the executive board is responsible for formulating visions and planning the future of companies through a strategic thinking process (Hollifield et al. 2016, p. 138). Indeed, the top managers receive information and evaluate it based on annual performance and they are responsible for prioritizing business solutions for the future. It may be said that the chief executives and managers are the 'architects' who take the responsibility of designing the strategy (Mintzberg/Ahlstrand/Lampel 1998; O'Shannassy 2003). As discussed before, the quality of the management team is one of the key factors that influence a company's innovation and success. A great many studies have emphasized strategic thinking as a competency that is necessary for all managers at any level (Zabriskie/Huellmantel 1991; Morrison, 1994; Bonn 2001;

O'Shannassy 2003; Whitlock 2003; Switzer 2008; Fairholm 2009; Wootton/Horne 2010; Nadkarni/Herrmann 2010; Dragoni et al. 2014; Self et al. 2015; Goldman, Scott/Follman 2015). A content analysis of job descriptions posted in LinkedIn also can support this notion in practice. To do so, more than 1,000 job positions descriptions posted on LinkedIn between December 2018 and January 2019 in Germany (in English and German language) were considered to identify which job positions are more likely to require strategic thinking. Appendix 3.2 (pp. 215-219) shows different job titles posted in the German market (in different businesses including the media industry). The keywords used here were 'strategic-', 'design-', 'critical-', 'system-', 'reflective-', 'divergent-', 'creative thinking', 'strategic mindset', 'out of the box', 'big picture' and 'reframing' and 'strategisches Denken' to reach and recognize the usual job titles that involve activities and qualifications related to the competency of strategic thinking. As summarized in Appendix 3.2 (pp. 215-219), most companies are searching for candidates who can think strategically and take on managerial positions (such as digital manager, account manager, art and creative director, e-commerce manager, content marketing manager, or head of advertising). Only a handful of these jobs (listed in the last columns in the table) was non-managerial positions (such as analyst, consultant, strategist, and planner). Searching for jobs specifically in media companies also illustrated the focus of companies on managers when seeking employees with strategic thinking competency. Appendix 3.3 (pp. 220-221) also confirmed that all the job titles and qualifications (posted in LinkedIn by Sky Deutschland GmbH, December 2018) were looking for candidates in top managerial positions who could think strategically. However, this small exploration and content analysis alone would not suffice to prove that strategic thinking is just a manager's competency. Because many start-ups, as well as small and medium-sized and team-based media companies, may also be active on other platforms (such as XING).

In this research, however, based on the previous studies and the result of the above content analysis, the focus is on the managerial level of media companies, but the discussions here are also relevant for all employees at every level. Chapter 4.2.6 will clarify the impact of the work processes and the structure of media companies on developing the competency of strategic thinking. The next Chapter will highlight the benefits of strategic thinking for media companies.

3.5.2 The Benefits of Strategic Thinking as Intellectual Capital in the Process of Strategy Formulation

According to previous discussions, to align and integrate all the values of media companies and ensure a wisdom-based and multidimensional vision, media managers need to think strategically. Previous literature mainly highlighted strategic thinking and strategic cognition as a central element in building unique competitive advantage and strategic development in an unpredictable marketplace with progressive changes that are often beyond the control of any single company (e.g. Zabriskie/Huellmantel 1991; Bonn 2001; Graetz 2002; Gallimore 2007; Switzer 2008; Hughes/Beatty 2011; Goldman 2012). Therefore, this section focuses on reviewing the benefits and necessity of strategic thinking competency as a part of media managers' cognitive ability in the process of strategizing and policy-making in media companies.

The high speed of content distribution and dynamic innovation, as well as sociological changes in the media environment, increase the complexity of business (e.g. Mierzejewska/Shaverb 2014; Wirtz 2018). In media industries, as Noam (2018, p. 630) observed, the core potentials of media companies are creating and distributing content and controlling platforms and advanced technologies while working closely with the government. However, it is difficult in this environment to maintain a non-imitable and extraordinary capacity in any resource (Noam 2018, p. 630). The assumption of this study is that the media manager's strategic mindset as an inimitable, rare, and valuable resource can be the most vital unsubstituted resource for media companies to generate outperforming results in the complex environment of the new media market (based on the VRIO framework). To secure this intellectual capital, companies should be fully organized and equipped with an optimal coordinate system and well-defined structures in order to effectively exploit the potential of thinking strategically to make it difficult for competitors to get access to the same capability or be able to replicate it.

Since different ways of thinking affect the process of decision-making, judgement, and ultimately, taking actions (Kahneman 2011, p. 430; Hofert 2018, p. 3), it is crucial to understand how media managers approach issues within a specific company (Picard/Lowe 2016, p. 69). In that light, this study introduces strategic thinking as a powerful core competency of media managers and a main invisible asset of media companies that imparts exclusive sustainable competitive advantages. According to the discussion in Chapter 3, strategic thinking competency helps individuals to identify market opportunities clearly, verbalize and articulate a vision to exploit opportunities, and plan possible strategies to maximize stakeholder and organizational value (Dragoni et al. 2011, p. 837). This research highlights the point that as long as it is easy for

competitors to imitate what a company is doing; that company cannot have a unique competitive advantage. Therefore, strategic thinking as an unsubstituted and non-imitable resource can be considered in the category of intellectual capital, which refers to knowledge and wisdom that can be transformed into economic profits (Sullivan 1998, p. 4; Hwang 2003, p. 95). The findings of a survey published by McKinsey in 2019, which studied a sample of 600 companies from 2001 to 2014, also support this notion and emphasized the importance of strategic thinking. It discussed that point that when managers consider a long-term horizon and look beyond the future of companies, they can surpass their industry counterparts in terms of key financial measurements (Birshan/Meakin/Kurt 2019).

Researchers in several studies have also claimed that possessing strategic thinking competency enables managers to continuously monitor the environment, reposition resources more productively and discover new opportunities more quickly (e.g. Zabriskie/Huellmantel 1991), tackle the uncertainties of organizational changes, foresee market trends realistically (e.g. Spencer/Spencer 1993), dissect strategic problems effectively (e.g. Loehle 1996; Liedtka 1998b; O'Shannassy 2001) and visualize and conceptualize the future of a business more flexibly (O'Shannassy 2003, p. 58). These altogether will help media managers to respond to consumers' needs more rapidly, develop novel strategies, make superior strategic decisions, and design innovative business models in times of complexity (e.g. Loehle 1996; O'Shannassy 2001; Hübner/Jahnes 1998; Fairholm 2009; Goldman 2012; Halvey 2016; Goldman/Scott 2016).

Moreover, the result of previous studies demonstrated a link between usage of strategic thinking skills and leadership effectiveness (e.g. Dragoni et al. 2011; Pang/Pisapia 2012) and effective strategic change (Srivastava/D'Souza 2021, p. 91). 'Effectiveness' means to be ensured about the performance and survival of the company along with satisfying different stockholders (Pang/Pisapia 2012, p. 348; Mumford/Higgs 2020, p. 2). Likewise, in empirical research, Moon B.J. (2013, p. 1706) concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between strategic thinking and a firm's marketing performance in terms of significant market share, sales, and profit. In another study, Schüller (2015, p. 142) emphasized that being competent in divergent and strategic thinking is a key factor of innovation and in securing the long-term market position of TV companies. To ensure ongoing, relevant, accessible, and beneficial content and records in the future – at a time when the formatting and distribution technologies are changing quickly – it is essential for media companies (especially news companies) to continuously re-evaluate their archiving policies and strategies (e.g. Ringel/Woodall 2019). This requires thinking strategically about the resources that will give them the potential to compete with giant online content aggregators.

As a best practice, AT&T Inc. (a large, U.S.-based multinational media conglomerate; see Appendix 2.6, p. 212) paid millions of dollars to the U.S. Department of Energy's Argonne National Laboratory (in 2020) to forecast the influence of climate change on the company's infrastructure over the next 30 years. This way of forward-looking strategic thinking about investment and financing allows media companies to rethink business models, create long-term value, and, ultimately, be equipped with a range of appropriate strategies and options against unexpected events (e.g. Winston 2020). Another example is the success of Apple's iPod in competing with Microsoft's Zune and other products. Both companies' production aimed at facilitating downloading music from the internet. However, iPod was more unique than Microsoft's Zune because of its system thinking behind the product development and design. Apple's managers thought simultaneously on licensing, pricing, payment and transition system, storing, song acquisition, and the structure of the company in supporting the users (Monat/Amissah/Gannon 2020, pp. 6, 7).

To summarize the above discussion, it can be concluded that strategic thinking competency helps media managers to deal with uncertainty, understand market trends and regulatory issues beforehand, verbalize and articulate a vision to exploit opportunities, plan probable and preferable alternatives (distinctive strategies and superior actions) to maximize stakeholders and organizational value, and ultimately form the company's competitive advantage (Graetz 2002, p. 458; Abraham 2005, p. 5; Hughes/Beatty 2011, p. 44; Dragoni et al. 2011, p. 837; Goldman/Scott 2016, p. 271). Strategic thinking can affect the media manager's choices in better handling inevitable changes and mitigating critical strategy risks. These discussions lead to the conclusion that learning to think strategically is fundamental for media managers. Before introducing the training approaches and practices that help individuals to develop strategic thinking competency, the goal of the next chapters is to answer the question of how media companies can evaluate the manager's mindset and provide the relevant and fundamental materials for a fruitful transition of this skill into the workplace.

3.6 Evaluating the Manager's Mindset and Strategic Thinking Competencies

Different fields of studies have provided some assessment tools that can help media companies evaluate one aspect of strategic thinking competency. For instance, to evaluate individuals' 'brain styles', Graetz (2002, p. 459) used the Lifetime Assessment Test, which has its roots in the whole brain model introduced by Herrmann-Nehdi (2017, p. 2). In this test, four dominant processing modes of the brain have been outlined: *producer*, *analyst* (left brain), *imaginist*, and *teamist* (right brain) (Graetz 2002, pp. 458, 459). Based on the assumption of this test, the right-brain thinkers (*imaginist* and *teamist*) are able to conceptualize, support and cooperate, and deal with ambiguity (zooming out), whereas the left-brain thinkers (*producer* and *analyst*) focus on details and logical planning (zooming in). Using this test will enable companies to assess the preferred types of thinking that managers apply in the process of strategy formulation in order to identify strategies to shift default mental models (Herrmann-Nehdi 2017, p. 2).

Similarly, the California Critical Thinking Skills Test (Ruff 2005), Divergent Thinking Test (Gilhooly et al. 2007), Pisapia's Strategic Thinking Questionnaire (Pisapia et al. 2011), and Strategic Aptitude Assessment (Schoemaker/Krupp/Howland 2013) reflect and measure in relative terms the attributes related to the competency of strategic thinking. However, the literature review of different fields of study on this matter confirms that there is no spectrum or a specific tool that shows managers' strategic thinking grade (Goldman/Scott 2016, p. 261; Srivastava/D'Souza 2021, p. 91). Moreover, the primary focus of the above-mentioned instruments is on testing the capability of candidates in the selection process of the organization's assessment center without considering the company's context.

According to the discussions in Chapter 3.2.1 (Figure 3.1), the competency of thinking strategically can also be predicted by evaluating the cognitive ability of managers (Dragoni et al. 2011, p. 846; Fehr/Huck 2016, p. 715). By analysing data from 703 executives, Dragoni et al. (2011, pp. 858, 859) found a strong relationship between executives' cognitive ability and strategic thinking competency. Based on this result, it is indeed possible to assess the competency of media managers in thinking strategically by employing tests of general mental ability. Moreover, the empirical studies confirmed that by assessing the managers' characteristics, media companies could distinguish between effective and ineffective strategic thinkers. In this regard, managers who have extroversion and openness type of personalities (are imaginative, social, expressive, curious, and open to experiences) are more likely to think strategically (e.g. Dragoni et al. 2011; Azarpour/Abooyee Ardakan/Gholipour 2016). In contrast, there is a negative relationship between neurotic personalities (low EQ and high nervousness) and strategic thinking

competency. In this regard, managers who are emotionally reactive and negative, and who feel anxious and stressed during work, are less competent in thinking strategically (Azarpour/Abooyee Ardakan/Gholipour 2016). According to discussions in 3.2.1, the IQ and EQ tests assess the cognitive ability of individuals in terms of reasoning, problem-solving, inspiring followers, and building collaborative networks, which are the prerequisites of thinking strategically. However, the reliability of these instruments in forecasting the long-term success of the test-takers performance is limited. From some researchers' perspective, for example, the reason is that IQ tests emphasize the cognitive skills dominant to be successful in school, not in business (Menkes 2005, p. 1; Drumm 2008, pp. 115, 116; Ahmed et al. 2016, p. 66).

Because the identification of individuals' competencies is related to personal biographies, knowledge, and career experiences, it is possible to judge the competencies of individuals by analysing specific activities and achievements inside and outside the professional field (North/Reinhardt/Sieber-Suter 2018, p. 59). It is obvious that different media managers with diverse experiences and backgrounds in specific industry branches will not have the same mental model. The mental model and the perception system of managers change and evolve with time. In that light, it would be imprudent to rely on the above-mentioned assessment tools alone when evaluating managers. Moreover, according to the discussions in Chapter 3.3, the entire dispositions and attitudes (such as openness to experience, intelligent, independent, self-aware, optimistic, proactive, creative, adaptive, flexible, innovative, opportunity-driven, future-oriented, curious, insightful, imaginative, risk-taker, courageous and passionate) must be considered in developing the instrument to evaluate the strategic thinking competency in the future studies.

Learning to think strategically during carrier life enables managers and especially potential candidates for management positions to continuously master their skills and knowledge. The question is how to discover the current mental model of managers or junior executives to develop and update their way of thinking in media companies. In that light, using metaphors may be practical to discover the cognitive process of a manager's mind in terms of thinking strategically and strategizing (McCourt 1997; Pitt 2001; Emson 2016; Coëgnarts 2017). In this regard, the Zaltman metaphor elicitation technique (ZMET) is applicable. This tool, as the most well-known marketing methodology and cognitive mapping technique, has been used to better understand customer expectations and win a deeper connection with stakeholders. This technique entails several steps in the form of interviews. To guide the conversation, different tools, techniques, and strategies are used: storytelling, showing missed images, and sorting the images

into meaningful strings. During the interviews, the participants are asked to utilize visual mediums or sensory images (metaphors) that represent their interpretation and thoughts (Zaltman 2003; Zaltman/Zaltman 2008). In this regard, metaphors provide a feasible way to gain access to individuals' unconscious sense-making (Emson 2016, p. 72). In fact, as a powerful qualitative technique, this deep metaphor expression could be useful in uncovering the unconscious thoughts of managers and strategists. For example, Ahmadi and Alizadeh (2018, p. 94) used the Ansoff matrix as an imaginative framework and metaphor to examine managers' perspectives about the future of business and changes (based on the Zaltman metaphor elicitation technique). This empirical research indicated that managers' awareness of their cognitive patterns and the way of processing information and strategizing allows them to be ready to change their mental constructs, insights, assumptions, and values (Ahmadi/Alizadeh 2018, p. 96).

According to the above discussions, the Zaltman metaphor elicitation technique could find application in evaluating managers' strategic thinking competency in media companies. Due to the different structures and communication cultures of companies (such as knowledge management or feedback systems), the function of dialogues and stories in assessing and developing the competency become important (Bergmann 2012, p. 2). Indeed, it is essential to find out which forms of content, stories, or metaphors are relevant for evaluating and developing the strategic thinking of media managers in the context of the media industry. The criteria for selecting an appropriate media content and product to learn and practice strategic thinking competency will be also the topic of Chapter 4.3.6.1.

4. Learning, Practicing and Mastering the Strategic Mindset - The Value of Media Products in Developing the Strategic Thinking Competency

4.1 Introduction of Learning Models Related to The Strategic Thinking Process

4.1.1 Three-Stage Model of Informal Learning

Learning to think strategically and out of the box is a complicated cognitive process in the mind, due to the fact that learning occurs in terms of changes in the mental model (Hwang 2003, p. 94). Based on in-depth interviews with executives from different countries (including Germany, Japan, China, Poland, and the U.S.), Sloan (2016) sought to understand this process by presenting a model of informal learning for strategic thinking. This learning process manifests itself in three stages: preparation, experience, and re-evaluation (Sloan 2016, pp. 67, 68). The main argument of this model remains relevant to the learning process happening at the individual level. However, based on previous discussions, the organizational viewpoint is also worth noting. Therefore, before explaining the individual approaches and their stages, it is important to outline this model in a broader context and to consider the role of organizational factors in the process of gathering, transforming, and developing knowledge (see Figure 4.1). This in turn can lead to a deeper evaluation of facilitators and drivers, which incentivize individuals to change their mindsets and learn to think strategically in media companies (e.g., Law/Cao 2020, pp. 26, 27).

Fundamentally, organizational culture and processes as dominant organizational learning factors (Law/Cao 2020, p. 30), play a vital role in encouraging managers to think strategically (Bonn 2001; O'Shannassy 2003; Whitlock 2003; Irelan/Hitt/Sirmon 2003; Allio 2006; Goldman/Casey 2010; Goldman 2012). In fact, organizational culture and processes aligned with the shared mission, vision, and values of companies, establish a direction for strategic actions and provide the primary platform for organizational learning (Whitlock 2003, p. 16). In this regard, the infrastructure and structures of companies (such as communication methods, interpersonal relationships, and knowledge management or feedback systems) may solidify greater commitment and collaboration among individuals to alter the existing knowledge, symbols, beliefs, and thoughts (Law/Cao 2020, pp. 29-32). A detailed explanation of the role of the situational conditions, systems, workflows, culture, and structure of media companies will be a topic of Chapter 4.2.6.

Moreover, the individual's mindset and different characteristics of managers influence the process of strategic thinking (Sloan 2016, p. 87). According to Figure 4.1, the process of strategizing is associated with a feeling of fear, concern, stress, anxiety, pleasure, or desire to win and

take risks, which may derive from past experiences (Wootton/Horne 2010, p. 20; Sloan 2016, pp. 68, 69). Sloan (2016, p. 69) mentioned that in the first stage of the learning process (preparation stage), checking the emotional component engaged in the process of decision-making is essential to ensuring that managers are ready to move forward with a proper strategic vision. In this regard, self-awareness plays an important role. For example, Covington (1985, p. 402) emphasized the necessity of being aware of one’s characteristics, capabilities, and restrictions in order to be able to learn diverse kinds of material. In preparation, in addition to effective emotional components, cognitive styles and belief systems (analytical, intuitive, or mixed style) in form of gathering information influence the process of thinking strategically. That means the brain utilizes data every single day to build simple patterns in the mind. These patterns will shape the mental model, mindset, or dominant logic of an individual (Olivia/Pollack 2017, p. 27). Chapter 4.2.3 will go into greater detail and explain the relationship of cognitive styles with strategic thinking competency.

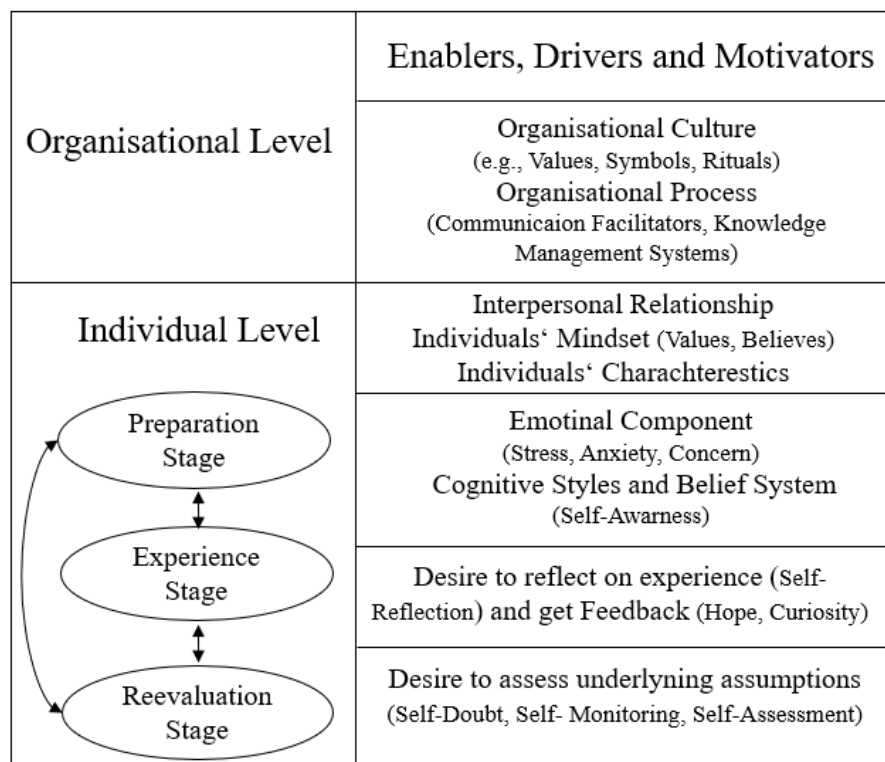


Figure 4.1: The learning model for strategic thinking
 (Based on the work of Sloan 2016, p. 87; Law/Cao 2020, p. 26)

In the second stage of the process of learning to think strategically (experience stage), critical inquiry and reflection on experiences are crucial (Hwang 2003, p. 96; Sloan 2016, p. 75; North/Reinhardt/Sieber-Suter 2018, p. 80). This means that by drawing on earlier experiences,

managers seek to interpret the data and recognize the familiar patterns engaging in the current situation and make sense out of it (Sloan 2016, p. 76). In this stage, evaluating the information (for example financial and customer data) allows managers to verify existing assumptions, gain new perspectives, and discover possible strategic business opportunities (Goldman/Scott 2016, p. 271; Sloan 2016, p. 71). Having a certain level of experience and mastery helps also managers to challenge the facts and their mental models to generate novel insights and simultaneously improve their knowledge and environmental awareness (e.g., Goldman/Casey 2010; Goldman/Scott 2016; Olivia/Pollack 2017). For media managers, it is crucial to be aware of media market trends, regulatory issues, as well as local, national, and international policies (discussed in Chapter 2.1.4.2). As shown in Figure 4.1, curiosity (asking questions) and hope (learning from mistakes) play a powerful role as stimuli in the process of learning to think strategically (Goldman/Scott 2016, p. 271; Sloan 2016, pp. 80-87). In Chapters 4.2.1 and 4.2.2, the importance of managers' experiences and characteristics will be explained more precisely.

The third stage (re-evaluation) refers to reviewing and assessing actions and decisions from cross-functional viewpoints (Goldman/Scott 2016, p. 271; Sloan 2016, p. 87). Casey and Goldman (2010) characterised this stage as a 'conceptualizing' process, which means that underlying assumptions (beliefs and habits of minds) and their influence on the process of strategy-making, should be explored continuously (Casey/Goldman 2010, p. 172; Sloan 2016, p. 85). Reorganizing cognitive patterns and creating new frames (regarding reframing mindset) as a way of classifying perceptions of decisions and behaviours helps managers to move forward in the process of thinking strategically (Sloan 2016, pp. 104, 105). In that light, self-assessment, self-monitoring, or even self-doubt, as the individual's motivations are significant in the process of realizing a strategy solution (Covington 1985, p. 402; Rodolfa et al. 2005, p. 350; Sloan 2016, p. 70; Law/Cao 2020, pp. 29, 30; Mumford/Higgs 2020, p. 10). In Chapters 4.3.2.1.2 and 4.3.2.1.4 these points will be elaborated on in greater detail.

In summary, the discussion of this section provides a basic understanding of the process of learning to think strategically. However, in this approach (the learning model for strategic thinking), the coherent perspective, contributions, and influence of different variables and their interactions have not been explained. To gain insights into underlying involved factors and to better understand, what actually happens during the strategic thinking process, Goldman and Casey (2010, p. 121) introduced a more comprehensive model of learning to think strategically, which manifests the interaction of different related factors (such as individual differences, work experiences and environmental influencers) with strategic thinking. In the next section, this

model will be presented to provide a holistic view of the topic, which is an organized basis for further discussions.

4.1.2 Model of Learning to Think Strategically Along with Relevant Variables

In the model of learning to think strategically (see Figure 4.2), based on the definition of strategic mindset (Chapter 3.1), four activities (scanning, questioning, conceptualizing, and testing) serve as prerequisites for generating conceptual and systems-oriented thinking. This model focused on the fact that thinking strategically occurs in a process of double-loop learning (Herculeous 1998, p. 482; Senge et al. 1999, p. 31; Casey/Goldman 2010, p. 174; Sloan 2016, p. 82). In fact, the key point to double-loop learning and reasoning is re-evaluating the way of approaching problems (Argyris 1991, p. 4). In this process, managers challenge existing assumptions and underlying norms by continuously questioning insight and searching for new solutions (e.g., Argyris 1977; Argyris 1991; Hawkins 1991; Bonn 2001; Hwang 2003; Casey/Goldman 2010; Stacey/Mowles 2016; Sloan 2016).

Based on the process of double-loop learning, managers begin to scan the environment to identify the signs of impending change and to recognize patterns in the actions of competitors. This is an essential activity in the process of thinking strategically (Goldman/Casey 2010, p. 122; Goldman 2012, p. 28; Shoemaker/Krupp/Howland 2013, p. 3; Goldman/Scott 2016, p. 271). In this regard, having related knowledge and experiences about how media business work helps media managers to better understand the whole system in order to monitor market trends and generate value-added strategies.

The next step is questioning conventional perspectives. A talent for asking relevant questions is an important element in the strategic thinking process (Switzer 2008, p. 35). In the questioning, assumptions that usually are not doubted will be challenged, and the issues will be considered from a different point of view (Johnson 2007, p. 4). In this regard, to determine the value of a company for its stakeholders, media managers should go beyond their functions in business units and ensure the alignment of tasks with company goals (e.g. Goldman/Scott 2016, p. 272). The combination of scanning and questioning, along with the systemization of all the information, help managers to identify novel strategies and gain new insights into the business (Mintzberg 1994, p. 109; Switzer 2008, pp. 31, 36; Goldman/Casey 2010, p. 121; Casey/Goldman 2010, p. 172). For example, SOAR analyses (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results), and the Query model of strategic thinking are helpful techniques that media managers

can employ to gain a big-picture understanding of business. Chapter 4.3.2.2.1 will place further emphasis on the usefulness of different instruments in the media companies.

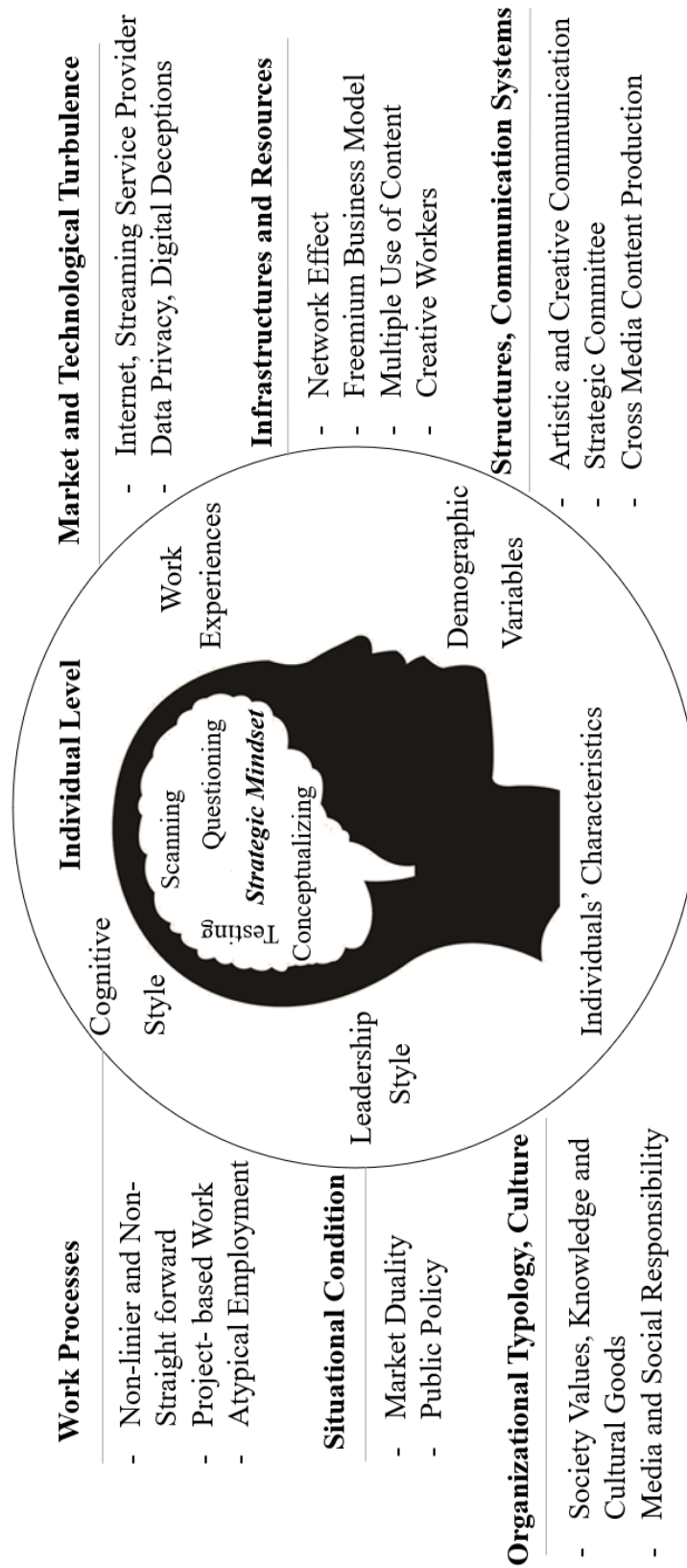


Figure 4.2: Model of learning to think strategically in media companies and relevant variables
(Based on the work of Goldman and Casey 2010 and the discussion of chapter 2.1.2)

By conceptualizing, managers seek to organize their thoughts and mental models in a new way (Goldman/Casey 2010, p. 121; Sloan 2016, p. 85). To do so, managers must challenge their existing assumptions and beliefs, as well as consider potential biases in order to be able to have a coherent vision for future direction that the business should follow (Morrison 1994, p. 2). This is what Sloan (2016, p. 85) called the 're-evaluation stage' as an underlying notion of cognitive ability. In this stage, the manager's mindset follows the changes continuously happening in the company and the market (Mintzberg/Ahlstrand/Lampel 1998, p. 143; Goldman/Scott 2016, p. 271). One real-world example of conceptualizing was the strategy of Carmike Cinemas in the 1990s. For a decade, Carmike Cinemas was one of the largest U.S. theatre chains and the key to its success was its contrarian investment strategy of opening movie theatres in small cities with populations of less than 200,000. In this case, the managers' thinking at Carmike contrasted with that of many big chains in the market at that time (Abraham 2005, p. 6). This shows that the media managers of Carmike doubted the existing way of competing by thinking entrepreneurially to find market opportunities before the other players recognized them.

In addition to conceptualizing, testing hypotheses also is required to develop coherent insights into the future (Liedtka 1998b, p. 123; Casey/Goldman 2010, p. 172). To do so, the possibility of alternative options in the context of the media business should be analysed in detail. Following only the solutions offered by other industries will not solve the unique problems facing media companies. In this regard, to learn to think more strategically, it is essential to learn how to think more accurately and realistically about the new media market (e.g. Senge et al. 1999, p. 500). Prototyping and simulations are some methods with applications in this step. Chapter 4.3.5 will discuss the value of media products and content in this regard.

To address the challenges confronting media managers (Chapter 2.1.3.2), it is necessary to adapt the model of learning to think strategically for media companies. According to this model (4.2), a vast array of factors impacts the whole process of learning to think strategically including individual differences, team structures, organizational culture, work processes, infrastructure, resources, and market turbulence (e.g. Bonn 2001; Graetz 2002; Whitlock 2003; Goldman/Casey 2010; Goldman 2012). For example, the individual's attributes such as personal habits, learning styles, and demographic variables (age, education, and experience) represent how individuals approach strategic issues and think strategically (Goldman 2012, p. 28; Six et al. 2013, p. 98). Furthermore, organizational typology and unique media business indicated that industrial characteristics play a decisive role in the process of learning to think strategically.

This model as a fundamental framework helps media managers to discover by focusing on which factors or elements, they could master and develop their competency in strategic thinking. In that light, a media manager as a person who shapes the atmosphere of innovation in a company must follow this learning loop (scanning, questioning, conceptualizing, and testing) repeatedly to practice thinking strategically and thereby create patterns, memories, and familiar neural pathways in his or her brain (Brown/Roediger/McDaniel 2014, p. 4). The linkages between each of these contributing variables (such as individual characteristics, team structures, organizational culture, work processes) with strategic thinking in media companies leave abundant room for further theoretical and empirical studies to determine how to maximize the effectiveness of learning and training. The following sections will cover this gap in the literature by considering multiple perspectives.

4.2 Investigation and Explanation of Factors Contributing to Learning Strategic Thinking

4.2.1 The Characteristics of Individuals and Demographic Variables

As stated in the literature, individual differences (such as cognitive ability, age, gender, personality traits, and educational background) affect the way that managers approach strategic issues and exploit opportunities (e.g. Shaver/Shaver 2006; Gallén 2006; Goldman/Casey 2010). Some studies have indicated individual characteristics as predictors of strategic performance (Graetz 2002, p. 458; Hough/Ogilvie 2005, p. 423; Halevy 2016, p. 21; Greck/Franzetti/Altmeppen 2017, p. 123). In fact, from the perspective of some researchers, the individual differences – especially in critical and strategic thinking along with multiple biases – affect managers’ strategizing processes (Schwenk 1988, p. 43; Ruff 2005, p. 45). For example, Mintzberg et al. (1998, pp. 154, 155) asserted that the recognition strategists’ and managers’ styles could help companies to ascertain diverse approaches to strategy formulating. In this regard, the personalities of executives describe how they extract and process information and calculate the strategic response possibilities, which in turn can have serious consequences for the company (Herrmann/Nadkarni 2014, p. 1319). By questioning the CEOs and CFOs (chief financial officer) of large German companies (including media and telecommunication companies), Six and others (2013, p. 98) concluded that the individual choices and experiences of strategic leaders affect their companies’ performance and outcomes. The impacts differ depending on the size of the company and the form of ownership (Six et al. 2013, p. 101).

An empirical study has specifically explored the relationship between the personalities of media managers and their ability to think strategically (Azarpour/Abooyee Ardakan/Gholipour 2016). The most common position among the 193 managers who participated in this study was editor-in-chief at a publishing company (located in Tehran). The aim of this research was to ascertain whether it is possible to select the right person with strategic thinking competency for a managerial position at the media companies, by assessing the candidate's personality type. To test the assumptions of this study, McCrae and Costa's theory of personality (Big Five Model Traits Test) and Pisapia's ST Questionnaire (Pisapia et al. 2011) have been applied. Statistical analysis (correlation test and Structural Equation Modeling through SPSS and LISRE Software) investigated the relationships among different dimensions of strategic thinking (system, reframing, and reflecting mindset) and personalities of managers (agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, extroversion, openness to experience). The findings revealed that media managers who are open to different experiences are more competent in thinking strategically (Azarpour/Abooyee Ardakan/Gholipour 2016). In fact, these media managers are open-minded to practicing new situations and are curious and imaginative about novel challenges. Such managers also support the promotion of fresh ideas in media companies. In contrast, the results demonstrated a negative relationship between neurotic personalities (low self-esteem, high persistence in doing perfect works, and high nervousness) and strategic thinking competency. Thus, managers who are impatient, sensitive, anxious, and stressed during work are less capable of thinking divergently and strategically (Azarpour/Abooyee Ardakan/Gholipour 2016).

Additionally, researchers found that demographic variables (such as individual age, gender, and education) affect the capability of strategic thinking and, ultimately, the strategic direction of a company (Shaver/Shaver 2006, p. 133; Gallén 2006, p. 118; Herrmann/Nadkarni 2014, p. 1334; Wootton/Horne 2010, p. 145). By analysing the strategies of CEOs in the top 50 media companies, Shaver and Shaver (2006, p. 132) confirmed that demographic characteristics of CEOs are associated with their strategic behaviour and consequently influence the performance of the company. Moreover, the study by Greck, Franzetti, and Altmeppen (2017, p. 123) on German media managers' backgrounds emphasized the impacts of academic degree and political and religious affiliations on managers' behaviour, attitudes, beliefs, and values.

Furthermore, the role of gender differences in learning strategic thinking competency must be taken into the consideration. For example, Kanter (2011) stated that females are more detail-oriented, 'zooming in' on details, whereas males are more focused on vision (the big picture), 'zooming out' to find the direction for the company. This pattern is attributed to company practices that differentiate the roles between genders based on traditional stereotypical biases. In

fact, women are often placed in roles where they will be rewarded for zooming in on the details (closed-loop thinking) while the men are encouraged to zoom out (dynamic thinking), giving them less of a chance to approach the issues from another point of view (Kanter 2011, p. 116). Therefore, considering the gender diversity, particularly in the structure of the executive board, is decisive for media companies to get a grip on diverse perspectives and develop strategic thinking competency. The McKinsey analysis in 2019, which examined more than 1,000 large companies in 15 countries, indicated that “companies with more than 30 percent women executives were more likely to outperform companies where this percentage ranged from 10 to 30” (McKinsey 2019, p. 3). Nevertheless, the studies also confirmed the small number of women and a lack of gender equality in top management positions (e.g. director-general, CEO, head of the direction, chief operating officer, editor-in-chief, news directors, broadcast manager, or similar top decision-making level) in many media companies (European Institute for Gender Equality 2017; Collins 2017; Eikhof/Marsden 2019). In European public and private media companies, women occupy only 16% of the highest-level management positions with the responsibility of making strategic decisions (European Institute for Gender Equality 2017, pp. 7, 8).

4.2.2 The Importance of Previous Knowledge and Work Experiences

Based on the assumptions of the learning models (presented in previous chapters), there is a relationship between individuals’ work experiences and previous knowledge and their ability to think strategically (Stumpf 1989; Schwenk 1988; Goldman/Casey 2010; Dragoni et al. 2011; Halvey 2016; Sloan 2016; Law/Cao 2020). In this light, researchers have posited that managers tend to have confidence in past decisions based on previous experience and knowledge, arising from the strategic mental frameworks they created earlier in confronting prior issues (Dragoni et al. 2011, pp. 837, 838). To examine the relationship among work experiences, individual differences, and executive competencies – specifically strategic thinking– Dragoni et al. (2011, p. 838) conducted empirical research examining the behaviour of 703 executive managers. The results showed a significant positive relationship among those variables (Dragoni et al. 2011, p. 853). From their point of view, “facing similar work activities multiple times increases the likelihood of repetition and mastery and, thus, potentially enabling leaders to solidify their understanding of key business factors, contingencies, and alternative courses of action” (Dragoni et al. 2011, p. 837). Consequently, reflecting on a certain prior experience and learning from that situation provides managers a mental framework as a basis for thinking strategically and

making a better strategic decision (Dragoni et al. 2011, p. 837; Sloan 2016, p. 77). This reflecting on, and referring to, previous experiences as a part of divergent and critical thinking helps managers to transfer experiences into learning. Therefore, by learning continuously from not only personal experiences but also the experiences of others at the company, managers can track and change the existing mental frames in their minds. This highlights the role of organizational learning in the process of exchanging knowledge.

In essence, experiences shape what managers know and understand, which guides them to accomplish tasks (Mintzberg et al, 1998, p. 150). In this regard, career path and professional experience as well as knowledge are important factors in the process of interpretation and strategizing (Greck/Franzetti/Altmeyen 2017, pp. 122, 123). Based on a quantitative survey exploring the educational background of German media managers, Greck, Franzetti, and Altmeyen (2017, pp. 127, 128) found that most managers have a university degree (548 of 759 respondents), but just 101 respondents (approximately 13%) received degrees in media-related studies (e.g. media management and economy or media research). As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, based on the definition of strategic thinking competency and the particular managerial challenges, in order to have a deep understanding about the media business, it is essential for media managers to acquire relevant knowledge about the uniqueness of the media market and its business complexities. Because the managers' past experiences of success may lead them to automatically recall these previous experiences (know-how) when they are evaluating and judging the chances of success with a new strategy (Schwenk 1988, p. 44). In this light, industry-specific knowledge and managerial experiences play a decisive role in formulating strategies.

Moreover, some researchers identified and classified the work experiences that contribute to improving the ability to think strategically (Goldman 2008; Casey/Goldman 2010; Goldmann 2012; Goldman/Scott/Follman 2015). These experiences can be grouped into four clusters:

- (1) Having general work experience and doing different types of tasks. In this category, freedom in decision-making plays a significant role for media managers. The discussions in Chapter 2 also emphasized giving autonomy and having flexibility in management roles. Here, learning from colleagues in similar job positions is also relevant (Goldman/Scott/Follman 2015, p. 167).
- (2) Being mentored in an early stage of career (Goldman 2008, p. 229; Casey/Goldman 2010, p. 176; Goldmann 2012, p. 33). This means that consistent feedback from a skillful mentor or supervisor is helpful for junior media managers.

- (3) Being challenged and questioned by taking on the responsibilities of different strategic projects that regularly face unexpected environmental changes. More centrally, activities in a process of strategizing and strategic planning provide thought-provoking communication with co-workers, which plays a critical role in developing strategic thinking competency. This will be discussed more thoroughly in 4.3.2.2.2. For example, experiencing the role of CEO helps media managers to interact with new people and new information that gives them a novel insight into the whole organization.
- (4) Being responsible for controlling the results and doing benchmarking. In this regard using several methods and comparative indicators to evaluate the organizational performance are necessary (Casey/Goldman 2010, pp. 176-178). Later, in Chapter 4.3.2.1.3, this study will explain more specifics about the job experiences and methods that help media managers to strengthen their competency of strategic thinking.

4.2.3 Individuals' Different Cognitive Styles

According to the discussions in Chapter 3, managers' strategic assumptions, belief systems, and cognitive ability play important roles in understanding how strategic problems are conveyed and decisions are made (Hunt et al. 1989; Stubbart 1989; Schwenk 1988; Schmidt/Hunter 1998; Gallén 2006; Dragoni et al. 2011). Initial work by Mintzberg et al. (1998, pp. 154, 155) made it clear that different managers have different cognitive styles. Even if they have the same skill sets and abilities, they differ in decision-making (Hough/Ogilvie 2005, p. 418). In an empirical study, Gallén (2006, p. 118) explained that managers' different cognitive styles can affect the way of approaching and choosing the strategy for a company. In that light, research has shown that cognitive ability may be a predictor for strategic thinking competency (Dragoni et al. 2011, p. 846; Fehr/Huck 2016, p. 715). In this regard, Hunt et al. (1989, pp. 438, 439) delineated three cognitive styles for managers: analytic, intuitive, and mixed-type.

Analytic style is characterized by a wide range of features, such as being goal-oriented, rigidly following formal plans and focusing on operational and short-run policies, breaking what is observed into separate steps and parts, and setting specific objectives (Hunt et al. 1989, p. 438). In fact, such analytical managers tend to have centralized control (Gallén 2006, p. 120) by structuring strategic plans with the focus on the data analysis of current business (Heracleous 1998, p. 482). They use a defensive strategy rather than preparing the company to take the swift actions needed in the competitive digitalized marketplace. The arguments of Chapter 3.4 and

Fig.3.8 also indicate that this isolated way of gaining information along with limited strategic options contrasts with strategic thinking. However, this analytic style will help managers to approach a system (close loop thinking) in detail with considering the interrelationships between various parts of the system (zoom in), there is a need for a different cognitive style to think systematically and divergently about the media business.

Intuitive style is defined as being flexible and proactive, open to the environment, adaptive and future-oriented, allowing for frequent changes, keeping the ‘big picture’ in mind, and considering the business as an integrated whole (Hunt et al. 1989, pp. 443, 444). Intuitive cognitive style or ‘strategic intuition’ can be bolstered by a higher level of experience (Sinclair 2011, p. 127). By taking a cause-and-effect perspective (association, combination, and abstraction), an intuitive manager follows a system and a divergent thinking process to conceive and implement viable strategies (e.g. Gallén 2006, p. 120; Van de Kamp/Admiraal/Rijlaarsdam 2016, pp. 545, 546). Therefore, this kind of cognitive style shows many similarities with the component of dynamic thinking (zoom out) in strategic thinking.

Mixed-type is a combination of the two previous cognitive styles. This type of individual has alternating tendencies toward analytic and intuitive styles at different times (Hunt et al. 1989, p. 439). Rosenberg, Firstenberg, and Seager (2017, pp. 83, 89) stated that in the media or entertainment industry, leaders who create extraordinary outcomes must use both rational and intuitive approaches to deal with unstructured issues where the absence of data hampers rapid strategizing (think strategically). In this regard, continuously adjusting a company’s business model and value chain to respond to changes quickly is a challenge for media managers (based on Table 2.2). Moreover, harmonizing the tasks of creative workers (attracting, hiring, motivating, handling, and preserving) and managing the possible conflicts arising with the utilization of new technologies increase the need for both rational and intuitive approaches for media managers. To overcome these challenges, the competency of strategic thinking, along with a mixed type of cognitive style, becomes more valuable in a crisis. Since the different leadership styles also influence strategic thinking development, the next section will place greater emphasis on this matter.

4.2.4 The Specific Leadership Style

Studies revealed that effective leadership as a powerful core competency can facilitate and promote the performances of business in times of new challenges (Switzer 2008). ‘Leadership’ refers to a social influence process in which leaders shape a work environment and organizational culture in a way that persuades subordinates to make the changes needed to advance towards achieving common targets (Yaghoubipoor/Tee/Musa Ahmed 2013; Joo/Nimon 2014). Therefore, the role of leadership is about change, and change is about thinking differently. In that light, leaders challenge organizational norms and set a new direction for the company (e.g. Whitlock 2003; Joo/Nimon 2014).

Bear in mind that because leaders are not similar in skills and styles (e.g. Jones/O’Leonard/Bersin 2012), it is necessary to determine which leadership behaviour fits the employee's organizational maturity. Current leadership theories show that leadership behaviour can be classified into different types. For instance, some researchers categorize leadership behaviour into three major styles: transactional leadership, transformational leadership, and non-leadership (or *laissez-faire* leadership) (Bass/Riggio 2006; Joe/Nimon 2014; Deslandes 2016; Beer/Finnström/Schrader 2016). According to the literature review, the most relevant media management studies concentrated on these leadership categories (e.g. Tsourvakas/Zotos/Dekoulou 2007; Schüller 2015; Collins 2017; Holzmann/Mazzini 2020).

In the transactional leadership style, leaders use and follow organizational bureaucracy, policy, rules, standards, and authority to keep everything under control. This style of leadership monitors the actions and performance of followers in order to give them particular orders or rewards. If there are mistakes or errors, the leader corrects them quickly (Bass/Riggio 2006; Tsourvakas/Zotos/Dekoulou 2007; Joe/Nimon 2014; Deslandes 2016). Leaders with transformational style, in contrast, are more involved with their followers. In essence, transformational leaders encourage and challenge subordinates’ old ways of thinking with novel ideas in order to reframe problems, see situations from different perspectives, and formulate effective questions to develop innovative strategies. By entrusting and mentoring, transformational leaders seek to provide a trusting environment in which followers can improve their strengths and potentials (Bass/Riggio 2006; Tsourvakas/Zotos/Dekoulou 2007; Yaghoubipoor/Tee/Musa Ahmed 2013; Joe/Nimon 2014; Deslandes 2016). Transformational leadership is also consistent with ethical and authentic leadership (Baron 2016, p. 297). Non-leadership, or *laissez-faire* leadership, refers to an absence of leadership that the leader acts very passively, does not hold an open conversation about the issues, and fails to make a strategic decision (Bass/Riggio 2006;

Beer/Finnström/Schrader 2016). In companies with laissez-faire leadership, the competency of strategic thinking has no chance to grow. This will be discussed in Chapter 4.4.

As discussed previously, the ability of strategic thinking refers to a leadership and management capability in which managers can think and lead strategically. In general, the literature review confirmed a positive relationship between strategic thinking skills and transformational leadership styles of the manager (Bonn 2001; Geratz 2002; Wootton/Horne 2010; Jones, O'Leonard/Bersin 2012; Taheri/Pourkiani/Aflaton 2014; Dragoni et al. 2014). According to Graetz (2002), having strong interpersonal skills, a high level of commitment, communication, and enthusiasm; the ability to inspire and lead followers; and skill in building collaborative relationships and networks (reflected in transformational leadership) are crucial for leaders to think strategically (Graetz 2002, p. 460). Jones, O'Leonard, and Bersin (2012, p. 12) also claimed that transformational leaders, who analyse and evaluate the current situation of the company critically and think forward to create new ideas, have stronger tendencies toward novelty and strategic thinking.

The fundamental question that appears here is: what about media managers' leadership styles? As discussed previously in Chapter 2.1, the common relationship between leaders in media companies (such as editors-in-chief, producers, and CEOs of diverse TV stations) and their subordinates (creative workers) do not adhere to the same role as in other industries. Due to specific conditions of work experience, along with flexibility in the structure of companies (project-based work), as well as the diversity in managerial power in media companies, a better understanding of the leadership styles and specific management characteristics in the context of the media industry is needed (Dal Zotto 2005, p. 58; Deslandes 2016, p. 313). Although various studies emphasize the necessity of leadership in the field of organizational behaviour and business administration, only a handful has addressed leadership as an important factor in the media sector (Shaver/Politis 2006, p. 59; Mierzejewska 2011, p. 21; Tsourvakas/Zotos/Dekoulou 2007, p. 83; Deslandes 2016, p. 313). For example, Tsourvakas, Zotos, and Dekoulou (2007, p. 83) interviewed Greek media leaders and CEOs and concluded that the media managers apply a combination of transformational and transactional leadership in order to forecast possible solutions in a dynamic environment, provide fair rewards based on teamwork, and simultaneously ensure high-profit production. According to specific wide-ranging activities in the media business (for example, working in TV or newspaper), and the different structures of private and public media companies, the leadership styles should be variable from task-oriented to relationship-oriented (Tsourvakas/Zotos/Dekoulou 2007, p. 83). However, Schüller (2015, p. 288) explained that transformational leadership in media companies –where

executives act as role models for creative workers— has a greater impact on the initiation and implementation of change than transactional leadership.

In successful leadership development, all relevant leadership styles should be taken into consideration, although this is rarely the case in practice (Rowold/Beinicke/Bipp 2019, p. 136). Therefore, a multilevel procedure for leadership development is recommended, which starts with the diagnosis of the leadership style and the requirements needed in the training of managers based specifically on the context of the company (Rowold/Beinicke/Bipp 2019, p. 142). Moreover, based on the debates in Chapter 2.1, due to the artistic freedom of creative workers and the unenforceable structure of media companies, the relationship between subordinates and managers (for example, actors and directors) is friendly rather than a hierarchical command situation (Schirmer 2012, p. 128). Therefore, a new form of leading people and making decisions—such as strategic leadership— (e.g. Zabriskie/Huellmantel 1991; Pisapia 2009; Schoemaker/Krupp/Howland 2013) has attracted the attention of researchers. A strategic leader creates a culture of independent working, risk-taking, proactiveness, and innovativeness in which continuous learning is possible. Researchers argued that such leaders are more adaptable, creative, and innovative in ambiguity-filled environments such as the media industry (e.g. Küng 2007a; Küng 2007b).

In an empirical study of German firms, including media companies, Six et al. (2013, pp. 88, 93, 97) confirmed that the companies' performance and outcomes (based on measuring return on assets and sales growth) depends rather on the "actions of strategic leaders", especially CEOs. Nevertheless, it is necessary to find the answer to the question of which skills and abilities are the prerequisites for strategic leadership actions in media companies. According to researchers, such actions comprise the following: encouraging discussion and welcoming different points of view, having a big picture and simultaneously zooming in on the details to extract patterns and conflicting information while synthesizing all inputs, monitoring efficiently and acting ethically with involved stakeholders to build trust and support, and inspiring a culture of shared learning and creating a sustainable learning environment (Schoemaker/Krupp/Howland 2013; Pisapia 2009; Zabriskie/Huellmantel 1991).

For the media industry, Küng (2007a, p. 3) also proposed some recommendations for strategic leaders. She emphasized that the media leader as a chief strategist must be aware of changes and update their assumptions by continuously envisioning, questioning the norms, and learning. Thus, the challenge facing the strategic leaders of media companies is simultaneously harmonizing and handling internal and external ecosystems (Küng 2007a, p. 5; Küng 2007b, p. 33). This has been also discussed in Chapter 2.1.4.2. Küng (2007a, p. 5) went on the name some

successful strategic leaders who have been able to combine these abilities in their companies, including Bob Eggington, Greg Dyke (BBC news); John Lasseter, and Ed Catmull (Pixar); and Michael Eisner, Frank Wells and Jeffrey Katzenberg (Disney). For example, Greg Dyke was the Director-General of BBC from 2000 to 2004; tried to make BBC the most innovative company in the world (Dwyer 2016, p. 354). For everyday creativity and thinking out of the box, he attempted to create an open culture in the organization. To do so, he invested a great deal in advancing leadership programs and collaborating with “Ashridge Business School” to train BBC producers in different skills, such as strategic thinking, by having the opportunity to give feedback and coach others (Dwyer 2016, p. 355). However, Küng (2007a, p. 6) further stated, “not many have got what it takes to excel in leadership in the media industry. It’s, therefore, no surprise that those who succeed become legends in their own time”.

4.2.5 The Role of Learning Styles

Learning styles reflect how individuals prefer to receive, process, represent and manage information. The importance of evaluating individuals’ learning styles inspired many researchers in the field of education to study the potential ways to improve instructional techniques (Rogowsky/Calhoun/Tallal 2015, p. 65). According to the previous learning models (presented in Chapter 4.1), different individual characteristics have an impact on the process of learning to think strategically. Therefore, in developing strategic thinking competency, it is necessary to figure out which learning styles are most suitable for media managers (Goldman 2012, p. 28; Six et al. 2013, p. 98; Sloan 2016, p. 87; Low/Coa 2020, p. 26). Various models of learning styles exist in the literature of management and educational studies. In 1984, Kolb (p. 42) presented one of the most popular models in learning styles, which consist of four individual learning types (see Figure 4.3): Concrete Experience (feeling), Reflective Observation (watching), Abstract Conceptualization (thinking), and Active Experimentation (doing).

According to this model, each area has corresponding learning modes: Diverging, Assimilating, Accommodating, and Converging, which can be summarized as follows. Diverging (feeling and watching- CE/RO): This group of individuals is able to look at things from different perspectives and viewpoints. They desire to watch rather than do. Individuals with diverging style prefer to work in groups. Assimilating (watching and thinking- AC/RO): These prefer reading and having time to think things through. Converging (doing and thinking- AC/AE): People with a converging learning style are best at finding practical uses for ideas and theories and solving

problems. Accommodating (doing and feeling- CE/AE): They are attracted to new challenges, experiences, and executing plans. They also try different ways of achieving objectives (Kolb 1984, p. 42; Kolb 2015, p. 51).

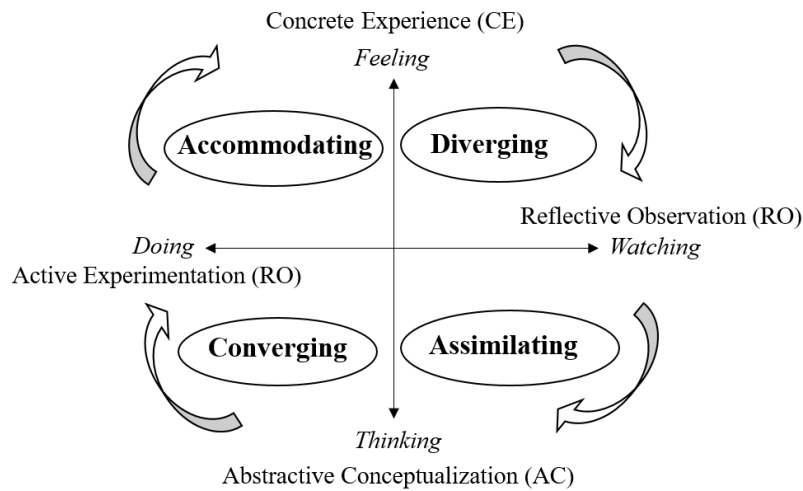


Figure 4.3: Kolb learning style and experimental cycle (Kolb 1984, p. 42; Kolb 2015, p. 51)

Based on discussions in Chapters 3 and 4, Kolb (2015) expressed that experimental learning happens through completely understanding and evaluating the information (Concrete Experience), which means that learning arises from sorting previous knowledge and experiences (Reflective Observation) to find the new implications for actions (Abstract Conceptualization) as a basis for activating new experiences (Active Experimentation) that are deeper and broader (Kolb 2015, p. 51). This cycle of learning (see Figure 4.3) must be continued to explore experience, reflect, think, and act repeatedly. Based on previous discussions and the definition of strategic thinking, this is exactly what happens in the process of reflecting and conceptualizing (see the model of learning to think strategically in Chapter 4.1.2). Therefore, it can be concluded that the concept of strategic thinking (scanning, questioning, conceptualizing, testing) also follows the assumptions of Kolb's model. However, no research empirically explores the relationship between these variables.

Furthermore, previous studies argued that people learn best when information is presented in a person's ideal learning style (Dekker et al. 2012, p. 3). However, the recent empirical research by Rogowsky, Calhoun, and Tallal (2015, p. 76) determined that there is no statistically significant relationship between a learning style preference and instructional method. This means that even if people consider themselves to be visual learners, that does not mean they learn or per-

form any better when they read the materials compared to hearing the materials (Brown, Roediger/McDaniel 2014, p. 4). The study of Moser and Zumbach (2018, p. 155) also supports the idea that learning styles show no impact on knowledge gain, cognitive performance (mental effort), or better learning outputs. This fact has also been supported by Cuevas, and Dawson (2018, p. 53), who posited that retaining information is not associated with learning styles. Therefore, discovering the learning style of managers could not help companies to find an effective methods or materials to apply in learning and training of strategic thinking competency (e.g. Cuevas/Dawson 2018, p. 40). In this regard, the cognitive theory of multimedia learning – which will be elaborated on in detail later in Chapter 4.3.5 – shares a more decisive argument related to developing strategic thinking competency.

4.2.6 The Role of Situational Conditions, Systems, Work Processes, Culture and Structure of Media Companies

The literature reviews in Chapter 4.1.1 highlighted the significant role of situational conditions (e.g. uncertainty, time pressure, and stress rising from threatening circumstances) and individual characteristics in shaping a decision-maker's thinking (Graetz 2002, p. 458; Wootton/Horne 2010, p. 14; Halevy 2016, p. 21; Sloan 2016, p. 87). According to Wootton and Horne (2010, p. 14), the process of decision-making and thinking strategically can be overwhelmed by several kinds of feelings such as stress, concern, and anxiety. Evidently, under highly uncertain conditions and pressures, managers' mindsets, behaviours, and leadership styles will be different, and media companies are not exempt from the pressure of daily changes and the stress of making quick strategic decisions (e.g. launching breaking news in newsrooms).

Similarly, it has been made clear that the organizational culture, including shared values, norms, rituals, and beliefs, influences firms' top management's attitude and approach toward risk-taking, strategic thinking, and, consequently, companies' performance (Bonn 2001; Graetz 2002; Allio 2006; Goldman/Casey 2010; Moon B.J. 2013; Sloan 2016; Law/Cao 2020). This means the culture of a company affects the cognitive framework of individuals and the way they perceive their company's issues in a competitive environment (Sloan 2016, p. 199). Therefore, a successful organization's culture would be one in which an open space exists for launching a new vision and conveying a fruitful change along with learning and practicing strategic thinking competency (Whitlock 2003, p. 16). Such an open space can exist, for example, in the strategic committee (discussed in Chapter 3.5.1.2) where several managers are integrated into the process

of strategizing. Open space also can be achieved in workshops and developing programs where the few rules and various dialogue groups enable the spontaneous generation of ideas (Bergmann/Daub 2007, pp. 172, 173). In that light, it is necessary to build strong relationships among all those managers and to create a culture of trust in companies with a powerful organizational design (Hitt/Duane 2002, p. 6). The result of the study by Greck, Franzetti, and Altmeppen (2017, pp. 126, 127) about media managers in Germany highlighted the influence of autonomy in experiencing different job positions and motivation and involvement in the process of organizing, strategizing, and decision-making in media companies.

Similarly, Moon B.J. (2013) proposed a hypothetical model to demonstrate the connection between the firm's internal variables (organizational culture, organizational structure, resources, or competencies) and external variables (market and technological turbulence) with strategic thinking (at the organizational level). This study concluded that it is essential to consider all these variables to provide a culture that fosters learning to think strategically. In this regard, the work processes and the system must be designed carefully to encourage managers to participate in the process of learning to think strategically (Graetz 2002, p. 458). Thus, it is necessary to monitor the context where strategic thinking can take place and consider the specific characteristics of media companies' structure, which are mostly project-based (e.g. Bonn 2001, p. 66, Sloan 2016, p. 197).

As discussed in Chapter 3.5.1.2, all employees need to know the strategies of the company to remain focused on achieving the goals and to be able to integrate these strategies into their jobs and plans. Therefore, a clear organizational workflow, well-defined communication system, development programs, job performance evaluation, and reward system play significant roles in motivating strategic thinking learning in the company (e.g. Haines 2005; Goldman/Cacey 2010; Kabacoff 2014). Moreover, the degree of centralization of decision-making is different in large media companies (Picard 2011, p. 214). Nowadays, there is a strong tendency toward decentralized decision-making, due to pressure from business competition among media companies that aim to be ever entrepreneurial and innovative (Albarran/Moellinger 2017, p. 26). For example, on 25 March 2005, The Walt Disney Company announced a rearrangement of the company's Corporate Strategic Planning Division with the aim of modernizing the structure and aligning the workflows with the company's growth priorities, such as implementing new technologies and expanding international business (The Walt Disney Company, 2005). In that light, informality, and decentralization play a decisive role in organizational decision-making structure and cross-unit integration (Moon B.J. 2013, p. 1703). An additional example is the

model of Bertelsmann’s groups and divisions and structure of the executive board (see Figure 4.4). This model can be considered as a best practice for media companies.

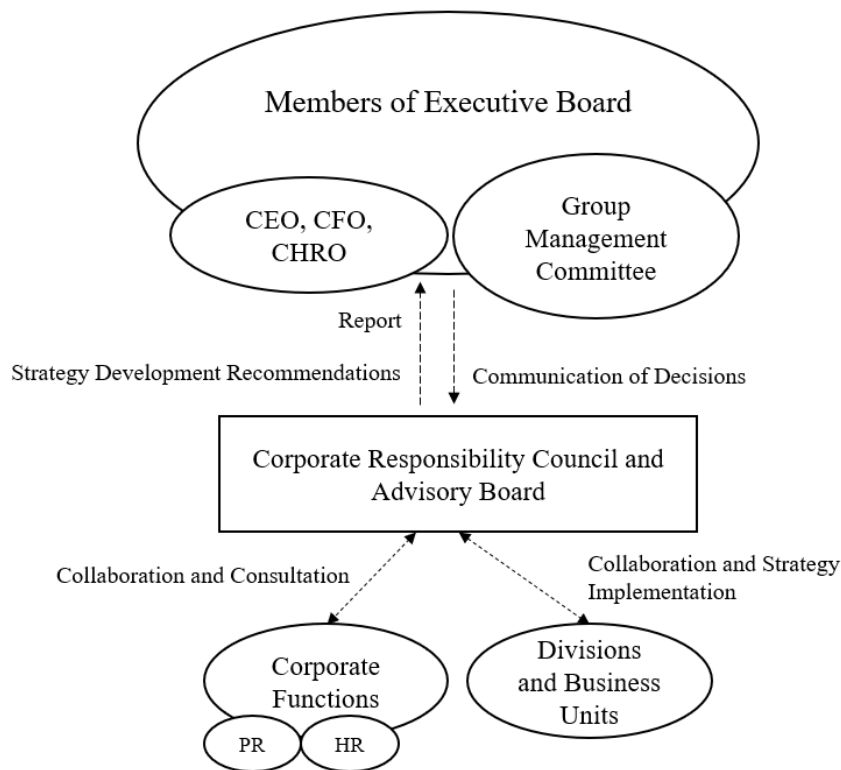


Figure 4.4: The structure of Bertelsmann executive board (Bertelsmann 2019)

In this model, the Corporate Responsibility Council and Advisory Board in the middle of the company’s structure, where all representatives of the divisions meet frequently, aims to advance the decision-making process of the executive board and encourage creative and strategic thinking competency. Here the information and reports from different functional sections (e.g. human resources, finance, and public relations) will be exchanged to improve strategy formulations and development (Bertelsmann 2019). The Group Management Committee works as an Incubator Group (explained in Chapter 3.5.1.2), where the senior executive advisors come together and communicate the decisions. Thus, as discussed before, to think strategically, media managers at different levels of big companies take on diverse roles including being a leader, director, operations manager, CEO (Chief Executive Officer), CFO (Chief Financial Officer), CHRO (Chief Human Resources Officer), negotiator, trainer, public relations and even entrepreneur (Artero/Manfredi 2016; Hollifield et al. 2016). In this regard, the CEO’s attention and emphasis on strategic thinking play an essential role in the process of strategy formulation and development (Moon B.J. 2013, p. 1703). However, in this structure, the role of other employees

(creative workers) in the process of strategic thinking and making decisions is not clear. Regarding the discussions in Chapter 2, based on the specific characteristics of the media market and creative workers, considering the employees' point of view and giving them a safe space to speak up plays a decisive role in generating a culture that encourages strategic thinking competency. In TV companies, for example, the creative professionals and managers can collaborate with different projects of cross-media content production in integrating the unique ideas and supporting the process of strategic thinking (Armutat 2007, p. 11; Schüller 2015, p. 181).

In small and medium-sized companies, especially media start-ups, it is more feasible for everyone to participate in this process (Petry 2019, p. 93). Consequently, the creative workers will strengthen the strategy implementation and support the product and service that they were engaged in (Switzer 2008, p. 36). For example, under a 'think tank' concept, ProSiebenSat.1 (a German media company) allows employees to present creative ideas that can be implemented in the business models (Schüller 2015, p. 288). Therefore, the strategic senior managers should modify the company's reward system and carefully watch for those individuals (from different business units) who are capable of thinking strategically and ought to encourage a culture in which the ability to generate and develop new strategies is appreciated (e.g. Zabriskie/Huellmantel 1991; Hitt/Duane 2002, Goldman 2008; Goldman 2012; Felin 2016). Moreover, HR managers could enhance the competency of strategic thinking with powerful strategic human resource management and effective leader, management development, and training programs that have a fundamental influence on the company's assets and position (Armutat 2018, p. 112). This is the topic of the next Chapter.

4.3 Overview of Techniques, Tools, and Practices in Developing Strategic Thinking in Media Companies

4.3.1 Training Managers' Mental Models to Think Strategically

Researchers suggested various techniques, experiences, and training practices that may directly or indirectly allow managers to change their mental models and cultivate the strategic thinking competency (Easterby-Smith/Davies 1983; Zabriskie/Huellmantel 1991; Loehle 1996; Senge et al. 1999; O'Shannassy 2003; Watkins 2007; Casey/Goldman 2010; Dragoni et al. 2011; Goldman 2012; Kabacoff 2014; Benito-Ostolaza/Sanchis-Llopis 2014; Goldman/Scott/Follman 2015). In this point of view, training the minds of managers means reforming habitual behaviour and developing an open-minded performance to change the managers' scopes (Dewey 1997, pp. 28, 45). Watkins (2007) proposed some approaches that should be considered in improving strategic thinking competency, such as simulations and cognitive reshaping or restructuring. Moreover, by having discussions with more than 400 executives who attended 10 focused educational seminars between 2007 and 2009 in the U.S., Goldman (2012, p. 33) identified some leadership practices (such as being mentored and having international experience) that can foster strategic thinking competency in managers. Later, by interviewing the human resources development executives, Goldman, Scott, and Follman (2015) categorized leadership and management programs in developing strategic thinking into two different types: formal organizational development training and self-coaching developmental activities. Nevertheless, researchers have directed only limited focus toward the academic content of leadership and management programs regarding the development of strategic thinking (Goldman/Scott/Follman 2015, pp. 158, 164).

Researchers claimed that there is limited focus on management and leadership development in terms of decision-making, which also reflects a gap in a common agreement on definitions and approaches (Vito 2018, p. 253). The need for superior management and leadership development and training has also been emphasized in the media and creative industries, especially public media (Harbert 2019, p. 12). The terms 'managerial training' and 'leadership training' (emphasize on the leadership task of leading followers) are often used interchangeably (Lacerenza et al. 2017, p. 1687). Nevertheless, improving strategic thinking is not only the topic of one type of training program.

The question that can arise in this section is how to systemize the development of strategic thinking competency and change the mental models of media managers. In this regard, Bonn (2005, p. 339) indicated that to study and analyse strategic thinking competency, it is necessary

to consider multilevel approaches. Based on the results of previous studies and the discussions about related factors, all recommended practices and strategies -that can be used in mastering and learning strategic thinking competency- can be classified into two general levels: ‘individual’ and ‘Organizational’ practices (Pellegrino/Carbo 2001, p. 379; Bonn 2001, p. 63; Hwang 2003, pp. 93, 94; Goldman/Scott/Follman 2015, pp. 158, 164). Figure 4.5 draws a schematic view of different practices and training methods based on previous studies.

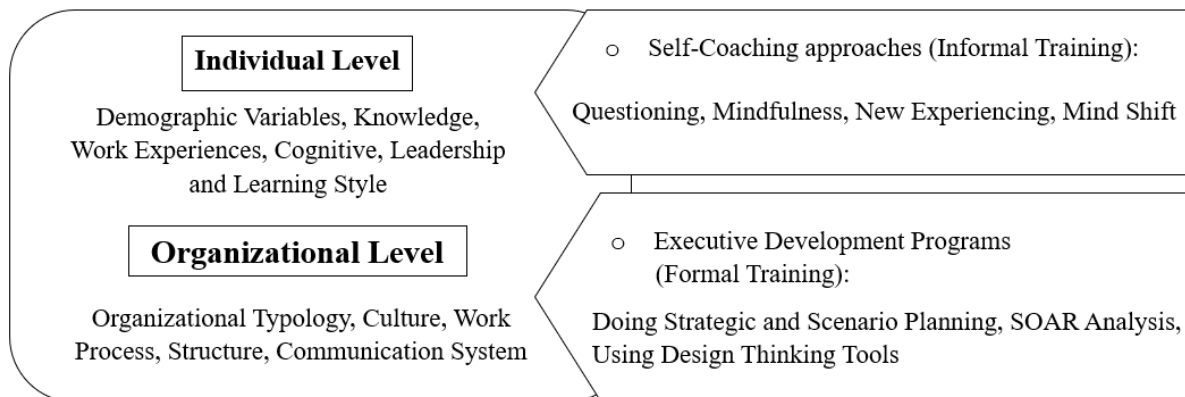


Figure 4.5: Developing strategic thinking at different levels of media companies (Based on the Work of Pellegrino/Carbo 2001; Bonn 2001; Hwang 2003; Goldman/Scott/Follman 2015)

To provide detailed explanations about each approach and level, the perspective of researchers from diverse disciplines (e.g. psychology and neuroscience) has been taken into consideration. As discussed in Chapter 3, the focus of this study is on the group of people in management positions, and all forms of managerial or supervisory development programs, training, and workshops that are designed to improve an individual’s competency in strategic thinking. The targets of companies’ management development programs are the members of top management or boards of executives, or the supervisor or manager of a group of employees. Moreover, the individuals who have the potential to assume management responsibility in the future (including informal and formal authority positions) can also be engaged in these training programs (e.g. Armutat 2007, pp. 16, 17; Lacerenza et al., 2017, p. 1687). Selection depends on the companies’ context and the manager’s preferences to interpret and develop the decision-making framework (Hwang 2003, p. 99; Wright/Paroutis/Blettner 2013, p. 95).

In the following, self-coaching approaches or informal practices (questioning, mindfulness, new experiencing, mind-shift) in the context of strategic making will be elaborated. Self-regulated learning methods help managers to handle the relevant dispositional components and behaviours (see Figure 3.8) to optimize their way of strategic thinking. In this regard, the role of

traditional media products and content such as books and films become significant. This will be the topic of Chapter 4.3.4. The role of organizational practices (formal training such as doing strategic and scenario planning, SOAR analysis, and using design thinking tools) in developing strategic thinking will be discussed in Chapter 4.3.2.2.

4.3.2 Practices for Thinking Strategically in Media Companies

4.3.2.1 Individual Approach

4.3.2.1.1 Questioning Based on Query Theory

The questioning was highlighted in Chapter 4.1 as a fundamental step in the process of learning to think strategically (Argyris 1977; Argyris 1991; Hawkins 1991; Bonn 2001; Hwang 2003; Johnson 2007; Switzer 2008; French 2009; Goldman/Casey 2010; Casey/Goldman 2010; Goldman 2012; Schoemaker/Krupp/Howland 2013; Stacey/Mowles 2016; Sloan 2016). According to previous arguments, by asking probing questions and shaking up underlying beliefs and assumptions, new neural pathways and connections will be created that ultimately facilitate the delivery of superior strategies (Hwang 2003, p. 97; French 2009, p. 218; Brown/Roediger/McDaniel 2014, p. 4). To better understand the process of questioning and to provide an organized framework, Halevy (2016, p. 10) introduced the Query Model of Strategic Thinking (QUEST). This model (Figure 4.6) has its roots in the ‘query theory’ (e.g. Weber et al. 2007; Hardisty/Johnson/Weber 2009), in which decision-makers primarily question their memory with the aim of retrieving and encoding the initiative subset of knowledge related to the decision (Weber et al. 2007, p. 517; Hardisty/Johnson/Weber 2009, p. 87).

According to QUEST, managers think about ‘strategic phenomena’ by examining and answering the three following questions: Who are the players in the global market? Which kind of options and adequate solutions (core competencies) exists to compete? How do choices affect the outcomes? (Halevy 2016, p. 10). From Halevy’s point of view (2016, p. 11), by answering these three main questions and thinking more concretely, managers will become motivated to change the market game. However, before generating the fixations and making strategic choices, there is a need to keep eye on one’s self while simultaneously paying attention to other businesses in order to win the whole picture of the game and competitors’ strengths (Halevy 2016, pp. 13, 14). To combat the tendency of jumping to conclusions and to avoid the trap of prejudgment, managers should be curious about their own perspectives and others in order to discover probable competitors’ strategies (e.g. Gino 2018).

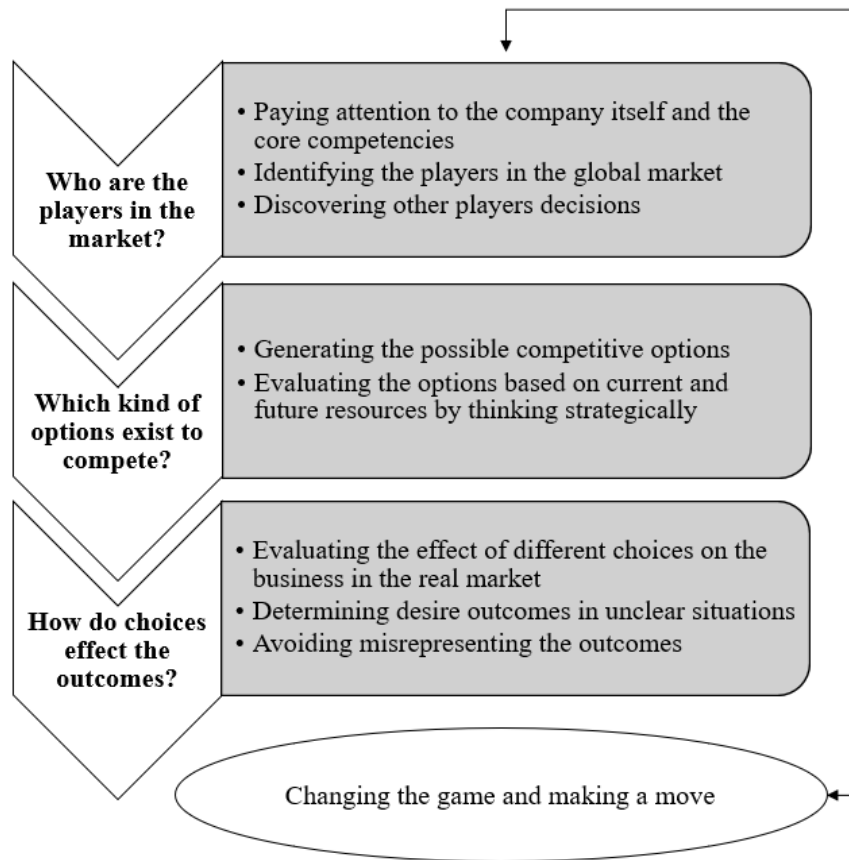


Figure 4.6: The Query Model of Strategic Thinking (based on the work of Halvey 2016, p. 10)

In media companies, by focusing simply on positive sales numbers, profit, and annual revenue reporting, managers will underestimate serious situational restrictions (e.g. Halevy 2016, p. 14). As discussed previously, for example, it is not easy to ascertain the real amount of generated revenue for a live radio event (for example measuring the real volume of audience reach). Therefore, considering strategic interactions, evaluating, modeling, and prioritizing different options, as well as determining the outcomes of each option, led managers to think and choose strategically. There are many decision-making tools and analytical problem-solving methods that can be employed to systematically identify a ‘right’ answer, such as a decision tree, root-cause analysis, or fishbone diagram. These techniques work as a metaphor in terms of showing and reflecting the way of interpreting and reasoning. In fact, such tools inspire strategists to find new ideas and consider problems from different perspectives (e.g. Wootton/Horne 2010). However, the results generated by applying these kinds of techniques mostly focus on a simple linear narrative (reductionist view) rather than counting on interacting contributions (e.g. responsibility of stockholders or associated risks) unfolding in a whole system (Peerally et al. 2017, pp. 417, 419). Liedtka and Ogilvie (2011, p. 8) recognized that most managers apply

straightforward linear procedures to solve problems by delineating a problem, discovering several alternatives and solutions, analysing each of them, and picking the right one. Nevertheless, in addition to linear and analytical thinking, creative problem-solving methods and double-loop learning are necessary to make strategic decisions and think strategically. In this point of view, managers must look for a ‘useful’ answer rather than the ‘right’ answer or best solution (Mintzberg 1994, p. 114; Simester 2016, p. 95). This has also been emphasized in Sloan’s (2016, p. 87) model of learning to think strategically, in which curiosity and hope are the main motivators at the experience stage.

Therefore, the role of managers in a media company is to find useful questions and valuable solutions rather than to search for the right strategic response (Morrison 1994, p. 2). For example, Hess et al. (2016) developed a set of strategic questions that could guide media managers more systematically in addressing the challenges of digital transformation. To do so, they surveyed the situation of three German media companies (*ProSiebenSat.1 Media SE*, *Mittelbayerische Verlag AG* and *Ravensburger AG*) and interviewed the CEOs, top managements, and industry experts (Hess et al. 2016, p. 138). Their study aimed to determine which kinds of options exist for media companies to compete with rivals in terms of digital transformation. In this point of view, to generate and evaluate possible digital strategies, the media managers must ask important questions based on the digital maturity of their company. Figure 4.7 summarizes some of these questions according to the work of Hess et al. (2016). For example, the role of information technology (IT) in supporting the core functions of media companies must be investigated. Besides, the options of choosing internal or external financial resources or human competencies through a partnership or joint venture must be considered in order to find useful options for competing.

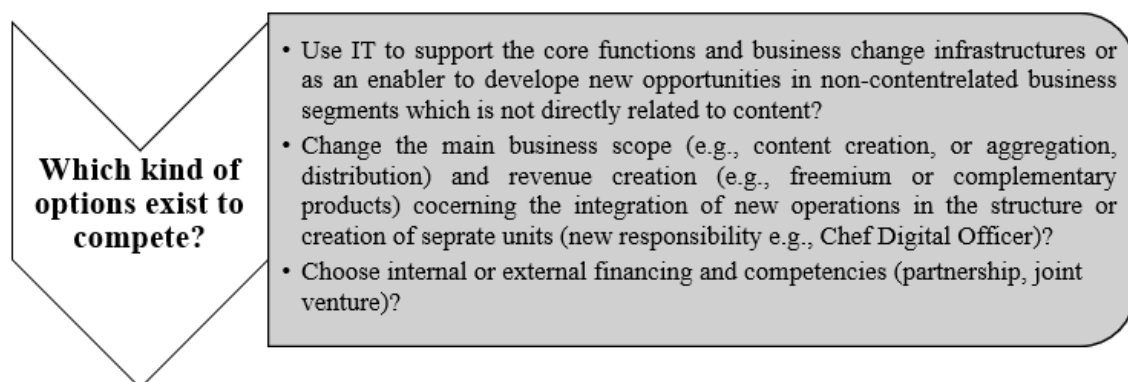


Figure 4.7: Digital transformation questions (based on the QUEST model and Work of Hess and others 2016)

It should be emphasized that in the QUEST model, strategic choices can be reassessed and reviewed in the process of strategic and system thinking by asking the same questions again and taking steps back to modify the game (Halevy 2016, p. 11). This loop as a roadmap, in general, can help managers and decision-makers, especially in the traditional media market, to track the expected goals and find the successful direction for companies in the future. To summarize this section, it should be noted that, based on this iterative reasoning process, strategic thinking can be dependent not only on considering what others know and are able to do (Halvey 2016, p. 5) but also on knowing own abilities and specific characteristics (e.g. Covington 1985). The next chapter will pay more attention to this point.

4.3.2.1.2 Mindfulness Practices

A research paper written by psychologists Killingsworth and Gilbert in 2010 shows during almost 47% of waking hours, people are thinking about something other than what they are doing (Harvard Education 2010). This wandering mind is the opposite of ‘mindfulness’, which aims to increase self-awareness. In fact, mindfulness and self-awareness let managers be aware of beliefs, thoughts, values, and emotions to continuously track the brain’s default patterns, judgments, biases, and reactions to current information, experience, and events (Good et al. 2016; Talbot-Zorn/Edgette 2016; Baron 2016; Hougaard/Carter/Afton 2018). Self-report questionnaires and mindfulness practices help managers to carefully observe what is happening at the time in the mind to efficiently control their attentions (Brown/Ryan 2003, pp. 823-824; Good et al. 2016, pp. 117-119; Baron 2016, pp. 300, 303).

For example, The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) contains statements about the general tendency to stay focused and aware of present-moment experiences. Some of the statements here are: “I find myself listening to someone with one ear, doing something else at the same time.”, or “I rush through activities without being really attentive to them” (Brown/Ryan 2003, p. 826). Mindfulness is significant for managers in unblocking them from unconscious judgments, automatic reactions, and unhealthy behavior patterns (such as neuroticism, Anxiety, angry hostility). In fact, mindfulness practices benefit working memory capacity and fluid intelligence by generating novel perspectives (Good et al. 2016, pp. 119, 120). Moreover, mindfulness plays a significant role in fulfilling the basic individual needs for autonomy (freely chosen activity, high self-esteem, and self-worth) which also are related to well-being enhancement (Brown/Ryan 2003, pp. 823, 824).

Zenger and Folkman (2018) indicated that managers with a non-leadership style are mostly oblivious to their weaknesses, which exhibits a particular lack of strategic thinking competency. These authors, who work on management development programs, emphasized self-awareness and self-monitoring as a way to learn more about thoughts and emotions and to identify weaknesses. The study conducted by Hougaard, Carter, and Afton (2018) has presented the same results. They revealed that managers at lower levels in company hierarchies tend to have lower self-awareness (Hougaard/Carter/Afton 2018, p. 3). They consider self-awareness and self-monitoring to be important aspects of leadership that cannot be acquired through an MBA education alone. In that light, Hwang (2003, p. 97) noticed that story and journal writing as a form of self-expression and self-reflection facilitate the process of tracing thoughts and making tacit knowledge more explicit. In fact, it is important in the process of learning to give meaning to materials by expressing them in one's own words (Brown/Roediger/McDaniel 2014, p. 5).

For example, Hubert Burda, the owner of a famous German media group (Hubert Burda Media) sought to identify the changes in the media industry, from traditional media to online platforms and social networks, by writing diaries and telling his story. *Notizen zur Digitalen Revolution 1990-2015* (2014) and *Landwege Seewege* (2017) are two books that he wrote in recent years to reflect his mindset. This way of narrative thinking allows media managers to observe their insights and thereby ease the creation of meaning from the present and of finding orientation to be able to envision the future (Schinko-Fischli 2019, p. 107). In business, managers construct the reality of their company through special stories that they share about themselves via a very specific communication and narrative style (e.g. Bergmann/Daub 2007, p. 5). In this regard, reading case studies, industry-specific publications, and histories of management decision-making in the media business could be valuable for the lessons to be learned from them. Nevertheless, gaining experiences through formal training programs at the organizational level is also necessary for media managers to empower their strategic thinking competency. Chapter 4.3.6.2 will open new insights about storytelling and its role in the prospect of strategic thinking competency development in media companies.

Studies have also explained that mindfulness can be prompted in different ways (Marques, 2017, p. 187; Hougaard/Carter/Afton 2018, p. 4). For example, meditation is a common technique, in which the focus is mostly on breathing, full consciousness, and considering the interactions happening in the mind (Talbot-Zorn/Edgette 2016, p. 2; Good et al. 2016, p. 119; Marques, 2017, p. 187). Taking some distance daily and regular short breaks to practice mindfulness gives managers a space for awareness, clarity in thinking, and detecting weaknesses (Tiziana/Mayer/Lynass 2016; Marques, 2017; Hougaard/Carter/Afton 2018; Zenger/Folkman

2018). Hougaard, Carter, and Afton (2018) found that 10 minutes of mindfulness training (e.g. closing one's eyes and breathing deeply) every day improved managers' self-awareness by up to 35%. Moreover, researchers believe that even vacations or several days off, as an opportunity to practice mindfulness, plays an important role in making room for new and influential strategies and visions as well as in developing managers' strategic thinking (Haines 2005, p. 27; Sloan 2016, p. 69). As a best practice, Google's "Search Inside Yourself" course, launched in 2007 as a mindfulness program, can be taken into consideration. The aim of this course was to improve the managers' capability to be present and pay attention to their environment (Fast Company 2016). The course was the idea of Google engineer Chade-Meng Tan, who later in 2012 established an organization, the Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute, to make the course available to the other companies. Nowadays, many media companies such as Comcast Corporation (as an American media and telecommunications conglomerate, see Appendix 2.6, p. 212) are among the clients of this organization (SIYLI Org. 2020).

4.3.2.1.3 Experiencing New and Different Work Situations

As discussed previously, the way that individuals experience, perceive and evaluate a situation, generate options, and think about the consequences of their own and others' options influences the strategic thinking competency (Halvey 2016, p. 55). The researcher confirmed that the competency of strategic thinking can be improved by engaging in several company assignments or projects (Stumpf 1989, pp. 34, 35; Senge et al. 1999, p. 497; Goldman, 2008, p. 229), working as a mentor or CEO (Goldman 2008, p. 229; Casey/Goldman 2010, p. 176; Goldmann 2012, p. 33), having managerial responsibilities (Dragoni, et al. 2011, p. 832), or working as a human resources manager or a market manager to take on a new leadership perspective (Zabris-ki/Huellmantel 1991, pp. 30, 31). In this regard, job rotation or job switching plays a central role in developing managers' skills in thinking strategically (Casey/Goldman, 2010, p. 175; Goldman/Scott/Follman 2015, p. 164). This idea has been also emphasized in terms of membership in the strategy forum described in Chapter 3. It means that for managers, moving from a corporate function position (or strategic committee) to a line operation – or vice versa – provides an opportunity of working with experienced executives and understanding how other business units work (Stumpf 1989, p. 35; Goldman/Scott/Follman 2015, p. 165). Moreover, because most people are not enough conscious of their capabilities and are perhaps unable to evaluate their actions and performance, skillful coaches can support managers' awareness of

their mental habits and frameworks by using critical dialogues, questions, and feedback (Sloan 2016, p. 171). According to the literature review, one of the best methods to learn strategic thinking is to work closely with masters in apprenticeship and tutor relationships (Easterby-Smith/Davies 1983, p. 45; Watkins 2007, p. 1). In essence, dynamic leadership succession and promotion in media companies are required to ensure the replacements and advancement for key positions through ongoing training programs and strategies.

Furthermore, Dragoni et al. (2014, p. 875) found a positive correlation between the strategic thinking competency of managers and their global work experience. Their study concluded that having multinational business experience improves managers' ability to think strategically (Dragoni et al. 2014, p. 868). Other researchers have suggested that involvement in the global environment such as attending conferences, international events, and professional associations is a key sign of a global, agile or international mindset (Levy et al. 2007, p. 236; Switzer 2008, p. 35; Kanter 2011, p. 116). For example, Bertelsmann SE & Co. KGaA held an event, The Bertelsmann Group Dialogue Conference, to give its managers and decision-makers the opportunity to discuss current concerns and exchange ideas (Bertelsmann 2018, p. 41). Nevertheless, the result of an empirical study accomplished by Greck, Franzetti, and Altmeppen (2017, p. 126) in the German media market showed that only a small group of media managers (16% among 759 participants) have work experience outside of Germany. It is certainly crucial to consider individual differences (discussed in Chapter 4.2.1) in the process of developing strategic thinking competency (via work experience) and selecting the appropriate types of work experience for each characteristic (Dragoni, et al. 2011, p. 831).

More centrally, the result of the Greck, Franzetti, and Altmeppen (2017, p. 126) study highlighted that working and collecting experience in the same organizational structure and culture (for example, in a traditional media company such as a newspaper publisher) has a great impact on the developments of media managers' current careers (in publishing) and, consequently, on their achievement of noteworthy insights into decision-making strategies and work processes. According to previous discussions, since the generated knowledge about a business or company environment change over time (Stubbart 1989; Goldman 2012; Colman 2015), in order to learn and create new knowledge, it is necessary to transform experiences (Kolb 2015, p. 51). In fact, to gain actionable knowledge from experiences, it is essential to invest time in reflecting on the situation and to be aware of one's tendencies (Sloan 2016, p. 70). As discussed previously, mindfulness practices in the first step assist media managers in improving their self-awareness and self-reflection. Experiencing new and different work situation help managers shift their

mindset, mental models, and build new mental habits. The next chapter will focus more on mind shift or mind restructuring techniques.

4.3.2.1.4 Mind Shift, Focused and Diffuse Modes of Thinking

From psychological perspectives, alongside the question of assumptions and reflections of the individual's intuition, strategic thinkers must be able to shift their mindsets. The technique of cognitive behaviour modification was introduced by Meichenbaum (1977) as an incorporated motivational training and multistage process in psychotherapy. It involves performing mental exercises with the aim of building new mental habits (Watkins 2007, p. 2). Neuroscience and biochemistry researchers consider cognitive behaviour modification in form of constructing 'neuronal networks' or 'brain plasticity' as a mental process in which the bits of information connect through finding meaning and learning by every new experiencing (Zull 2002, pp. 109, 115).

A manager's mental model, which may also be known by such diverse names as 'mental frame', 'cognitive map', 'dominant logic' and 'belief system' (in strategic management studies), can be defined as that managers' way of interpreting and approaching strategic issues (Bhansing/Leenders/Wijnberg 2016, p. 910). According to the discussions in Chapter 3, in strategic thinking, the combination of convergent and divergent mindsets helps managers break out their assumptions and reframe their mental models (Moon B.J. 2013, p. 1669). This means that the process of strategic thinking challenges the manager's dominant mental frames and defaults. In that light, several strategy theorists and practitioners have underlined strategic thinking as a competency that can be learned and be established as a habit for managers (Liedtka 1998; Hughes/Beatty 2005; Switzer 2008; Casey/Goldman 2010). In this regard, mindful managers can scan the situation from a different viewpoint and shift their perspectives and mental models in specific settings, which also improves their executive functioning. In contrast, mindless managers are caught in a single perspective and are not flexible and open-hearted (Marques 2017, p. 180). For example, managers of news organizations need to have the ability to shift their cognitive framework and think strategically at all times to consider the technological changes and influence of social networking and user-generated content on their company's content production process (e.g. Küng 2011, pp. 53, 54). In fact, this new mindset – in contrast to old ways of thinking – leads to further consideration of the media industry's boundaries and its ecosystem to identify and change the dominant logic.

According to the discussions in Chapter 3, to gain more insight into the business and think strategically, managers must not only focus on details (zooming in) but must also stand back (zooming out) to see the complete systems of business and related parts (Kanter 2011, p. 112). Cabane and Pollack (2017) term this ‘breakthrough thinking’: the ability to switch from a diffuse mode of thinking (focused mode of thinking and diffused mode of thinking). It also refers to being intensively immersed in a problem (focused mode of thinking) and then ceasing to focus on it further (diffused mode of thinking) (Tiziana/Mayer/Lynass 2016, p. 193; Cabane/Pollack 2017, pp. 12, 13). In the focused mode of thinking, the manager’s attention deeply engages with the particular problem in which the working memory is involved in the process of storing and retrieving information. In this way of thinking, brain activity, consciousness, and concentration are high (Tiziana/Mayer/Lynass 2016, p. 193). In the diffuse mode of thinking, in contrast, the brain experiences an attention-relaxed state and mindfulness. From a neuroscientific point of view, these kinds of practices (shifting brain modes from focused to diffuse modes of thinking), allow the brain to strengthen the neural patterns that are required to boost new knowledge and learn to think strategically (e.g. Tiziana/Mayer/Lynass 2016, p. 193).

As discussed previously, learning to think strategically is a complex process. Nevertheless, researchers have found that it is possible and worthwhile to teach and encourage managers to think strategically (Bates/Dillard 1993, p. 110; Kabacoff 2014, p. 2; Vogel 2018, p. 240). According to previous arguments, in addition to individual self-coaching practices, it is necessary to take a closer look at the organizational techniques and training strategies in this matter.

4.3.2.2 Organizational Approach

4.3.2.2.1 Training Leaders and Executive Development Programs

Studies highlight that the diverse managerial roles in combination with digitalization changes increase the need for specific education and training programs to enhance abilities and competencies and to diversify experiences at all levels of management positions in media companies (Artero/Manfredi 2016, p. 59). In fact, competency development and learning programs as an undeniable part of companies' strategies help media businesses to maintain value and ensure competitive advantage (Hwang 2003, p. 93). However, it should be noted that motivating and training media managers, which involves more than conveying the tacit knowledge and lessons (Hwang 2003, p. 97), remains a challenge for many companies (Hollifield et al. 2016, p. 34). Based on the discussion in previous chapters, companies should invest more in culture, communication, training, and education to equip managers with the skills to think, analyse and act strategically (Whitlock 2003; O'Shannassy 2003; Allio 2006; Goldman/Casey 2010; Goldman 2012; Law/Cao 2020). To put these all into practice, management development programs and activities must orient toward strategic business goals based on a company's vision, along with considering the specific characteristics and context of company and industry (Armutat 2007, pp. 17, 18; Drumm 2008, p. 334; Wright/Paroutis/Blettner 2013, p. 95).

Despite advances in leadership and executive development programs in recent decades, a special focus on improving strategic thinking competency with the aim of preparing managers to confront multifaceted challenges is lacking (Vito 2018, pp. 253, 254). Moreover, there is a need to evaluate and document the effectiveness of these training programs at different levels of learning (Felfe/Franke 2014, pp. 68, 69). For example, Herbert (2019, p. 7), by interviewing women serving as general manager, CEO, and executive network editor at a public radio organization in the U.S, emphasized a lack of standards for leadership and management development and training for media managers. Moreover, other studies show that additional factors that contribute to strategic thinking learning (discussed in Chapter 4.2) are missing from these programs in order to train the minds of managers. For example, normal aging influences the speed of information processing and learning (Murman 2015, p. 120). This reality has been largely ignored in the design of training programs that are consistent with adults' cognition and learning profiles (Czaja/Sharit 2013, p. 7).

As noted above, to train concrete competency and behaviour, companies can offer different types of programs for managers such as formal training, informal learning courses, seminars, and coaching workshops that include opportunities of gaining feedback and engaging in action

learning. Action learning as a problem-solving process allows managers to practice anticipating the company's probable future crises and strengthen their strategic thinking competency (Felfe/Franke 2014, p. 65; Vito 2018, p. 253). At some companies, mentoring programs offer such opportunities (Goldman 2008, p. 229; Casey/Goldman 2010, p. 176; Goldmann 2012, p. 33). In this regard, an experienced mentor helps managers to work on their reflection process and mental models to improve their understanding of business dynamics (Hwang 2003, pp. 97, 99).

It is also important to ensure that learned knowledge is transformed into skill, ability, and expected performance (being competent in strategic thinking) based on a program's planned goal in a company's context (training outcomes). Strategic thinking at an organizational level arranges the interaction between thinking and motivation in coping with complex problems and situations. In this regard, companies should invest in developing training programs and prioritizing the essential skills and competencies of managers. In fact, the cornerstones of management development as a part of personal management tasks consist of formulating a basic plan and a model in which the fundamental competencies have been described in detail (Armutat 2007, pp. 17, 18). In practice, previous surveys have illustrated that CEO succession planning within the media industry is challenging and expensive (Artero/Manfredi 2016, p. 50). For example, in its annual report 2019, ProSiebenSat.1 Group announced that, in order to support their employees in today's professional tasks and to meet future challenges, they were investing a total of EUR 4.5 million in their education and training programs. A part of this investment, ProSiebenSat.1 Academy is intended to offer more development programs. In 2019, this academy organized 58 executive training programs with 371 participants in the area of management development. Moreover, individual practices such as job rotation, mentoring, 360-degree feedback, and coaching at all management levels have also been considered (ProSiebenSat.1 Group 2019, p. 51). However, it should be mentioned that it is not possible for any media company to invest a great deal in management development programs.

Since 1996, a growing number of large companies (e.g. Bertelsmann and Walt Disney) has established their complex personnel development programs to promote junior managers and executives in different areas. For example, Disney "offers career planning workshops and talent planning processes for its employees" through Disney University (Carillo et al. 2012, p. 9). In these programs, a company-wide exchange of experience occurs through the project-based works in combination with internal and external seminars (mostly university lecturers). Bertelsmann, for its part, launched systematic programs in cooperation with universities (Aris/Bughin 2009, p. 348). If we consider the topics and the content of the training courses it

is obvious that they follow mostly the same framework provided in other development programs offered by companies in different industries. From Drumm's point of view (2008, p. 352), such linear learning programs mostly provide standardized learning content which neglects individual tailoring and interactivity. This may cause demotivation among participants. For example, Bertelsmann University offers leadership or management development programs with a focus on topics of creativity, self-organization, communication, feedback culture, and design thinking (Bertelsmann University 2020), which provide almost the same content as other development programs in different industries. This means that the specific characters of media managers, along with the uniqueness of the media market and its products, have been largely ignored in most offered programs. In fact, inappropriate content that is not tailored to the company's specific context will increase the risk of failure in transferring the goals of learning (e.g. Armutat 2007; Drumm 2008; Wright/Paroutis/Blettner 2013). It should be also recognized that most of the content in these training programs has not been produced by media companies themselves. Therefore, it is essential for media companies to re-evaluate their management development programs by considering their core competencies and available resources. Therefore, Chapter 4.3.5 provides an insight into the potential of media products in the process of learning and developing strategic thinking for their own use.

The focus of the next chapter is on some other training methods whose effectiveness has already been confirmed in different fields of study. These organizational techniques could be useful and affordable for many media companies of any size to apply in management development programs. Because improving brain function and developing strategic thinking during the learning process takes time, many researchers assert that the training of managers should start even earlier in their careers – perhaps even beginning during their education (Goldman 2008; Casey/Goldman 2010; Goldmann 2012; Iordanoglou 2018). Thus, these techniques should also be considered in developing teaching media management and economic studies. In the following, these techniques will be summarised and grouped into three main categories: strategic planning and SOAR analysis, design thinking tools, and scenario analysis.

4.3.2.2.2 Considering Different Types of Organizational Techniques and Tools

4.3.2.2.2.1 Strategic Planning and SOAR Analysis

As discussed previously, media companies that search for alternative solutions through strategic thinking at early stages are more able to react to the influence of the business changes and also have a decisive time advantage in global competition. According to the pillar temple model of strategic management tools (Chapter 2.2.2.4), this section places more emphasis on the importance of existing strategic concepts as well as future research methods and techniques. Because studies have confirmed the usefulness of some of these techniques, those that most affect the process of strategic thinking will be covered in this section.

As discussed in Chapter 2.2.2.3, the value of strategic planning lies in practicing strategic thinking (Bates/Dillard 1993, p. 110; Wootton/Horne 2010, p. 128). In that light, Goldman (2008, p. 229) found that performing strategic planning as a persistent work experience helps managers develop their ability to think strategically. This means that through the strategic planning process, a strategic thinker as a learner can bring strategy to the learning process, and can cultivate the capabilities of thinking and strategizing (Zabriskie/Huellmantel 1991, p. 29; Senge et al. 1999, p. 138; Switzer 2008, pp. 32, 37; Kabacoff 2014, p. 2). In fact, strategic planning as a tool provides a road map for media managers to reach a planned destination (Hollifield et al. 2016, p. 105). Thus, researchers have stressed that managers should participate in seminars and training programs to learn more about strategic planning and should also spend regular time formulating and developing dynamic plans (Zabriskie/Huellmantel 1991, p. 31; Haines 2005, p. 209). In fact, participation in events and workshops related to the business and agile project management in any form helps managers to think out of the box (e.g., Schoemaker/Krupp/Howland 2013). Even virtual conferences may be a platform where managers can gather and share their knowledge and ideas about the future of business.

It should be noted that undertaking duties and important tasks related to strategic planning under the coaching and mentoring of experienced executives and trainers can accelerate and advance the process of learning the strategic thinking competency (Zabriskie/Huellmantel 1991, pp. 30, 31; Goldman 2012, p. 33). This tacit learning process, which improves observing the way that others think about and approach problems, helps managers to master and learn new capabilities through observation, reflection, and repetition (Hwang 2003, p. 97; Eikhof/Marsden 2019, p. 251). More centrally, effective strategic planning requires “relevant and broad business information that helps leaders elevate their thinking beyond the day-to-day” (Kabacoff 2014, p. 2). This information could be sought from other managers, employees, or stakeholders who are

engaged in strategic committees (Switzer, 2008, p. 35). For example, Summer Redstone, a former executive chairman of Viacom and well known as an ‘empire builder’ (Gershon/Suri 2004, p. 67), was intensely involved in Viacom’s daily decision-making and strategic planning process (Gershon/Suri 2004, p. 59). Researchers assert that Redstone’s strategy made Viacom into one of the world’s premier media companies (McChesney 2000, p. 65). Nevertheless, the transient nature of strategic planning underscores the need for continuous modification and alternative tools. Therefore, agile project planning could be more relevant for project-based and collaborative work in media companies.

Likewise, as discussed in Chapter 2, different analysis tools (such as SWOT analysis or resource-based view) facilitate the process of interpreting and reasoning. For example, as a prerequisite of strategic thinking, SWOT analysis encompasses understanding the strengths and weaknesses of an organization as well as competitive threats and possible opportunities (Allio 2006, p. 5; Spencer/Spencer 1993, p. 343). This method of analysis examines the company’s goals, mission, organizational structure, market position, as well as financial and personnel resources (Hollifield et al. 2016, p. 187). Nevertheless, based on the discussions in Chapters 2.1.2 and 2.2.2.4, the effectiveness of SWOT analysis in an elusive and dynamic competition environment is decreasing, especially in the new media market where the borders of the industry competitions are unclear.

Recent studies have introduced a new framework called SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results) as an evidence-based framework along with a systematic approach to the stockholders’ engagement. This framework contributes to a positive psychological capacity and an appreciative inquiry that enables the manager to think strategically (Cole/Stavros 2019, pp. 506, 507). In fact, SOAR and SWOT are different in two elements: aspirations and results (versus weaknesses and threats). ‘Aspirations’ refers to stockholders’ shared desires and preferred future; ‘results’ emphasize the search for measurable success (Cole/Stavros 2019, p. 517). In comparison to SWOT, which is an analysis conducted with the aim of finding competitive planning, the focus of SOAR is more on the value co-creation and the potential of an organization in creating innovative strategies and discovering profitable results (solution- and action-oriented). Whereas in SWOT analysis the attention is on gaps (e.g. weaknesses and threats), SOAR analysis searches for the achievable process by engaging employees and other stakeholders and fostering positive energy. Table 4.1 shows the questions that media managers should ask themselves in the process of SOAR analysis.

SOAR Elements	SOAR-Based Questions
Strengths	What are the greatest strengths of our company at different levels (e.g. individuals, team)? What makes us different and unique (e.g. creative workers)?
Opportunities	Which kind of values do our stakeholders (e.g. employees, customers, advertisers, politicians) ask for? How could we differentiate our business from competitors (e.g. entering uncharted business territory)?
Aspirations	What is our ideal future of business? What are the wishes of our stockholders? What do our companies care truly about? What kind of strategic projects will boost the aspirations (e.g. CSR, participating in charities)?
Results	What are the measurable outcomes? How does our company know we are succeeding? Which kind of resources are required to carry out the most crucial projects?

Table 4.1: The SOAR Framework and the relevant questions (Cole/Stavros 2019, p. 518)

These multiplicative conversations and questions in this analysis, which arise from the system and divergent thinking, shape a collaborative relationship instead of a top-down communication (Cole/Stavros 2019, pp. 505-510). In the media market, because the diverse stakeholders (advertisers, public, audiences, and creative workers) are very closely tied to the process and success of strategizing in the media companies (based on the discussion in Chapter 2.1), SOAR may be a more suitable instrument for media managers to meet different stockholders' value.

4.3.2.2.2 Design Thinking Tools

According to the cycle model of design thinking (discussed in Chapter 3.2.5) and the learning model of thinking strategically (discussed in Chapter 4.1), it can be established that both perspectives cover the same assumptions. In this regard, Liedtka and Ogilvie (2011) as well as Liedtka et al. (2013) outlined four steps for design thinking and introduced different essential tools (see Table 4.2).

Steps of Design Thinking	Explanation	Useful Tools
1- What is going on	Data-based exploratory to understand better current reality accurately	Some useful tools are ‘mind mapping’ and ‘value chain analysis’. With the help of these tools, the managers can access the existing needs of stakeholders (Ist-Zustand) and discover where they want to go, and ultimately create value (Soll-Zustand).
2- What if	Creative- a focused and systematic way of thinking to visualize multiple options and hypothesizes	This step is the heart of design, in which ‘brainstorming’, and ‘concept development’ play an important role. The deep insights from the last step (what is) will be employed here to generate new ideas from various points of view.
3- What wows	Test hypotheses to prioritize the choices	‘Assumption testing’ and ‘prototyping’ are the tools, which can be used. In this step, the new insights and assumptions will be verified to figure out which ones could be sufficient choices in the existing market.
4- What works	Take actions	The ‘Customer co-creation’ technique aims to engage the customer in building the solutions to fulfill better their needs. Moreover, ‘learning lunch’ helps managers implement the small and affordable market experience to identify valuable points, which have not been considered before.

Table 4.2: The steps of design thinking and useful tools (Liedtka/Ogilvie 2011, p. 23; Liedtka/King/Bennett 2013, p. 8)

In the first step, to better understand the current situation of a company and envision the future, ‘mind mapping’ (also known as ‘journey-mapping’ or ‘road-mapping’) is a practical tool to recognize what is going on in business (scanning the environment as a part of strategic thinking). For example, the ‘Disney recipe’ published in 1957 (Figure 4.8) illustrates how thinking in the form of designs (journey mapping) can better describe the vision of the company, structure the complex business of film-making, and process value generation in different business sectors (HRB 2013). This gives managers the possibility of organizing the mass of information in the mind and generating insights (Liedtka/Ogilvie 2011, p. 23; Liedtka/King/Bennett 2013, p. 8).

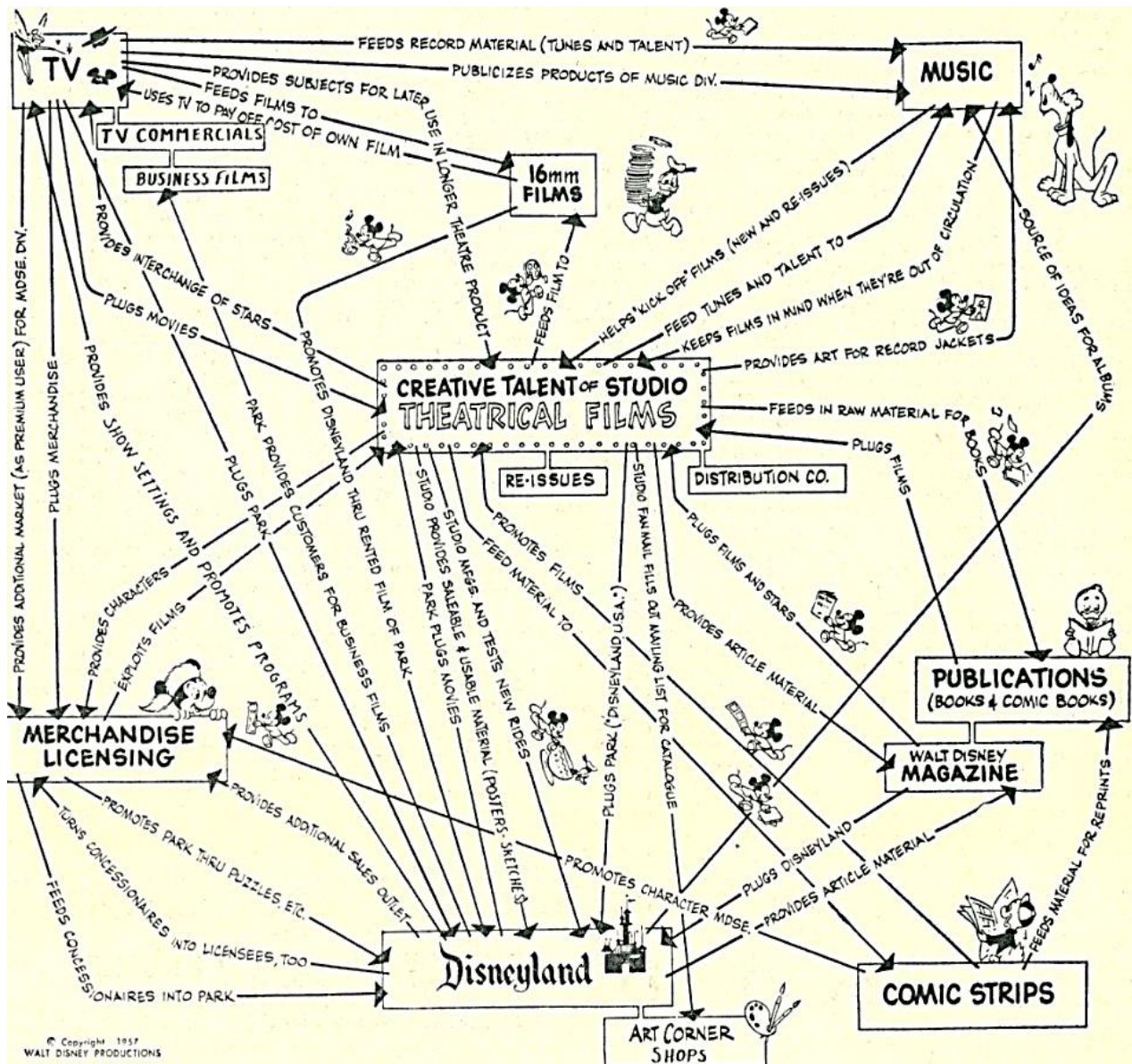


Figure 4.8: The Disney recipe published in 1957 (HBR 2013)

Road mapping draws the way from the status quo to the desired goal within a defined schedule in which the milestones and the necessary actions have been determined. The study of Göpfert and Kersting (2019, p. 225, 226) on German logistic companies shows that road mapping has similarities to the scenario technique, and many companies apply these methods to analyse their value chain. This study also concluded that this method has the second-highest frequency of use in companies after brainstorming methods (See Appendix 4.1, p. 222). However, there is a lake of studies exploring the frequency of utilizing various future research methods specific to media companies.

As discussed in Chapter 4.1.2, questioning and hypothesis testing is a part of strategic thinking. To express a new idea in a tangible form, there is a need to explore, visualize ('what if'), and test it in the real experiment ('what wows'). For example, a question here is: What if our audience and target group changed and the producers went out of the business? In this regard, Picard and Lowe (2016, p. 67) mentioned that in media companies utilizing different methods is a key prerequisite of interpreting and reasoning to create new insight and to boost knowledge about what is meaningful for business. Prototyping as a form of design thinking tool can be helpful in terms of testing hypotheses, reducing the risk of making mistakes, and increasing the chance of making effective decisions (Liedtka/Ogilvie 2011, p. 23; Liedtka/King/Bennett 2013, p. 8). Chapter 4.3.6.3 will shed more light on prototyping as a valuable potential tool in learning to think strategically.

In the next step (take actions), employing the techniques such as 'customer co-creation' helps managers implement the small and affordable market experience to identify valuable points that have not been considered before. In this regard, social media channels could find applications to engage customers in the process of design and product development. Moreover, Axel Springer (a German publisher company) rolled out a series of 'learning lunches' and 'best practice clubs', to enable managers from other business units to discuss the future possibilities for competitions (Jelassi/Martínez-López 2020, pp. 577, 578). Liedtka et al. (2013) asserted that by following these steps, answering these questions, and using the relevant tools, managers can think divergently and strategically. These steps of design thinking empower managers to look at the business broadly and to expand the vision by breaking out the assumptions in mind and reframing their mental model. Then, after generating new ideas, they think in a convergent way to decrease their choices (Liedtka/King/Bennett 2013, pp. 4, 5). This means achieving the 'zoom out' and 'zoom in' perspective or thinking in a closed loop and dynamic fashion (Chapter 4.2.1).

4.3.2.2.3 Scenario Analysis

Additionally, scenario building as a future research method helps managers to challenge their assumptions and ways of thinking, and to update their mental models by considering numerous future alternatives and discovering the utility of dissimilar strategies (Liedtka 1998; Abraham 2005; Allio 2006; Talbot-Zorn/Edgette 2016). A pillar temple model of strategic management tools in media companies (Figure 2.8 presented in chapter 2.2.2.4) also emphasized the unde-

niable role of the scenario technique in the process of strategy formulation and strategic thinking learning. According to Graetz (2002, p. 457), scenario analysis “has become a recognized tool for stimulating strategic thinking because it goes beyond the traditional financial and forecast-based planning approaches”. In essence, scenario planning or scenario-driven forecasting as a tool aims to construct a shared baseline for strategic thinking (Schoemaker 1995; Buer-schaper 2000; Graetz 2002; Fleisher/Bensoussan 2003; Senge et al. 2014). This means that every scenario construction is based on assumptions of what the future may look like, how certain trends may develop, which developments will remain constant and which changes will influence the business. These assumptions refer to comprehensive mental future models, and such assumptions are often implicit in dealing with the future. However, they must become explicit via the scenario construction (Kosow/Gaßner 2008, p. 10).

Scenario planning as a systematic technique usually comprises eight steps (Rose 2017, pp. 116-118): (1) The first step is problem analysis and defining the scope, which generally considers a time frame between five to ten years. The next step is (2) environment analysis with the aim of identifying the major stockholders and structuring all relevant influencing factors within the system. This reflects the scanning part of strategic thinking, which has been discussed in Chapter 4.1.2. In the next step (3) the basic trend projections and their impacts on business are determined through the questioning of the current situation and doubting existing assumptions. The goal of the next step (4) is to prognosticate and generate future assumptions by re-evaluating critical descriptions. These assumptions reflect managers’ and strategists’ mental models and patterns of thought (Kosow/Gaßner 2008, p. 10). Step (5) scenario interpretation, (6) incident analysis by considering unexpected events and changes and uncertainties, and (7) impact analysis, all belong to the conceptualizing and testing part of thinking strategically (Figure 4.2). The final step (8) involves action planning or scenario construction (Kosow/Gaßner 2008, pp. 21-23; Rose 2017, pp. 116-118). Following these steps eases the analysis of the impact of multiple uncertainties and the imagination of potential futures for media companies.

In media management studies, there are also some examples of applying the technique of scenario planning. For example, the empirical study by Oliver and Parrett (2018) used the scenario technique to analyse and forecast the future of the U.K. media industry in 2025. For this research, the managers of one of the U.K.’s top media planning agencies were asked to outline their concerns and anticipations about the uncertainties rising with digital technological innovation in particular the future growth of YouTube (Oliver/Parrett 2018, pp. 343-344). With scenario analysis, Sjøvaag and Krumsvik (2018) sought also to realize the future effect of different media policies on empowering innovation in the Norwegian news companies. The scope

of business in this study was national, regional, and local news and the stakeholders included the newspaper owners, creative workers, freelancers, suppliers, customers, and government. The basic trends in this media sector were technological (more mobile platforms and social media activities), political (toward a liberal media system), and economical (more profit demands from the owner) changes (Sjøvaag/Krumsvik 2018, p. 1208). In the conceptualizing phase, the impacts of each of these trends in terms of positive, negative, and uncertain outcomes have been explored. In the end, to develop coherent insights into the future and construct different scenarios, asking questions and testing hypotheses (thinking strategically) are necessary (Liedtka 1998; Casey/Goldman 2010).

The study of Göpfert and Kersting (2019, p. 217) on 76 German companies (from the shipping and logistics industry) showed these companies predominantly used the brainstorming method, road-mapping, and the scenario technique to envision the future of business. In this research, eight different types of future research methods have been presented (see Appendix 4.1, p. 222): science fiction and prototyping, simulation, mathematical or statistical method, seminar and workshop, scenario technique, road-mapping, and brainstorming. These companies evaluated the methods based on their positive practical experiences (Göpfert/Kersting 2019, p. 224). Respondents were asked to indicate how popular these methods were in their companies and how often they used them (Göpfert/Kersting 2019, p. 217). Appendix 4.1 (p. 222) shows the frequency of use of various future research methods in companies based on a five-point Likert scale. As a result, brainstorming and road-mapping (as design thinking tools) got the first positions in this research. It has been also inferred that the scenario technique as an integrative method is often used in combination with the other methods (Göpfert/Kersting 2019, p. 225). According to the results of this study, science fiction, prototyping and simulation are not popular methods in predicting the future of business. However, in media companies, these methods may have high potential in the process of learning and developing to think strategically.

As discussed before, media content can be produced with diverse purposes: entertainment (in the form of narrative content), educational (informative), and commercial (communicative) (Küng 2001, p. 224; Küng 2008, p. 7; Wirtz 2019, p. 16). The aim of using the relevant content is to ease the transfer of knowledge concerning developing strategic thinking and to increase the effectiveness of training and learning by focusing on the diverse purposes of content production. In this regard, training effectiveness refers to a successful transfer of the meaning and reaching the intended results (Sitzmann/Weinhardt 2018, pp. 733, 734). Therefore, the

ultimate question is how the media companies can select the related content and training methods that, if invested in, could bring more value for the business and specifically help media managers to think strategically.

In keeping with all the above discussions, choosing the methods of analysis in the process of training and learning plays an important role in overcoming undetected cognitive biases and traditional or ‘business-as-usual’ ways of thinking. According to the arguments presented in Chapter 2.2.2.4, a manager’s preference in using strategic analysis tools also plays an important role here. With regard to this point that there is a limited focus on the academic content of management development programs concerning the development of strategic thinking (Goldman/Scott/Follman 2015, pp. 158, 164), the question is, in addition to different strategic and future-oriented analysis tools and methods, which forms of content (science fiction, simulation, and prototyping) could find application in informal and formal organizational training? Moreover, because the literature around the multilevel perspective on the effectiveness of management and organizational training is not yet sufficiently mature (Sitzmann/Weinhardt 2018, p. 733), this study attempts to provide some suggestions with the aim of improving the process of learning to think strategically in the media companies in the long term. The next chapters propose a set of approaches to the value generation of media products and content by considering the innovative tools and existing e-learning courses.

4.3.3 Innovative Training Tools and E-Learning Courses

The advances in media management education, learning technologies, and multimedia training programs provide opportunities for media companies to improve the necessary know-how competencies by applying new forms of content presentation and building self-organizing structures in their business processes (e.g. Hwang 2003, p. 101). In recent years, e-learning and open online courses have begun offering massive training programs on a wide variety of platforms. Some of them are specially designed for supporting management and leadership development in companies (Drumm 2008, p. 358; Petry 2018, pp. 46, 53). Since access to the training programs and contents provided on these platforms is location- and time-independent, the participation of individuals with different time horizons, disabilities, and physical problems will not be limited. In this regard, learning level and learning speed can also be adapted based on previous knowledge.

Because there are many options available for planning, choosing, and optimizing such courses and programs, media companies face the task of providing their managers with e-learning content based on their demands and the uniqueness of their market. However, there are many similarities between the various providers in terms of content and format generation for training and development courses. Therefore, media companies must determine the contributions that e-learning can make to their management development and which courses and tools are affordable and relevant to the context of the company. To do so, the competence models, learning approaches, and content (situation-specific or need-oriented) must be expanded or adapted (Petry 2018, pp. 51, 52). Additionally, the project-based work in the media companies, along with the size of the company, will influence the make-or-buy decision. According to a study of the Institute for Media and Competence Research and the *Haufe Akademie* (2014), large German companies with more than 500 employees often rely on in-house e-learning systems. On the other hand, small companies rarely use self-developed products, due to the high costs of production and personnel expenses for training programs (Media and Competence Research 2014, p. 20). The small budget of HR for training and development in small and medium enterprises is not comparable with that of the forerunner media companies. This in turn forms the requirements of redesigning the HR strategies and functions in terms of digital optimization and transformation to get a grip on the core aspects of business and efficiency (Petry 2018, p. 43).

With the resource-based approach, Chapter 1.3 attempted to highlight the position of managers and the way of thinking in generating competitive advantage for media companies (based on the work of Barney and Wright in 1998). In this regard, intellectual investment in developing training programs is essential to make this human capital group a valuable resource for achieving long-term success. If we look at the resource-based approach from a different perspective, being rich in unique content, schemes and specific training courses (regarding developing strategic thinking competency of managers) gives media companies a competitive advantage to succeed in competing with rivals. In supporting this pursuit, for example, a business game, educational animation, or explanatory video as a multimedia product can provide valuable room for applying rare simulation in this context. If media companies be fully organized and equipped with the coordinating systems and well-defined development programs in order to effectively exploit the potential of thinking strategically competency, they will make it difficult for competitors to get access to the same capability or to replicate it in a volatile economy (e.g. Felfe/Franke 2014, p. 76).

Furthermore, since there is a gap between the competencies acquired at universities and those expected by industry nowadays (Iordanoglou 2018, p. 123), the question is, which features of future research methods – and particularly the quality of training content – makes them effective and attractive for educating future media managers in real practice? The most important accomplishment is to integrate different perspectives of researchers surrounding the concept of strategic thinking development. In fact, to increase the effectiveness of the management training programs, the methods must be combined (Felfe/Franke 2014, p. 78; Petry 2018, p. 52). The next chapters will put more emphasis on the power of unparalleled storytelling, metaphor, dialogue, and simulation in the content of training media managers' strategic thinking competency.

4.3.4 A New Approach to Management Development Training in Media Companies

As reported above, it is very likely that strategic thinking as an abstract competency could be developed through the ongoing learning process and using different tools and techniques. However, researchers concede that in real situations, managers have difficulty applying these practices that they have learned (Ruff 2005, p. 23; Beer/Finnström/Schrader 2016, p. 2). Because most such practices are standard learning content and programs provided by the external service providers, which makes it is challenging for media managers to realize the learning materials in the specific context of the media industry. As discussed in Chapter 2.1, the unique features of the media market, as well as its specific managerial issues, increase the need for developing unique management training methods and programs.

Moreover, since all media managers have different educational backgrounds and experiences, exclusive development processes concerning a combination of individual and organizational training are necessary to train managers in strategic thinking competency. This means that competency can be learned better through diverse and mixed practices, tools, and media (Brown/Roediger/McDaniel 2014, pp. 2, 4; Moser/Zumbach 2018, p. 155). It should also be noted that training and developments programs tend to be expensive for companies (Beer/Finnström/Schrader 2016, pp. 1, 2). For example, in 2003 the BBC invested millions of dollars in leadership training courses to empower more than a thousand staff (especially producers) in creative thinking and other competencies (Dwyer 2016, p. 355). Moreover, it is not possible for any media company to offer all media managers different job positions at any level of professional training, either operationally or financially. It is also questionable whether external management development contents and programs make sense for small media companies

in the long term. Therefore, planning an in-house management training program, considering the valuable internal sources, could be more reasonable for media companies of any size to meet the specific needs of their managers and to follow their specific strategic plans.

Reviewing the academic discourses and arguments in the field of media management reveals a lack of studies related to developing future media managers' strategic thinking competency in connection with the specific characteristics of media products and contents. This study assumes that media products and contents as core competencies of media companies could have profound value and influence in self-directed learning and organizational development training. This means that the content produced by media companies be used in their own processes of management development and in-house training. Nevertheless, the question is whether selecting effective content or products (information-based or practice-based), along with training delivery method and channel, can make the entire development efforts affordable and effective for any media company, especially small or traditional ones (e.g. Drumm 2008, p. 348).

More centrally, in media companies where the creative workers are the source of innovation and inspiration (e.g. Schirmer 2012, Schüller 2015), the production of specific content and creating unique stories is more achievable in comparison to other industries. With skilled creative workers, media companies are able to monetize content in new ways by producing development program content for the top managers and executives to develop their competency of thinking strategically. This will benefit the media company not only through the sales of the relevant training content (in the form of educational videos or short explanatory films and games) but also in terms of story-making to train their own media managers with their specific demands and concerns. Accordingly, this will reduce the cost of hiring expensive trainers for executive coaching and mentoring.

According to the assumption of this study, in addition to entertainment and commercial purposes (Küng 2001, p. 224; Küng 2008, p. 7; Wirtz 2019, p. 16), media content can be applied to design in-house development programs for the educational purpose of training media managers in strategic thinking. The advantage of using in-house programs, courses, and innovative training tools is the potential for individualization. In contrast, linear learning programs generally provide standardized learning content and neglect the individual tailoring and interactivity, which may demotivate its users (Drumm 2008, p. 352). In this light, content can be presented in different forms using diverse methods such as metaphors, prototyping, and simulations to convey meaning effectively in the process of developing strategic thinking. The next chapters take a closer look at the value of media products and content in developing media managers' strategic thinking competency in media companies.

As discussed in Chapter 4.1, the development of a strategic mindset occurs in a double-loop learning process in which it is necessary to repeatedly practice thinking strategically and thereby create patterns, memories, and familiar neural pathways in the brain (Brown/Roediger/McDaniel 2014, p. 4). This highlights this fact that constant learning is fundamental for the process of strategic leadership (Aydin/Guclu/Pisapia 2015, p. 6) and it helps managers to be prepared in times of confusion when the direction of the business is not clear (Wootton/Horne 2010, p. 5). Thus, it should be noted that in addition to executive development programs and formal training, a lifetime learning approach (informal training) should also be considered. In this point of view, it is also necessary to investigate the role of media management studies in educating the next generation of media managers who can think strategically.

4.3.5 Selecting Related Media Content based on the Assumptions of the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning

Based on the results of the studies described in Chapter 4.2.5, it can be concluded that regardless of an individuals' preferred learning style, considering a new approach to management development in media companies is necessary, especially in terms of teaching and learning the competency of strategic thinking (e.g. Moser/Zumbach 2018; Cuevas/Dawson 2018). Because the concepts of strategic mindset and cognitive ability are complex, from scholars' perspectives, it is necessary for the strategic thinking learner to develop a deep understanding of the integration of language, image, and emotion (Zull 2002, p. 173). Media products can provide valuable content in this regard. The cognitive theory of multimedia learning (CTML), introduced by Mayer (2002, 2005), supports this notion and provides a conceptual framework to better understand how the use of media content and products help media managers to improve their competency in strategic thinking (see Figure 4.9). This theory is based on the principles of cognitive science, which assume that the human mind, as an active processing system, has a limited capacity (influenced by motivation, anxiety, age, etc.) that can actively acquire and process information from separate dual channels that act as a **sensory-motor system**: eyes and ears for visual and verbal processing (Mayer/Moreno 2002, p. 91; Mayer 2005, p. 32). The CTML illustrates how individuals learn from words (e.g. narration, music, or text) and pictures (e.g. graphics, animations, or videos). Based on the assumptions of this theory, multimedia presentations are necessary to deliver information effectively and make the concepts easier for the learner to retrieve (Mayer 2005, pp. 32-37; Coëgnarts 2017, p. 8). Several empirical studies have applied

the principles of this theory to design effective training instructions (e.g. Coëgnarts 2017; Chau et. al, 2019; Barnes 2021).

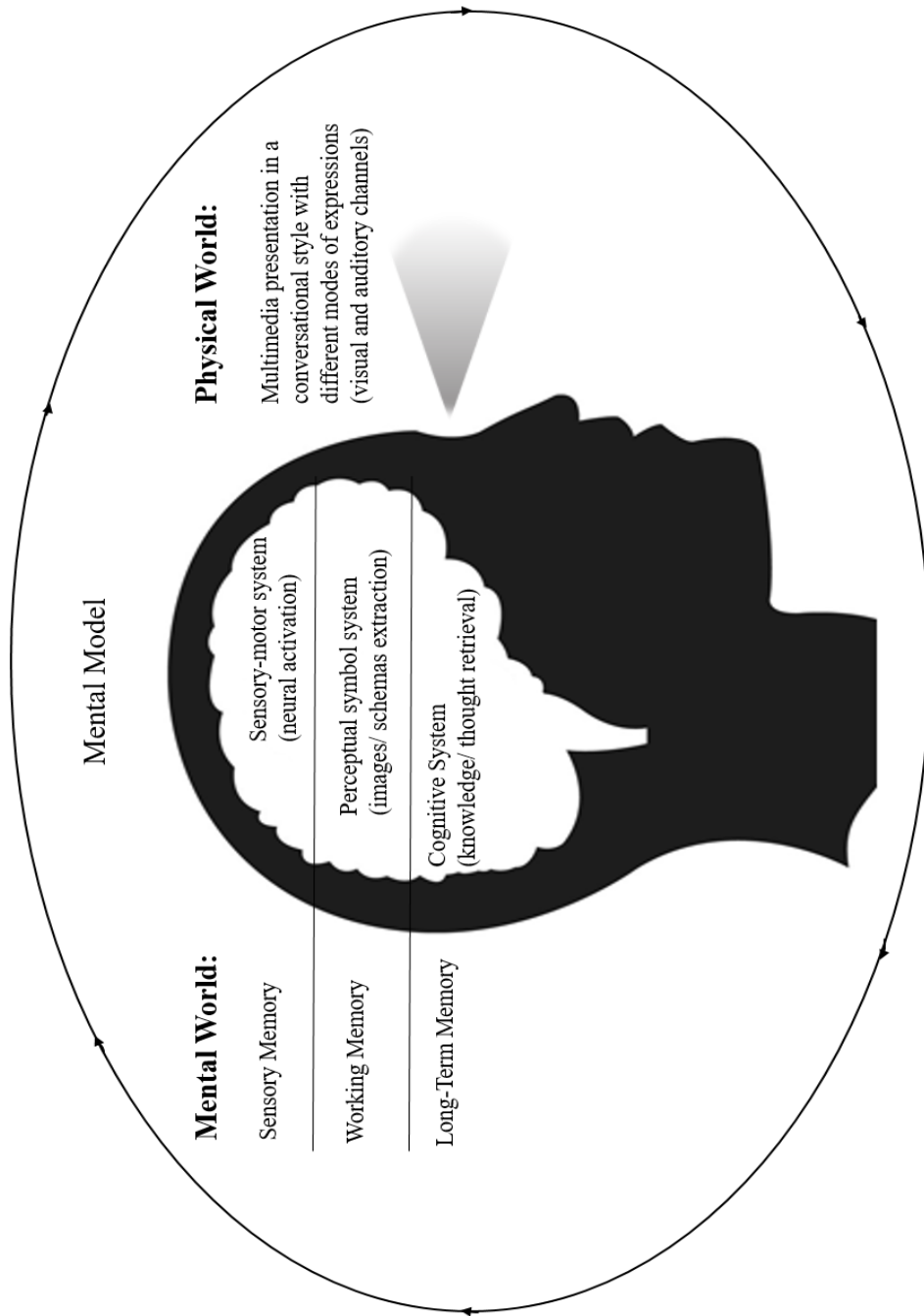


Figure 4.9: The Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning and the principles of cognitive science (based on the work of Zull 2002, p. 179; Mayer 2005, pp. 32-37; Coëgnarts 2017, pp. 4-8).

The cognitive theory of multimedia learning seeks to understand how people can engage deeply with the cognitive process and learn without overloading the mind system. This point has been ignored completely in the learning models of strategic thinking discussed in Chapter 4.1. In essence, if the information is presented by the multimedia channel in a conversational style and the form of the story closely matches managers’ existing mental model, the transfer of learning

will be facilitated (e.g. Zull 2002, pp. 181, 182). According to the CTML, multimedia training content that is designed and created based on how a manager's mind works, is more likely to succeed in transferring meaningful learning in comparison to those that are not so individually designed (Mayer 2005, p. 32). This content as a basis of cognitive processing guide effective communication through any channel or medium such as books, videos, and animations (Mayer/Moreno 2002, p. 87; Mayer 2005, p. 32). In fact, the narrative, communicative and informative characteristics of media products facilitate the transferring of the concepts in a **perceptual symbol system**, and the meanings underline the process of learning and visual thinking (see Figure 4.9).

According to this theory, effective learning occurs when events or concepts are recalled from prior experience and knowledge (from the **cognitive system**) and connected with what is already known in long-term memory (Brown/Roediger/McDaniel 2014, p. 5). This means that managers with extensive prior knowledge about the concept of strategic thinking are more likely to be able to create clear mental images or metaphors about this phenomenon during training programs (e.g. Mayer 2005; Coëgnarts 2017). As discussed previously, the mindset or mental model as a mind map shapes the thinking process and describes the particular manner in which individuals see the world, think, and behave (Hofert 2018, p. 4; Senge et al. 2014, pp. 235, 236). According to the arguments of Chapter 4.3.2.1.4, from a therapeutic and psychological perspective, alongside the question of assumptions and reflection of the individual's predisposition, strategic thinkers must be able to shift their minds and update their mental models. It should be noted that the sense of meaning-making derived by the domain mental or perceptual symbol system controls the process of strategic thinking and decision-making. However, the mental model can be changed and updated continuously based on different experiences and environments. In this regard, multimedia presentations can deliver information and meaningful learning to learners more effectively than single-medium presentations. The learner thus chooses some of the words and images simultaneously for further processing in the cognitive system where these materials and prior knowledge will be integrated and organized. Then, in long-term memory mental connections (thought retrieval) can be built and kept for a long time (Mayer/Moreno 2002, pp. 90-92).

From the above discussions, it is clear that the contents of the training in the learning process, as an important topic in management development of companies must be adapted to meet the need of the managers participating (e.g. Kenblanchard 2019). In fact, the learning content of management development in a time of digitalization could be technical, operative, and subject-

specific to the relevant professional activities (e.g. data analysis knowledge, software development, forecasting skills, and dealing with social media), methodical (agile and creative techniques, innovation competency) or socially relevant subjects (self-organization, networking, and communication skills and leading employees) (Petry 2019, p. 96). Strategic thinking that covers a range of skills and abilities (such as forecasting, data analysis, dealing with ambiguity and complexity, and self-organizing) can be considered as a multi-competency. Because the trends in management development are diverse across industries, and because each business can apply different methods to improve the capabilities of managers and leaders (Megheirkouni 2018, p. 122), it is necessary to consider the specific characteristics of media products and current managerial challenges (according to Table 2.2) to design and launch effective programs for media managers.

According to the model of the new media market (Figure 2.1), content – as a central product of media companies – could play a significant role in developing strategic thinking competency and generating competitive advantages for media companies because it is created based on inspiration and artistic work that is exclusive and unique (Baumgarth 2004; Mierzejewska 2011; Deuze 2011; Picard 2011; Lowe 2016). In one respect, the specific content of training influences training success in terms of transferring strategic thinking and cognitive skills (e.g. Felfe/Franke 2014, p. 49). Training transfer can be further enhanced when the purposes of the training have been achieved and what was learned can be applied in a real work situation (Laker/Powell 2011, p. 112; Felfe/Franke 2014, pp. 44, 45; Lacerenza et al., 2017, p. 1688; Sitzmann/Weinhardt 2018, p. 734). Hence, the objective of learning must be set up at the early stage of designing the training and developing the program (in the pre-training step).

Since the content of a management development program influences the effectiveness of the training (Lacerenza et al. 2017, pp. 1686, 1701), and consequently, the transferring of the companies' goals along with the development of strategic thinking competency, it is necessary to put greater emphasis on the message and content of the training in media companies. This content can be presented in form of metaphor, story, dialogue, science fiction, prototyping, and simulation. Figure 4.10 depicts the content funnel and different modes of expression. According to the cognitive theory of multimedia learning, a combination of multiple channels (auditory and visual) and content presented in different formats (text, image, graphic, animation, video, and movie), allows learners to internalize and decode the information with greater concentration and motivation (Zull 2002; Mayer 2005; Coëgnarts 2017; Barnes 2021). In the following, each form of content that can be applied in the learning process of strategic thinking will be clarified in detail. Some examples of media products will make it clear which kind of materials and

multimedia content may find application, not only in management development programs in media companies but also in courses material in teaching media management and economics to students, especially generation Z (born from 1995 to 2010), who may later undertake the managements position and run media businesses in the near future.

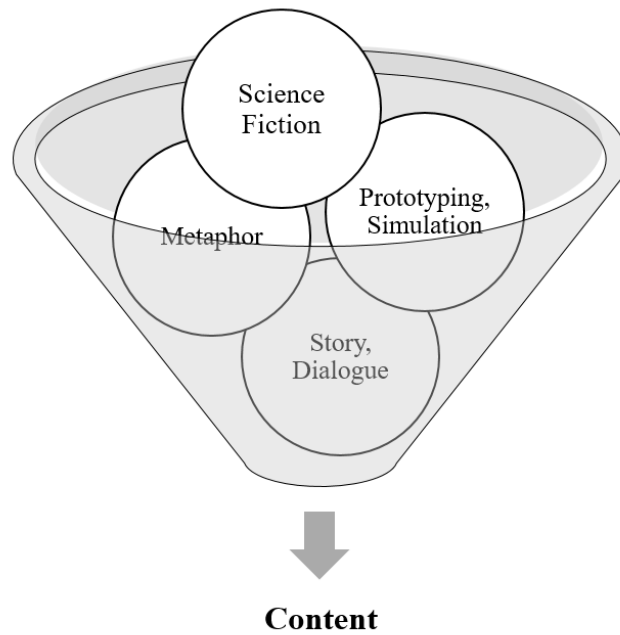


Figure 4.10: The content funnel and different modes of expressions

4.3.6 The Value of Media Products and Multimedia Content in Improving the Competency of Strategic Thinking

4.3.6.1 Metaphor

Scholars have posited that using metaphor as a symbolic medium and expressive language helps managers to perceive and understand organizations in a novel way, which generates possibilities for thinking strategically and creative actions (McCourt 1997, pp. 511, 512, 516; Pitt 2001, p. 7). In fact, abstract concepts and patterns can be communicated through metaphors. In other words, metaphor as a rhetorical and cognitive tool (Coëgnarts 2017, p. 4; Atanasova/Koteyko 2017, p. 453) eases the processes of thinking about complex ideas by transforming them into something else that is more understandable, concrete, tangible, literal and familiar (Emson 2016, p. 68). According to the cognitive theory of multimedia learning, the sensory-motor and perceptual symbol system of our mental model, “extracts a subset of a perceptual state and stores it for later use as a symbol” (Coëgnarts 2017, p. 4). This means that the interactions of neural networks form the perceptions in which the brain searches for meaning embedded in concrete experience (Mayer/Moreno 2002, p. 91; Zull 2002, p. 103). Thus, the strength of the metaphor is in reflecting some set of physical relationships that gives meaning to the abstract concept (Zull 2002, pp. 103, 128). For example, by interviewing the more than 100 successful executives from 37 countries, Sloan (2016, pp. 53, 54) found that managers use their experience in diverse contexts (such as in music, painting, visualizing, and sculpting) as a metaphor for generating a clear understanding of issues in a business strategy and that this makes them better strategic thinkers. The main idea here is that metaphors guide and inform managers’ viewpoints about their intent for strategic change (Pitt 2001, p. 8).

As discussed in Chapter 4.2.2, using previous experiences as metaphors may play a key role in transferring the learning experience from a particular situation to a business context (Sloan 2016, p. 77). Namely, by communicating tacit knowledge and transforming underlying beliefs in the process of sense- and decision-making, metaphor aims to advance new cognitive structures by examining existing values (Schwenk 1988, p. 50; Hwang 2003, p. 98; Emson 2016, pp. 60, 61). In essence, metaphor as a strategic medium or content makes it easier for managers to see the big picture, formulate better questions, share more profound interpretations, reflect on experiences and discover new abstract ideas (reflecting entrepreneurial mindset). In fact, metaphor as a cognitive tool has the potential to make insights about future organizational changes (Emson 2016, p. 62). From interviewing and coaching the executives of the private

sector, Emson (2016, p. 66) concluded that some managers use metaphors to help them rationalise their beliefs and expectations and to express their internal values.

The question that arises here is, how can conceptual metaphors be built and communicated? By borrowing metaphors, media products such as printed text and books could also facilitate the transmission of meaning in the learning process of strategic thinking. For example, the book ‘Six Thinking Hats’ by Edward de Bono (2000) is a very well-known resource in which the author sought to find a passageway to communicate a complex way of thinking in the form of metaphors. In this book, different colors of hats (blue, white, red, black, yellow, and green) were used to unscramble lateral thinking within conversations and brainstorming meetings (Figure 4.11). Studies have also confirmed the benefits of using the approach of ‘Six Thinking Hats’ and different modes of reasoning in fostering individuals’ critical thinking (Gill-Simmen 2020, p. 138). In fact, this technique provides a space for evaluating the mental models and exercising the shifts in perspective that are important in the process of learning to think strategically (De Bono 2000, p. 176; Gill-Simmen 2020, p. 140).



Figure 4.11: The Thinking Hat Metaphors (De Bono 2000)

In this point of view, the white (Analytical) hat checks the existing facts and knowledge by analysing the available information (for example, financial reports or the result of marketing surveys) (de Bono 2000, p. 5). If managers put on only this hat while formulating strategies, they put a value on evidence and do not consider the interpretations and possible changing opinions. The red hat focuses on “non-rational aspects of thinking” such as emotional resonance (concern, stress, anxiety, pleasure, or desire), which could alter the process of strategizing in the preparation stage discussed in Chapter 4.1.1 (de Bono 2000, p. 50; Sloan 2016, p. 69). The benefit of bringing the feelings, intuitions and judgments to the surface is in becoming aware

of the emotional background that is influential in the process of thinking (de Bono 2000, p. 54). If the managers put on the red thinking hat during the process of evaluating the solutions, they may make the influence of their feelings more visible in the process of decision-making.

The purpose of the black hat is to remain cautious, logical, ethical, and critical. Therefore, an important function of the black hat is to assess risk (de Bono 2000, p. 83). The limitations, obstacles, and weaknesses of potential solutions in the future must be considered in this way of thinking (de Bono 2000, p. 88). The yellow hat searches for practical values and best-case scenarios. This is the experience stage in the learning process of strategic thinking, which has been discussed in Chapter 4.1.1. In this stage, having hope (learning from mistakes and being optimistic) plays a powerful role (de Bono 2000, p. 108; Sloan 2016, pp. 80-87). As discussed in Chapter 4.3.2.2.2.3, using the scenario technique is also aimed at taking on different viewpoints by alternating ways of reasoning and thinking (taking off the black hat and putting on the yellow hat, or vice versa).

The green hat reflects the conceptualizing or re-evaluation stage in the strategic thinking learning process (Chapter 4.1.1). This hat enables managers to change their perspective and move on to a fresh suggestion or new idea (entrepreneurial thinking). The blue hat is a symbol of the sky and represents the task of observing and monitoring the situation as a whole (system thinking) in order to harmonize the way of thinking and making conclusions (de Bono 2000, p. 172). Keeping all the functions of these hats in mind will allow individuals to practice and master their strategic thinking while formulating strategic plans. Therefore, 'Six Thinking Hats' works as an interactive method in which effectual reasoning and constantly changing perspective are demanded. Based on previous discussions, the ability to select the appropriate hat (reasoning mode) in different media market situations and especially when in the grip of profound crises, will also promote a manager's self-awareness in making strategic decisions.

4.3.6.2 Dialogue and Story

As discussed in chapter 3.1.1.3, reflective thinking is part of a strategic mindset. This mindset is associated with a reflective conversation that occurs through a narrative description of the situation and the way of thinking (Hwang 2003, p. 96; Senge et al. 2014, p. 240). Arguably, questioning and reflection (based on the assumptions of query theory) work as a crucial activity in the process of strategic thinking. This is also the central point in the action learning process (discussed in chapter 4.3.2.1.1). In fact, small groups of employees, coaches, and managers who

are working on real business problems and searching for reasonable actions are experiencing the action learning process while making stories by analysing the business situation (Felfe/Franke 2014, pp. 79, 80). The focus here is on dialogue and communication to observe the way that managers interpret, make sense of the world and think. In that light, using powerful questions to expand the discussion and gain clarity about a concrete issue is important here. Significantly, thinking in dialogue and asking relevant questions could guide managers in determining what knowledge has been accrued previously, what the meaning behind the arguments was, what the lessons and knowledge could be, and which actions must be taken anew based on newly acquired insights (Wootton/Horne 2010, p. 19). In that light, effective dialogue (in the context of organizational culture) establishes mutual personal knowledge and facilitates the transfer of meaning (e.g. Bergmann 2012, p. 16). Based on the assumptions of ‘the theory of communicative action’ presented by Habermas (1981), communication is inherent in mutual and shared understanding. Fundamentally, communicative action can happen, if the actors freely agree on a collaborative behaviour (Habermas 1981, pp. 95-97). This means that with dialogic knowledge, managers can speak their minds and better follow the arguments to reach a consensus. The theory of communicative action aims to reconstruct the validity of the rationality and reasoning processes (critical thinking) that shape the social system. Media companies, as a part of this system, could also search for certain patterns to develop rules and rituals that provide managers and creative workers with a space for dialogue and communication. For example, the action learning process can be a part of the strategic forum function in the media companies (discussed in Chapter 3.5). This gives managers the possibility of gathering additional information or specific recommendations and gaining perspectives that might be overlooked.

To teach how to make effective dialogue and stories, management development training programs can choose the relevant media product and content to give the managers the possibility of visualizing different points of view in diverse cases, contexts, and senses (Roth 2001, p. 30; Huczynski/Buchanan 2006, p. 75). Practicing attentive story-telling and story-making gives media managers space to communicate their metaphors and analogies (e.g. Hwang 2003, p. 98; Schinko-Fischli 2019, p. 107). Since stories can trigger emotions and act as a “learning turbo” (Zull 2002, pp. 150, 152; Schinko-Fischli 2019, p. 106), media companies are able to ease the learning process and transfer the knowledge contributed to the strategic thinking competency of managers by using effective stories in training and development programs. For example, in 2018, Horwath wrote a graphic novel titled “Strategy Man vs. The Anti-Strategy Squad: Using Strategic Thinking to Defeat Bad Strategy” (See Figure 4.12).

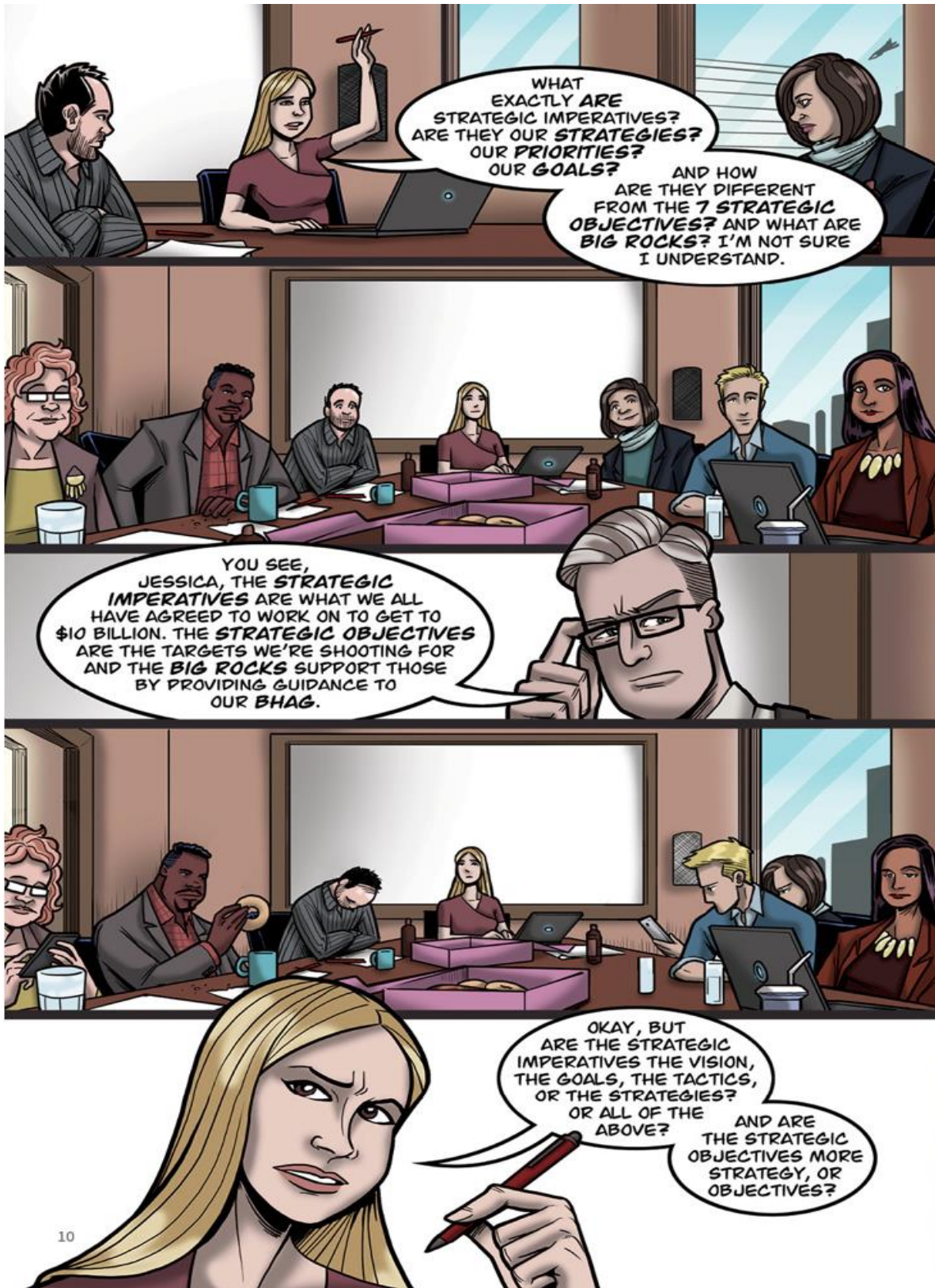


Figure 4.12: An excerpt from the book “StrategyMan vs. the Anti-Strategy Squad: Using Strategic Thinking to Defeat Bad Strategy”, written by Rich Horwath (2018, p. 10)

By presenting different characters (superhero vs. supervillain) and telling the story about confronting strategic problems, he tried to make the process of strategic thinking more understandable and absorbent for the managers. For example, the story of the book visualises the strategy meetings and the biases and questions that can occur during companies' business discussions (See Figure 4.12). This innovative way of presenting complex materials can help managers diagnose the common habits and similar situations in their companies that can hinder the strategizing and the process of policy-making.

This book also provides some insights about how to revise the business model, use strategic analysis tools, and communicate strategies effectively with the aim of fostering the competency of strategic thinking. However, based on the assumptions of Mayer's cognitive theory of multimedia learning, an improvement in learning cannot be guaranteed simply by adding pictures to words (Mayer 2005, p. 31). Therefore, more than 20 professional voice actors also lent their talents to produce an audio version of this book. Such multimedia interactions can open a window for media managers to understand others' perspectives in taking on the role of strategizing. In fact, perspective-taking could be considered a dynamic cognitive process in which managers seek to consider the thoughts and targets of others (Halevy 2016, p. 18). This allows the strategic thinker to understand and predict what is going on in other players' minds to figure out their perspectives, intentions, and probable decisions in the reality (Halevy 2016, pp. 13, 14). Indeed, utilizing these forms of content presentation in management development programs (in this case, a graphic novel) can be seen as training opportunities for media managers, not only at the individual level (self-coaching approach) but also at the organizational level based on the assumptions of CTML.

Apart from graphic novels and audiobooks, many researchers in the diverse fields of study have also highlighted the value of films, animations, and movies as an effective and innovative teaching tool in the educational process and especially in management learning courses (e.g. Kozma 1991; Anderson 1992; Boyatzis 1994; Champoux 1999; Roth 2001; Bumpus 2005; Dunphy 2009; Coëgnarts 2017; O'Doherty 2020). Research has singled out the film as a communication medium that can tell stories artistically and convey meanings better than any other media, including textbooks (e.g. Kozma 1991; Champoux 1999; Hediger 2006; Kernodle 2009; Dunphy 2009; Smithikrai 2016). Generally, by working on the individual image, motion pictures can achieve a high level of detail and control the intended representation (Hediger 2006, p. 149).

In fact, various studies have illustrated the usefulness of media content as a pedagogical instrument that can help individuals to improve their abilities and skills in different aspects of management, leadership, and business studies (Hobbs 1998; Champoux 1999; Clemens/Wolff

1999; Bumpus 2005; Huczynski/Buchanan 2006; Hediger 2006; Bilsberry/Gilbert 2008; Kernodle 2009; O'Doherty 2020). In this regard, films and movies may be considered as available dialogical and narrative materials for management training, which can in turn paint a 'big picture' of diverse business behaviours (Hediger 2006, p. 148). The advantages of using these contents include making the training program more enjoyable (e.g. Boyatzis 1994; Roth 2001), enhancing individuals' satisfaction and interest (e.g. Bumpus 2005; Dunphy 2009), improving analytical and critical skills (e.g. Anderson 1992), and increasing cognitive involvement (e.g. Kozma 1991; Bumpus 2005; Dunphy 2009). In this light, film scenes facilitate the understanding and learning of managerial theories and concepts by offering a visual portrayal of abstract phenomena (e.g. Champoux 1999, Bumpus 2005).

Therefore, scholars argued that watching famous and popular Hollywood movies or documentary films, as appropriate teaching tools (as a case study) that contain scenes depicting complicated concepts (such as organizational behaviour theories), can increase the possibility of effective interpreting and memorizing the situation in the unconscious mind of the viewer (Dunphy 2009, p. 5). In fact, the function of film and movies is in offering a new way of experimenting by creating powerful metaphorical expansion with visual and audio arts (Champoux 1999, p. 210; Coëgnarts 2017, p. 6). Therefore, the usage of films as a storyteller can be one alternative for crafting diversity, critical thinking, and creativity in the work assignment. For instance, *The Godfather* showed the progress of a family business over generations. This film illustrated the complexities of strategizing, negotiation and control in family businesses (Dunphy 2009, p. 2).

12 Angry Men is another film that has been analysed by scholars to find leadership lessons (Champoux 1999; Clemens/Wolff 1999; Kernodle 2009). The role of different personalities and individual characteristics and their influence on group dynamics, perceptions, and collective decision-making is evident in this film (Kernodle 2009, pp. 42, 43). The application of such films in development training program materials could pose a more central question to rationality and a way of reasoning and thinking (critical thinking) that managers apply in process of approaching the issues and strategizing. Moreover, the viewer could be motivated to question their assumptions and be more aware of their thinking in practice (O'Doherty 2020, p. 375), which is a requirement of the strategic mindset.

Another example is the German documentary film *Rhythm Is It*, in 2004, which sought to explain that the combination of art (dance and music) and education can give students (with different languages and cultural backgrounds) the opportunity to control their attention (increase self-awareness) and to be able to change their mental models and attitudes through different

practices. This film could be used as a pedagogical tool to inspire the training of dynamic movement and explain its influence on thinking, memory, cognition, feedback, defense mechanisms, reasoning, and communication in media management education. This film also has lessons for media managers who still resist redefining their norms and goals and adapting their business model continuously (thinking strategically). The ethnographic documentary film *Leviathan* (2012) can also be considered as a significant resource for encouraging different modes of thinking for management education and learning. This film stresses thinking systematically (considering the interrelationships among diverse parts and the consequences of various actions in a broader context) and challenging the basic assumptions about a specific subject (in this film: fishing industry) (reflecting thinking) (O’Doherty 2020, pp. 367, 378).

In addition to the above examples, short films presenting the concepts of strategic thinking directly are other practical materials that could find application in management development programs at media companies and even in media management studies. For example, a 12-minute video title *Systems Thinking: A Little Film About a Big Idea*, published by Cabrera Research Lab on YouTube, aimed at explaining the concept of mental model, perspective-taking, and thinking systematically by drawing the recognizable items and scenes associated with the thinking. Figure 4.13 represented a scene of the film, in which the director aimed at showing how different diverse viewpoints could change the outcomes (Cabrera Research Lab 2015). According to the assumption of the cognitive theory of multimedia learning, the visualization of an abstract object (in this case: system thinking) along with a detailed explanation could be helpful in conveying the meaning of the concept.



Figure 4.13: Perspective-taking - A scene of the film “Systems Thinking: A Little Film About a Big Idea” (Cabrera Research Lab 2015)

In summary, various approaches have been proposed to show that using films and movies in the training programs makes it easier to transfer the meaning of concepts and illustrate their functions in a real company. The lessons learned in these films and movies could also help managers to recall the relevant senses in the workplace later (Smithikrai 2016, p. 524). Moreover, they could be considered as case studies for teaching media management and economics. However, there is no recommended structure to help scientists evaluate narrative films in terms of identifying applications of theories and considerations of rationality (Dunphy 2009; O'Doherty 2020). Thus, further research into this topic is needed to examine the usability of such media products as educational material in management education at universities and business schools.

4.3.6.3 Simulation, Prototyping and Science Fiction

By pre-experiencing the future, simulation is an instructional method in the management education programs that aims at providing multimedia space and interactive situations to portray business issues (Stumpf 1989, p. 37; Hwang 2003, p. 97; Ncube 2010, pp. 569, 570). The basic idea of simulation is to give managers the opportunity of redesigning and re-correcting similar practices in a simulated environment to experience different scenarios again and again and ultimately avoid the high cost of real-world failure and negative consequences (Stumpf 1989; Liedtka 1998b; Watkins 2007; Ncube 2010; Felfe/Franke 2014; Wright/Paroutis/Blettner 2013). Furthermore, simulation enables the manager to imagine, predict and test the feasibility and viability of several assumptions and plans by creating a form of virtual reality (Hwang 2003, p. 97; Lu/Hallinger/Showanasai 2014, p. 220). This means that in simulation, managers, and companies can take control over the learning process and need not wait for a real-work situation to occur (Felfe/Franke 2014, p. 76). In this point of view, simulation and visualization empower design mindset as a part of strategic thinking (Liedtka/Ogilvie 2011, p. 49).

One of the most popular simulation techniques in business analysis is Porter's five forces analysis model. The focus of this analysis tool is on exploring the potential consequences that may arise from different activities by simplifying the market game in the form of a model (Porter/Siggelkow 2008, p. 35). However, in order to survive in an ever-shifting and hyper-competitive environment such as the new media market (discussed in Chapter 2.1.1), managers must deal with multiple complex issues simultaneously (discussed in Chapter 2.1.3). This means that the real media business is more complicated than merely simplifying the power of competitors. Thus, there is a need to explore the application of combined analysis methods in the specific

context of media companies (e.g. Wright/Paroutis/Blettner 2013, pp. 96, 112), and evaluate their usability for future media managers. In this regard, in addition to traditional techniques (Figure 2.8: A pillar temple model), other simulation analysis methods could also be designed and developed to practice and learn to think strategically in media companies.

For example, in comparison to other strategic analysis and future research techniques, science fiction and prototyping are the lesser-known methods. The study by Göpfert and Kersting (2019) of 76 German companies indicated that only 19 companies have experience utilizing those methods. In essence, the goal of science fiction and prototyping is to integrate people with future technologies to derive the possible implications for shaping the future. For example, with the help of artificial intelligence, mixed reality visualization, and simulation, the goal of Talespin Company (an American start-up) is empowering leadership soft skills (See Figure 4.14). To do so, this company designs training programs and creates virtual human characters that enable managers to practice the unpleasant situation of firing employees in a prototyped situation (Talespin Co. 2020). The basic idea here is to make the new abstract concept stick in mind and burn it into long-term memory (based on the assumptions of the cognitive theory of multimedia learning) by practicing the situation, again and again, to be able to anticipate the possible future reactions. This helps managers to be prepared for unexpected situations and to think in diverse scenarios and options (divergent thinking).



Figure 4.14: Talespin’s virtual reality training module (Reuters 2019)

Moreover, books, short stories, or films contain various subgenres of science fiction and prototyping models that embody a high degree of creativity and imagination (Göpfert/Kersting 2019, p. 226). It is important to find out which kind of these media products and contents can find application in developing training programs or in teaching media management – in form of course materials in an educational context – with the purpose of developing the strategic thinking competency of media managers. For example, Gernsback (1884-1967), an engineer and editor, published numerous magazines on technical topics and the science fiction genre, such as *Science and Invention* (1920-1928) *Amazing Stories* (1926-1929), and *Wonder Stories* (1929-1936). Some examples of Gernsback’s magazines’ cover photos (Figure 4.15) and related stories illustrated his point of view on subjects such as external distractions and noises in the workplace (left picture). The idea was to show that through the application of an isolator in form of a helmet, attention, and focus – as well as the possibility of generating novel ideas – could be increased (Vrobel 2017, p. 165). One interpretation of this image at that time may be that it underlies the role of cautiousness of the inward nature of mind in the process of strategic thinking. The isolator in this perspective was then aimed at discovering internal noise and biases (Vrobel 2017, p. 166; Shure 2018, p. 244). This echoes function of meditation as mindfulness training in developing the competency of strategic thinking (discussed in chapter 4.3.2.1.2).



Figure 4.15: Cover photos from *Science and Invention* magazine between 1923 and 1926 (Archive.org 2020).

The idea behind the story of ‘Newsletter as a radio loud talker’ (Figure 4.15, right picture) was to present a talking newspaper with the ability to lead a conversation with the reader by employing a human voice. To use the device, it would only be necessary to put the newspaper on the wall and use the audio frequency amplifier and a telephone transmitter (Worldradiohistory Archive 2020, p. 858). Indeed, such stories, which were commonly published in different magazines in the 1920s (more examples attached in Appendix 4.2, p. 223) sought to predict future technological changes and trends in the media industries. However, the slow revolution of TV and radio technologies at that time (between 1920 and 1930) confirms the unnoticed valuable artistic contents (such as the content and stories mentioned above) in the process of strategizing of media companies. These examples highlight the worth of media professionals’ works in foreseeing future changes and design thinking through utilizing the science-fiction technique. Hence, it is vital to investigate the strengths of existing media content and product, as well as the role of creative workers in generating novel ideas in the process of strategic thinking development. Such fantasies and imaginative exercises produced in media companies nowadays can be considered as a source of organizational scenarios. In fact, science fiction and prototyping content – produced in diverse media forms (e.g. illustrated, story, cartoon, or video) – can be valuable materials in terms of helping managers to design and test hypotheses and to build different scenarios about the future and think strategically.

Another example that highlights the formation of novel ideas using science fiction is the article of *Rundfunk von morgen* in UHU Magazine published by *Ullstein Verlag*, written by Ludwig Kapeller (1925). This story described the emerging and expanding form of television and radio transmission (Appendix 4.3, p. 224). The scenario that has been developed at that time was that radio stations of the future will be small enough to put them in one’s pocket (Kapeller 1925, p. 66). In this story, the creative worker envisioned the possible alternatives for future radio consumption with the help of science fiction genres. This kind of content and media product in an educational context could also stimulate the imagination of students (the next generation of media managers) in the field of media management to expand their vision about the media industries, predict and explore possible changes and innovation in the future of business.

Arguably, the diverse job positions and responsibilities of media managers (discussed in chapter 2.1.3.1) at different levels – along with different individual self-set goals and prioritizations in their duties – increase the complexity involved in finding appropriate training. In this light, personalized coaching and training offerings that consider the maturity level of managers and the potential of media content in improving strategic thinking competency should be favored

over a generalized program. It should also be recognized that management development training should focus more on the context of media companies and industrial-specific concerns and challenges (discussed in Chapter 2.1.3.2). Empirical studies have confirmed that a more comprehensive approach is needed to support and train managers (e.g. Milner/McCarthy/Milner 2018). Moreover, since learning is a long-term process; lifelong practice (informal) and continuous learning ('on-the-job' and formal learning) are required to build a strategic mindset in media companies (discussed in chapter 4.1.2). In this light, the role of teaching materials in the field of media management and economics becomes crucial in educating and fostering future media managers who can think strategically. Nevertheless, there are still some limitations and hindrances in the process of developing the competency of strategic thinking. The next chapter will discuss these fundamental obstacles.

4.4 Hindrances in Improving the Competency of Strategic Thinking in Media Companies

The final section of this study aims to introduce barriers that impede the development of strategic thinking competency in media companies. According to discussions in Chapter 2, it can be concluded that an isolated focus on strategic planning can undermine thoughtful decision-making by limiting it to a set of checklists to tick off. Moreover, relying only on the business data analysis provided by various software, tools and algorithms narrow the managers' frame and perspective-taking in the process of strategizing and policy-making. In fact, these kinds of traps hinder managers' ability to question and reframe their beliefs and assumptions and to take decisive actions (Mintzberg 1994; Pellegrino/Carbo 2001; O'Shannassy 2003; Fleisher/Bensoussan 2003; Raguž/Podrug/Jelenc 2015). As discussed before, the unstable and highly dynamic media market forces media managers to respond rapidly to crises. This increases the risk of making decisions without first ascertaining the optimal and useful strategic solutions. As explained before, applying the same frame of thought (mental model) and being rigid in one's way of thinking causes the neglect of strategic thinking (Sloan 2016, p. 104). Furthermore, being trapped in confirmation (being conformist and satisfied) and over-optimistic biases (being overconfident) will also prevent media managers from thinking critically and strategically (e.g. Sloan 2016, p. 170, 171; Kahneman 2011, pp. 81, 255). Open reacting to critics and discussing ideas (openness to experiences) will help a manager to create new insight, learn, improve, and build strategic thinking skills (Senge et al. 1999, p. 498; Goldman 2012, p. 34; Wright/Paroutis/Blettner 2013, p. 96).

According to the arguments in Chapter 4.2.4, indecisive leaders who inhibit truthful conversation and have difficulty hearing others' points of views (have non-leadership, or laissez-faire leadership style) cannot think divergently and strategically (Senge et al. 2014, p. 237; Beer/Finnström/Schrader 2016, p. 5). In fact, to protect their own strategies and actions, these managers exhibit mostly defensive reasoning mindsets that prevent them from challenging their own assumptions (Argyris 1977, p. 13; Argyris 2003, p. 1180). From Argyris's (1991, p. 5) perspective, such defensive reasoning can impede the learning process. As discussed before, most media companies focus on discovering and resolving problems, at the same time they obstruct critical learning and thinking. The empirical research of Göpfert and Kersting (2019) on 76 German companies indicated that most managers and employees work routinely without questioning their own actions. Thus, in order to achieve generative growth, productive constant questioning and double-loop learning should replace defensive reasoning (e.g. Argyris 1991, p. 11; Law/Cao 2020, p. 31).

Moreover, Cabane and Pollack (2017, pp. 5, 6) stated that uncertainty and fear of failure can obstruct the breakthrough mindset and the process of strategic thinking. In this light, media managers must accept the risk of being fallible. Nevertheless, repeating mistakes and non-trivial learning will also impede their strategic thinking competency (e.g. Wootton/Horne 2010). By observing the daily morning meetings at the *Hufvudstadsbladet* newsroom (the largest Swedish-language newspaper in Finland), Mats (2013, p. 208) confirmed that even daily meetings fail to give managers space to think beyond ordinary news flows (review of current edition) and immediate tasks. Studies have also verified that the most long-established media companies are locked in their old thinking patterns because of their managers' traditional behaviour (Artero/Manfredi 2016, p. 56; Greck, Franzetti/Altmeyden 2017, p. 126), which originates from the traditional way of thinking and approaching the problems. Thus, to avoid business myopia, it is crucial for managers to learn to be self-critical (Göpfert/Kersting 2019, p. 229). In this situation, open reflection is helpful in abandoning perceptual routines (Bergmann/Daub 2007, pp. 171, 179). The steps of cognitive restructuring and mind shift (discussed in Chapter 4.3.2.1.4) may be also relevant in this matter.

Furthermore, the results of empirical studies revealed a negative relationship between neuroticism as a personality type and strategic thinking competency. This means that media managers who feel anxious and stressed at work are less capable of thinking strategically (Azarpour/Abooyee Ardakan/Gholipour 2016). Drawing on the literature review, dealing with emotional crises (for example anxiety and aggression) under time pressure is a crucial skill for thinking strategically (Buerschaper 2000, pp. 172, 173; Sloan 2017, p. 87). More importantly, studies also showed that organizational conflict, role ambiguity, and budgetary limits diminish creative efforts and thinking strategically, especially in a workplace where constant innovation, fast problem-solving, and effective negotiations are needed (e.g. Schüller 2015, p. 213; Hollifield et al. 2016, p. 5).

Furthermore, managers who are surrounded by like-minded thinkers and loyalists may also miss out on the opportunity for divergent thinking, as same-frame thinking limits the chances to seek diverse solutions and insights (Sloan 2016, pp. 104, 107). Moreover, by relying only on their own perspectives in an exchanged dialogue, managers may fail to notice which problems are not being discussed. In this regard, Felin (2016, p. 96) cited the history of John Lasseter as an example. Lasseter was a young animator working at the Walt Disney Company in the 1980s. He failed to convince the top managers about the value creation potential of computer animation at that time which should become a central focus of Disney. Ultimately, he was fired. After that, he joined Lucasfilm Graphic Group, which has been acquired by Steve Jobs later and become

Pixar Animation Studios. Disney discovered the power of computer animation later and tried to get John Lasseter back, but the strategy and idea of the former employee had already walked out the door (Felin 2016, p. 96). In 2006, the Walt Disney Company bought Pixar for USD 7.4 billion.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Summary of Study

Most existing studies in the field of media management and economics have shown that media products are very different in terms of production, distribution mechanisms, and costs in comparison to other industries (Baumgarth 2004; Picard 2005; Aris/Bughin 2009; Mierzejewska 2011). In this regard, there are also specific concerns such as multi-purpose content production and cross-media distribution in the media businesses (e.g. Lowe 2016). In this market, a company's success largely depends on the power of the content brand in attracting audiences. However, as discussed previously (in Chapter 2.1), it is difficult for new entrants to build an independent brand in the media market. The concept of a strong media brand requires stability over a longer period and differentiation of the brand against competitors (Baumgarth 2004, p. 9). This also poses a formidable challenge for traditional media companies. Moreover, since most of the contents are short-lived products, sometimes they must be created anew every day (Noam 2018, p. 629). Therefore, many media companies must have a high level of content production to generate a wide range of various products to maximize audience reach by distributing the content everywhere (Kung 2007, p. 34; Aris 2011, p. 267). This approach also leaves media companies vulnerable to data piracy and digital deception, because the target group can simply access the content from alternative platforms. Moreover, the competition in new media markets among the FAANG companies (Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Netflix, and Google) as content aggregators as well as the top international media conglomerates (such as AT&T Inc., Comcast Corporation Co., and Walt Disney Co.) has deteriorated the situation for traditional media companies (Albarran 2019, p. 174). Competing with streaming services providers, major labels, as well as considering political impacts are some additional challenges confronting media managers.

According to the new media market (Figure 2.1), it is crucial to have special competencies to confront diverse concerns in the media business. This complex environment of media business increases the need for competent managers who can remain aware of changes and rapid innovations to strategize effectively in the highly competitive media industry. However, most studies in media management and economics express concern that media managers' knowledge of strategy is narrow and the recognition of strategic solutions is challenging for media companies especially traditional ones (Picard 2004, Andreescu 2009, Kung 2011). Thus, due to cooperation with diverse stockholders, media managers – in addition to their traditional roles such as forecasting, motivating, planning, organizing, negotiating, controlling, and commanding –

should undertake dissimilar and novel duties (Artero/Manfredi 2016, pp. 47, 48; Hollifield et al. 2016, p. 160). For example, the competent media executive who works for TV companies is simultaneously a content (editor, social media, online), business (marketing, licensing, venture capital, portfolio), and process manager (Schüller 2015, p. 221). Studying the media management literature shows that there have been no specific studies of how media managers can at the same time outperform these diverse roles and responsibilities, process information systematically, and strategize quickly to develop optimal strategic solutions and overcome business problems and operational challenges. The assumption of this study is that media managers' competency in strategic thinking helps them to remain aware of changes, adjust media companies to the new condition, diagnose strategic problems and quickly devise solutions.

To provide a basic understanding of the uniqueness of the media market and specific managerial concerns and challenges, this study performed an exploratory literature review in Chapter 2, which discussed the need for managers of media companies to make informed decisions and act properly and quickly in times of crisis. However, the review of related literature and the perspective of media practitioners demonstrate that many media companies, especially traditional ones, spend most of their time and energy reacting to existing problems (acting defensively) instead of forecasting changes and threats (acting proactively) (e.g. Benito-Ostolaza/Sanchis-Llopis 2014, p. 785). It should be noted that an uncertain and complicated market forces the decision-makers and managers to rely mostly on their own preferences based on accessible information. In such circumstances, they tend to simplify the situation and reduce the number of alternatives, which results in neglecting an important part of the available information. Therefore, the strategizing process may lead to a satisfying decision rather than an optimizing one. Furthermore, the high speed of changes in the media industry makes the business environment more chaotic, which increases the need for unique strategic decisions. As a result, to survive and prosper in this complicated market, where customers' and audiences' needs are changing rapidly and daily, media companies – especially the small and traditional ones – should modify their strategies more often.

Moreover, hybridized media products, along with diverse revenue streams from different sources, cause a modification in the structure and business model of the media industry, which makes it challenging for media managers to track the ongoing convergence within the media production process and find new opportunities associated with the monetization of media content (Deuz /Prenger 2019, pp. 18, 19). It is also clear that by ignoring changes and defending the status quo, media businesses are likely to lose their competitive advantages and their place in the market, which ultimately leads to the downfall of their companies (e.g. Picard 2004;

Andrescu 2009). In fact, the developments in digital transformation (e.g. the appearance of content intelligence and cloud-based workflows) and the highly turbulent competitive media market make it extremely difficult to identify and implement deliberate strategies. In general, the question of how leaders and managers can best position their companies strategically has not been studied very well in-depth (Dragoni et al. 2011, p. 831).

Therefore, this study attempts to shed more light on the uniqueness of strategic management in the media business and illustrate the possibility of finding solutions to the above challenges and concerns by learning and developing the strategic thinking competency of media managers (including critical, design, and entrepreneurial thinking). In previous studies, researchers have claimed that strategic thinking is the most critical leadership and management competency in a company – one that equips managers to have a clear mental picture about the business actors and understand the market complexity (Liedtka 1998b, pp. 122, 123; Artero/Manfredi 2016, pp. 57). This competency empowers managers to respond efficiently to strategic problems and make thoughtful decisions in confronting the increasing complexity of the media industry. Literature review shows that managers without this competency will fail to create a well-defined vision and produce competitive strategies for companies (Theiss 2018, p. 209). This study assumes that by improving the strategic thinking competency of media managers as an inimitable and unsubstituted resource (based on VRIO strategy), media companies can build a competitive advantage by improving their missions. Thus, the current study sought to demonstrate the critical role of strategic thinking competency in managing media companies to provide new insights into strategic management studies in the field of media management and economics.

The concept of strategic thinking has been discussed in the fields of strategic management and cognitive research. Nevertheless, it has been relatively rarely used in the context of media management and economics research. Before borrowing and applying the concept of strategic thinking in the context of the media industry, it was necessary to carefully explain its contributions to the field of media management and economics. Chapter 2.1.4.2 covered this point and Chapter 2.2 addressed the theoretical background of the study by describing the origin of the concept of strategic thinking. Most definitions provided in the literature focused on the actions and behaviours occurring in the strategic thinking process rather than explaining its dimensions and components. Moreover, the literature review on the topic illustrated a conceptual gap in understanding the main domains and dispositions of strategic thinking while also overlooking the viewpoints of the other related disciplines such as applied psychology, educational studies, and organizational cognitive neuroscience. Therefore, Chapter 3.1.2 summarized the whole discus-

sion and adopted multidimensional and multidisciplinary perspectives to reach a solid consensus. More centrally, to identify which factors play a significant role in thinking strategically, it was necessary to understand what constitutes a strategic mindset. Reviewing the literature indicated similar terms (Figure 3.2) that initially overlap with strategic thinking or reflect comparable approaches to this concept. Therefore, the target of Chapter 3.2 was to provide a comprehensive overview of research on strategic thinking. From the perspective of diverse fields of studies, the main components of strategic mindset are the critical (system and divergent), entrepreneurial, and design mindsets (Table 3.4).

Having outlined the background of strategic thinking, the next section of this thesis (Chapter 4) focused on identifying the learning, training, and exercising methods and practices (at the individual and organizational level) that can improve the strategic thinking ability of media managers. Because solely possessing knowledge and skill about strategic thinking is not enough to be competent in this way of thinking, researchers in applied psychology have emphasized the importance of continuously practicing and learning the competency (Rodolfa et al. 2005, p. 348). In this light, the question of which factors are related to the process of learning to think strategically is as important as understanding how strategic thinking can be developed during work experiences and education in media management and economics studies. Due to the lack of studies in this area, Chapter 4.3 considered the perspective of scientists in the field of education and business studies to provide some suggestions that may be applicable not only for media companies but also for students in the field of media management and economics. Indeed, the purpose of Chapter 4.3 was to overview knowledge from the diverse field of studies and extract techniques that would be relevant for developing the competency of strategic thinking in media companies. Some examples here are reflective practices (purposeful questioning), mindfulness, self-awareness.

Moreover, based on The Ken Blanchard Companies' research (2019), the current challenges facing companies in terms of management training and development consist of securing budget approval to finance such programs. In that light, expensive individual coaching for developing media managers' strategic thinking competency cannot be the first option – especially for small and traditional media companies– due to limited financial resources. Nevertheless, the study of The Ken Blanchard Companies (2019) on the impact of leadership and management development training on a company's performance shows a high return on investment in these programs in comparison to other forms of training. Thus, it can be concluded that management development is a worthwhile investment in human capital (Drumm 2008, p. 360). Therefore, the target of Chapters 4.3.3 through 4.3.6 was to explore the possibility of improving managerial strategic

thinking competencies considering the value of media products and contents in the context of management development and training programs. To do so, some methods and patterns have been described that can be transferred into the media industry to benefit media managers in today's challenging environment by improving their strategic thinking competency. With the help of the cognitive theory of multimedia learning, this study indicated that multimedia presentations are necessary to deliver information effectively and make the key concepts easier for learners to retrieve (Mayer 2005, pp. 32-37; Coëgnarts 2017, p. 8). Content production is the central activity of media companies, and producing specific content to develop media managers' competencies could influence the training success in terms of transferring the meaning of strategic thinking and cognitive skills (e.g. Felfe/Franke 2014, p. 49). Thus, the final sections placed more emphasis on the message and content of leadership and management training in media companies and highlighted the value of media content and products (in the forms of science fiction, prototyping, storytelling, simulation, and metaphor) in this regard.

Taken together, depending on the needs and desires of individuals, media companies should ensure that managers at any level have access to the appropriate content to help them develop strategic thinking competency. Because improving this competency is a lifelong practice, this study attempted to provide some practices to help media managers, in a self-coaching process, and media companies, in designing the appropriate programs in the long term. By reconsidering the valuable content sources and revising existing formal organizational development training, the success of transferring the aimed learning could be increased. Given this foundation, some researchers recommended the 'training to go' approach (Wainwright/Cronauer/Limberger 2019, p. 57), which highlights the power of media products and content in the process of learning to think strategically in terms of mobility (everywhere and anytime). The strength of such an approach is to support individuals in carving out the time and searching constantly for flexible space to exercise their strategic mindset. In this light, every individual has the same chances and equal opportunities to learn to think strategically.

So far, the informal development of strategic thinking competency has received little attention from the pedagogical perspective (e.g. Ehrlich 2020, p. 44). Therefore, the practices and contents presented and summarized in this study could find applications as case studies not only in teaching media management and economic studies but also in daily routine. This would help also scholars to ensure the availability of teaching materials to improve the education of powerful future global media managers who have the competency of thinking strategically. In general, the suggestions provided in this study will clearly benefit managers not only in the media industry but also managers and practitioners in any business sector.

5.2 Limitations of Study and Recommendations for Future Research

Although this study elaborates on some enhancements and possibilities associated with learning and developing strategic thinking competency, it is not devoid of limitations. During the literature review, it became clear that various interdisciplinary discourses and complex scientific approaches contribute to the main topic of this study. Therefore, this study primarily strives to provide a comprehensive understanding of this concept and its elements by considering the perspective of diverse cross-disciplinary fields. Nevertheless, due to the vast number of studies related to the topic, it would be necessary to conduct more research and consider the literature of other fields of research especially philosophy and biochemistry research (e.g. brain and neuronal activities). Moreover, the focus of content analysis in this study was on the job positions published in the professional international networking website 'LinkedIn'. However, this analysis could be repeated and expanded by exploring the job market on different platforms (such as XING).

This study was designed to inspire media researchers to include the strategic thinking competency of managers in analysing and investigating the companies' vision and the process of strategy formulation. For future systematic research on this topic, it is necessary to focus separately on specific industry sectors such as music, theatre, cinema, and gaming and to discuss the particular possibilities of improving strategic thinking competency in each media business. More precisely, the difference between public or private media companies in terms of value orientation and business vision with several manager populations could make a novel contribution. Therefore, there is a need to specialize in training and education within the context of different systems and media companies.

Moreover, a broader set of explanations is required to track the impact of influential factors on the learning process of strategic thinking in media companies. For example, as discussed in this study, creative workers as a source of insights and ideas must gain a clear understanding of the companies' strategic intent (O'Shannassy 2003, p. 56; Felin 2016, p. 96). Based on discussions in Chapters 2.1.3.2, it is challenging for media managers to grant greater autonomy to creative workers in their roles (Küng 2007a, p. 3; Küng 2007b, p. 28) and involve them in the process of strategy-making. These ambiguities and conflicts in fulfilling the job requirements and simultaneously following the company's strategies without engaging in the process of strategizing are exacerbated when the old structure and unnecessary regulations hinder the process of critical thinking and dynamic questioning. Furthermore, future works must establish to examine

whether media ownership and media policy limit the competency of strategic thinking (e.g. Jin et al. 2020, p. 86).

Even now, very little effort has been made to interpret the findings from U.S. and European studies and to make these conclusions applicable to the global media industry. This means that mainstream scholars have ignored the cultural and social context of learning in the process of thinking strategically. This increases the need for more empirical studies to assess the possibility of applying international training programs for media managers in diverse countries with different cultural backgrounds, social norms, and infrastructure development. Additionally, the degree of freedom, empowerment, and level of well-being (political freedom, social opportunities, economic facilities, and protective security) in developing countries (based on the assumption of ‘capability approach’ presented by Sen in 1993) affect the learning process of strategic thinking competency in the long term. This should be considered in future studies on international human resource development. Since there is no amenable instruction or practice that works for every individual in every industry and country, it is, therefore, necessary to re-evaluate several strategies and different media content to build a mastery (e.g. Brown/Roediger/McDaniel 2014, p. 5).

Furthermore, scholars have emphasized the lack of research in examining the effectiveness of developing strategic thinking programs (e.g. Goldman, Scott, and Follman 2015, pp. 158, 159). For example, the question that can arise here is, whether managers’ age influences the effectiveness of training and learning. The research shows that with normal aging, the speed of processing information, mental flexibility, and learning ability will decline (Murman 2015, pp. 112, 113). These are requirements for thinking strategically. Therefore, there is a need to design instructions and training programs that consider managers of different ages. According to the discussions in Chapter 4.2.1, personality also affects managers’ way of strategic thinking. Therefore, an exploration of the relationship between the dark triad of personality traits (narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy) and strategic thinking is essential.

This study sought to highlight that, by changing the way media managers think about the company and the business, they could improve their competency of acting, handling, and responding to changes and strategic issues more effectively and efficiently. However, this introductory work opened new insights on approaches and methods that help managers to develop strategic thinking competency at a theoretical level; in the future, further empirical explorations are required to flesh out the suggestions and evaluate the assumptions discussed in this study. Moreover, detailed recommendations demand further study to test the process of learning to think

strategically and its applications in media companies. This study focused only on the improvement of training design, transfer of meaning and did not evaluate the trainees' learning or reactions, or the programs' outcomes. Therefore, in order to have a broad range of values implemented, a longitudinal study can provide a better understanding of the necessary changes in management training in terms of improving strategic thinking competency.

This study assumed that human resource development practitioners and media managers can successfully implement and practice some of the presented methods to facilitate the process of learning and fostering strategic thinking. However, "future research should examine whether effective content can improve affective outcomes to a greater extent" in management development programs (Lacerenza et al. 2017, p. 1701). In this regard, a need, desire and motivation analysis of participants may improve the training transfer and effectiveness (Sitzmann/Weinhardt 2018, p. 745). Furthermore, the influence of the different forms of participation in management development programs – whether mandatory or voluntary, virtually or face-to-face – should be taken into consideration before designing and launching the training courses (e.g. Lacerenza et al. 2017, pp. 1701, 1703). In this point of view, the content is not a mere short-lived product and could generate value in the long term for media companies. In general, this study aimed to advance strategic management research in terms of suggesting the possibilities of using alternative teaching materials and contents in management development training programs. This can also be applied in business curricula to edify future media managers who are able to envision the future and analyse the business issues through different lenses. Furthermore, integrating university degree programs with the aim of fostering individuals' strategic mindset could enrich personal development programs in media companies.

It is also interesting to note that countless discussions indicated that in the future, some jobs may be replaced by the development of technology and artificial intelligence. However, numerous doubts remain as to the possibility of technology replacing the functions of human minds in the process of strategizing and thinking strategically. In *Harvard Business Review*, Pistrui (2018) supports this notion by explaining that it is still impossible to automate tasks that need a high degree of innovative analysis, risk-taking, imagination, and strategic thinking. Given the new media market model (Figure 2.1), it is clear that modern technologies can assist top media management teams in the process of decision-making by accelerating data analysis, facilitating simulations, and delivering more comprehensive insights. Nevertheless, there will be an increasing need for further research that explores the potential of technical solutions for the integration of modern tools into the process of strategizing and policy-making to establish optimal

human-machine interactions that support media managers in gaining deeper insights about the business and thinking strategically (e.g. Chan-Olmsted 2019, p. 211).

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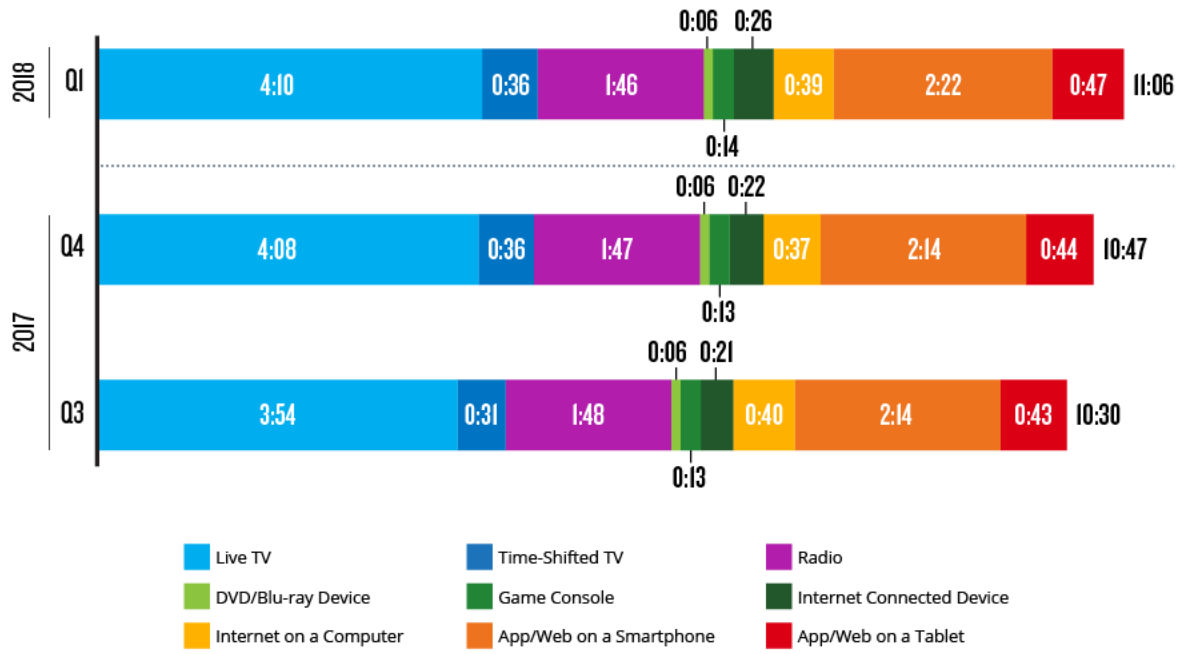
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Appendix

Appendix 2.1: Media usage in USA (Nielson Total Audience Report 2018)



Appendix 2.2: The Webpage of SKY UK Company on LinkedIn (2018)

The screenshot displays the LinkedIn profile of Sky UK. At the top, there is a navigation bar with icons for Home, My Network, Jobs, Messaging, Notifications, and Me. The main banner features a tennis court with the text "How's this for an office?" and "Says Jonny, Sky Sports Production Manager". Below the banner, the Sky logo and name are visible, along with the location "Broadcast Media · Osterley, London" and "296,227 followers". A section titled "A job you love to talk about" includes a "+ Follow" button and a "Visit website" link. To the right, it says "2 people from your school were hired here" and "See all 24,500 employees on LinkedIn".

On the left sidebar, the "Jobs" tab is highlighted with a red arrow. The main content area features a job alert section: "Never miss an opportunity at Sky. Create a job alert to get notified when jobs matching your skills are posted." Below this, a dark blue banner states "Sky has 440 job openings - find the one for you." and contains a search bar with "Manager" entered and circled in red. The "Recently posted jobs" section lists three positions:

- Data Product Analyst** at Sky, Isleworth, GB
- PMO Analyst @ NOW TV** at NOW TV, Isleworth, GB
- Insight & Research Assistant** at Sky, Isleworth, GB

A "Messaging" button is visible in the bottom right corner of the page.

Appendix 2.3: Media executive Job titles published on the website of Walt Disney on LinkedIn (Germany, Aug. 2019)

The screenshot shows a LinkedIn search interface. At the top, the search bar contains 'executive' and the location is set to 'Worldwide'. Below the search bar, there are filters for 'Jobs', 'Company (25)', 'Date Posted', 'LinkedIn Features', and 'Experience Level'. The results are sorted by 'Relevance'.

The left sidebar displays a list of job results:

- Studio Marketing Executive** (Promoted) - The Walt Disney Company, Melbourne, Australia, 4 days ago.
- Executive Director, Security Architecture & Engineering** (Promoted) - Walt Disney Direct-to-Consumer & International, New York City, NY, US, 3 hours ago.
- Sales Executive - Studio Distribution** - Walt Disney Direct-to-Consumer & International, Richmond, AU, 4 hours ago.
- Executive Assistant – Brand Development and Integrated Planning** - Walt Disney Television, Burbank, CA, US, 4 weeks ago.
- Chargé de Recrutement - Profils Cadres Dirigeants** - Disneyland Paris, Région de Paris, France, 1 week ago.
- Executive Assistant – Creative & Studio Direction** - ESPN, Bristol, CT, US, 2 weeks ago.

The main content area shows the details for the 'Studio Marketing Executive' position:

- Job Title:** Studio Marketing Executive
- Company:** The Walt Disney Company · Melbourne, Australia
- Posted:** 4 days ago · 1,341 views
- Buttons:** Save, Apply
- Comparison:** See how you compare to 90 applicants. Try Premium Free for 1 Month

Job	Company	Connections
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1/9 skills match 90 applicants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10,001 employees Burbank, CA 	<p>You have 0 connections at this company.</p> <p>Add ></p>

Job Description:

This role will contribute to the delivery of marketing campaigns for allocated Studio titles throughout the lifecycle (theatrical & in-home). You will support the team to determine Title/Content local strategy and creative positioning, manage P&L and commercial development & understanding, driving maximum revenue and efficiency for Studio and create broader TWDC revenue opportunities through a one team/one vision approach.

Responsibilities:

Champion content/titles across TWDC:

- Develop and share product knowledge/insight with the key stakeholders to grounded collaborate on direction for each title.
- Excite and drive interest in content/product within the broader Studio team and wider TWDC where relevant, e.g. DPEP
- Develop marketing collateral including presentations, updates and decks that display the local strategy for each campaign.

Help to build a business rationale for key in-home titles

Appendix 2.4: Some Example of Job positions for Media Manager on LinkedIn (Germany, Aug. 2019)

The screenshot shows the LinkedIn job search interface. At the top, the search bar contains 'media manager' and the location is set to 'Germany'. Below the search bar, there are filters for 'Jobs', 'Date Posted', 'LinkedIn Features', 'Company', and 'Experience Level'. The results are sorted by 'Relevance'.

The job listings on the left include:

- Senior Entertainment Social Media Manager, Prime Video** (Amazon, Munich, BY, DE, 2 weeks ago)
- Performance Marketing Manager** (Urban Sports Club, Berlin, Deutschland, 3 days ago)
- Media Manager** (Präsident des Landtags Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, DE, 1 month ago)
- Publicis Media - Group Head Activation Manager Digital Planning - Düsseldorf (m/w/d)** (Publicis Media, Düsseldorf, DE, 3 days ago)
- Social media manager** (University Tübingen, Baden-Baden, DE, 1 week ago)
- Senior Social Media Manager (m/w/d)** (Fresenius Kabi, Bad Homburg vor der Höhe, HES, DE)

The detailed view of the 'Senior Entertainment Social Media Manager, Prime Video' position is shown on the right. It includes the company logo, job title, location (Munich, DE), and posting date (2 weeks ago, 689 views). There are 'Save' and 'Apply' buttons. Below this, a comparison bar shows: 64 applicants, 10,001 employees, and 2 company alumni. A 'Description' section follows, detailing Amazon's Prime Video service and the role's responsibilities. At the bottom right, a 'Messaging' button is visible.

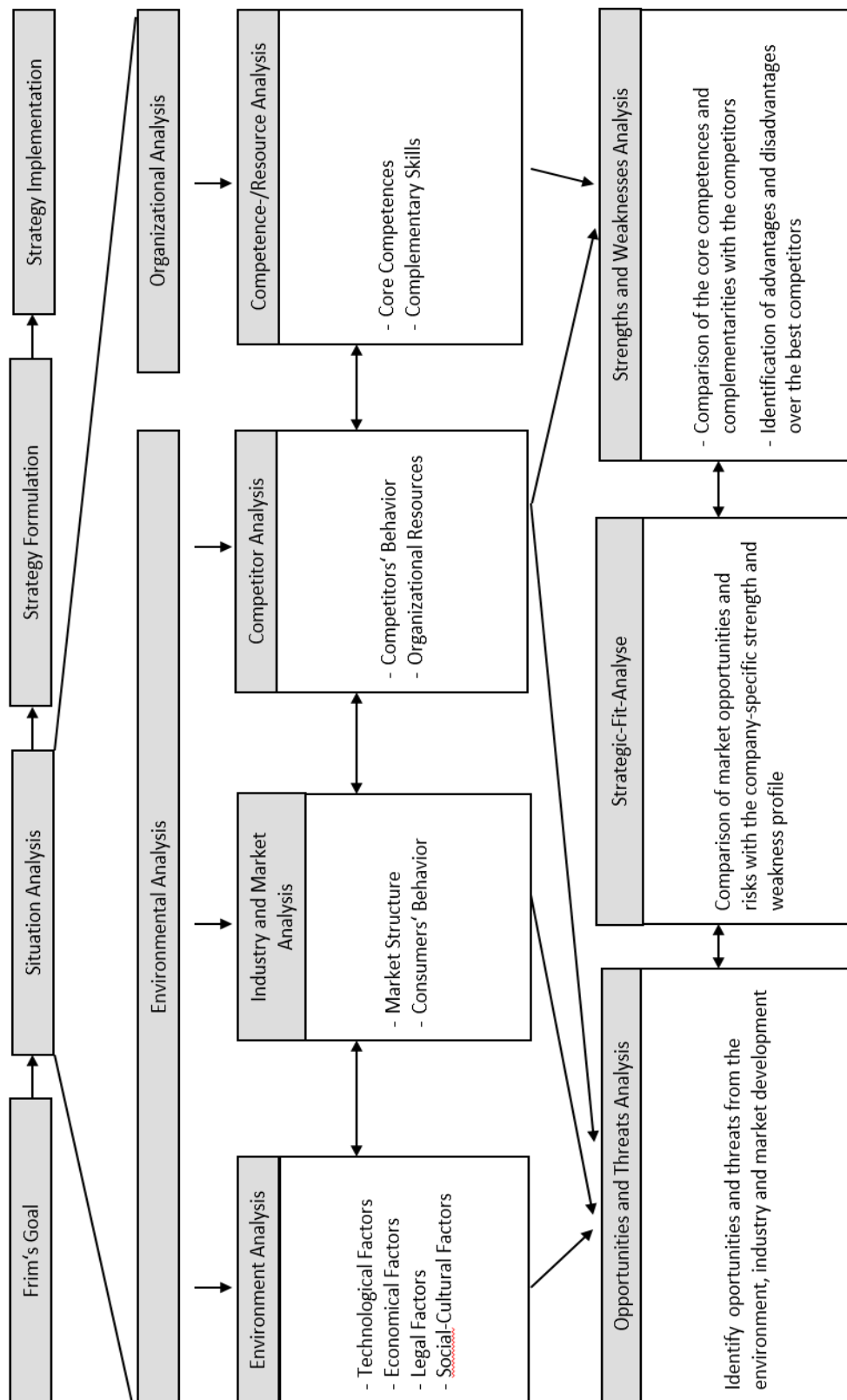
Appendix 2.5: Some examples of media managers positions posted on LinkedIn focus on the German market (Aug. 2019)

Job Title	Company Name	Description and Responsibilities
Social Media Manager	TERRITORY Content to Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conception of holistic social media strategies and projects in cooperation with other departments - Strategic consulting for customers in the social media environment - Operational support of social media appearances (community management, content creation, research planning, issue management) - Monitoring, analysis, and evaluation of customers' social media activities
Online Marketing Manager	OBO Bettermann Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build the search engine optimization area and develop an SEO strategy - Conduct on-page analysis and recognize optimization possibilities for the technical structure and content of the website
Social Media Advertising Manager	Gooqx GmbH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Administrating, placing, and monitoring overall digital advertising strategy - Analysis of campaign success with given KPIs, goals, and budgets - Ability to recognize and present complex interrelationships
Social Media / Content Manager	LANCOM Systems GmbH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The conceptual design, management, and maintenance of German-language social media presence and editorial support of reference marketing - Planning and preparation of applications for corporate and product awards (e.g. German Innovation Award) - Implementation of the customer satisfaction survey
Digital Project Manager	The Lewis Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A digital marketing generalist with knowledge in social, search, and performance marketing I- An organizational talent and have knowledge in the conception and the management of digital projects - Have a good graphic sense and think in a way that the user is centered
Paid Social Media Manager	Performics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic Planning and Evaluation of Social Media Advertisement Projects focusing on Facebook - KPI based conception, implementation, permanent monitoring, and sustainable optimization of social media projects
Digital Marketing Manager	Wienerberger AG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic planning, implementation, and control of digital marketing - Development of company websites and takeover of the project management and Content marketing

Appendix 2.6: Large media conglomerates in 2019 based on acquired revenue (Based on the work of Picard 2011; and annual report of companies: The Walt Disney Company 2018, 2019; News Corporation Co. 2018, 2019; Bertelsmann 2018, 2019; Sony Group 2019; Comcast Corporation Co. 2019)

Large Media Conglomerates	AT&T Inc.	Comcast Corporation	Sony Group	Walt Disney Co.	Bertelsmann SE & Co.	News Corporation
Headquarter	USA	USA	Japan	USA	Germany	USA
Revenue in 2019 *Billion USD	170.756 (year 2018)	80.5	79.51	69.57	14.12	10.07
Chairman (CEO)	Randall L. Stephenson	Brian L. Roberts	Shuzo Sumi, Kenichiro Yoshida	Robert Allen Iger	Thomas Rabe	Rupert Murdoch, Robert J. Thomson
Segments, Divisions or Business Units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AT&T Communications - AT&T Latin America - Warner Media (HBO MAX, CNN) - Xandr Advertising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Xfinity - NBCUniversal - Sky - Comcast Business - Comcast Technology Solutions - Comcast Ventures - Comcast Spectacor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobile Communications - Game & Network Services - Imaging Products & Sensing Solutions - Home Entertainment & Sound - Sony Picture - Sony Financial Services - Sony Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media Networks - Parks, Experiences and Products - Studio Entertainment (Pixar) - Direct-to-Consumer and International. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gruner + Jahr - RTL Group - Penguin Random House - BMG - Arvato - Printing Group - Education Group - Bertelsmann Investments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dow Jones & Company - News UK - News Corp Australia - News America Marketing - HarperCollins. - Storyful. - Move Inc. - NewYork Post
Core Media Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TV and Movie Production - Publishing - Broadcasting and Streaming - Video Games - Telecommunications - Cable, News and Business Channels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TV and Movie Production - Broadcasting and Streaming - Music - Video Games - Telecommunications - Cable Channels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TV and Movie Production - Broadcasting and Streaming - Music - Video Games - Telecommunications - Cable Channels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TV and Movie Production - Publishing - Telecommunications - Cable Channels - Music 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cable, News and Business Channels - Publishing - Radio - Broadcasting and Streaming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cable, News and Business Channels - Publishing - Radio - Broadcasting and Streaming
Missions and Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Redefining the entertainment and media activities - Delivering best Stories - Moving forward in Advertising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leading Innovation - Defining the future technologies - Delivering revolutionary entertainment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reinforcing User oriented service - Generating high level of cash flow from branded hardware businesses - Maintaining the Position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating more effective global framework - Restructuring - Forward Looking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthening the Core Creativity - Digital transformation - Growth of platforms - Growth of Regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Optimizing Portfolio - Simplifying the Structure - Enhancing Stakeholders Values

Appendix 2.7: Strategic management process (Wirtz 2019, p. 90)



Appendix 3.1: Strategic priorities of Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) for different years (based on ABC Strategic Plan 2013-2016 and Corporate Plan 2020-2025)

Some Strategic Priorities	2013-2016	2020-2025
Target Audience	Provide relevant content for all Australians and focus on international audiences	Deliver personalised digital experiences and contents
High Quality	Deliver independent distinctive trustworthy content	Remain Australia's best and most trusted source of information and news
Innovative and Efficient	Build an agile and flexible business	Remain creative, flexible, efficient and invest in the workforce of the future
Social Responsibility	Focus on safety and health in the workplace and consider the corporate governance	Strengthen local connections

Appendix 3.2: The job title and qualifications (LinkedIn, Job positions' descriptions posted on LinkedIn between December 2018 and January 2019 in Germany which entail strategic thinking competency)

Job Title	Personal and professional profile, Qualifications and responsibilities
Business Media Leader (Media and Digital Manager)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic thinker with excellent perspective-taking and open mindset (Think out of the box) - Strategic mindset combined with a pragmatic, can-do approach
Account Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability and proven experience with strategic thinking and complex decision-making - Strong Entrepreneurial mindset with excellent communication and management skills - Strong strategic thinking; the ability to solve problems and anticipate ways to overcome pain points and complex challenges
Art Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A problem-solver who does not afraid to challenge the routine and strive to bring new ideas - Support and guide brand designers in thinking holistically and continually learning. - Out of the Box Thinking
Social Media Manager (Cross Channel, E-Commerce)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creative and innovative in your daily work and your deliveries - Kreativ und innovativer Ideengeber (Kreativität und Innovationsbereitschaft) - Zielgerichtete und analytische Arbeitsweise - Denken in neuen digitalen Strategien - Ideenvielfalt und out-of-the-box-thinking
Manager Business Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have a mindset that combines initiative, strategic thinking and a hands-on mentality - Have an insight about fast-growing and dynamic industry where diverse stockholders with the different business models are working
Product (Supply, operation) Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have Business Skills: strategic and visionary thinking - Have Comprehensive strategic and conceptual thinking, - Have an ability to quickly grasp complex interrelationships paired with good analytical skills - Have an ability to design new and innovative solutions to complex problems, based on business and industry knowledge and customer-centricity - Have empathy and curiosity to listen to novel ideas

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have an ability to see the big picture and think creatively
Creative Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hohe Kreativität und Out of the box-Denken - Ganzheitlichen Blick für den Markenwert, die Zielgruppe, die Reputation, den Bedarf der Stakeholder
Director Business Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have an entrepreneurial spirit with a “can-do” attitude goal and solution-oriented - A breakthrough strategic thinker, open-minded, creative and innovative, a quick learner - Intelligence and ability to easily lead others in complex conceptual thinking and to follow comfortably along
Business Unit Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distinctively entrepreneurial and strategic thinking and acting - Combining a hands-on mentality in operational business with a strategic way of thinking and devising concepts
Head Senior Manager Media Channel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unternehmerisches und Vernetztes Denken - Kreativität im Hinblick auf Umsetzungen in der digitalen Mediabranchen
Strategic (Projects Planning) Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong analytical skills and strategic mindset (challenge the routine, dig deeper into problems to see the bigger picture of business) - An understanding of correlations in project business Flexibility and interdisciplinary teamwork skills Entrepreneurial and strategic thinking - A strategic design-thinker who understands the consultancy business
Business Planning (Corporate Strategy) Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hohe konzeptionelle und strategische Kompetenzen mit Fokus auf Zukunfts- und Trend-themen - Sehr gutes analytisches und konzeptionelles Verständnis und Denkvermögen - Ability to synthesize complex business information and data into a concise recommendation - Experience in supporting the implementation of strategic decisions within the operational units - Excellent strategic thinking and analytical skills
Global Competitive Intelligence Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have Strategic «big picture» and future-oriented thinking - Experienced in Strategic thinking and planning
Commercial Planning Manager (Head of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong combination of analytical and strategic thinking skills along with the ability to simplify the complexity of the case

Advertising, PR Manager)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask questions, provide feedback, think critically, be present and curious every day to ensure the highest level of quality work
Brand Manager (Content Marketing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creative thinking and marketing skills - Strategic thinking and flexibility to adapt - High degree of proactivity - Think not one, but two steps ahead.
Digital Content Strategy Manager (Strategic Manager)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Excellent analytical skills combined with strategic thinking - Ability to quickly adapt to the changing business changes and needs and be flexible in an ever shifting work environment. - Entdeckung und Anwendung von Techniken und Methoden (z.B. Design Thinking) - Analytical, business and strategic expertise to quickly and holistically understand, evaluate and develop business models
Associate Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pro-actively looks for opportunities to synthesize data from multiple sources to develop realistic, insightful, and actionable recommendations - Exceptional analytical and strategic thinking skills
(Digital) Marketing Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have the ability to think both creatively and critically; willing to think outside the box and challenge the status quo - Be competent in strategic thinking to find out of the box solutions - Excellent data-driven mindset, be analytical on all the decision making but also has equal ability for creative thinking
Area Sales Manager (global head of sales)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong strategic thinking ability, leadership background and sales experience.
Category Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simplifying the complex issues and searching for entrepreneurial challenges - Being competent in strategic thinking to detect key trends in the market and suggest creative solutions
IT Project Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong problem-solving, technical leadership skills, critical thinking, results-driven, and demonstrated cross-group collaboration. - Communication strength, conflict resolution competence, and strategic thinking are fundamental
Projects Manage, Planning, and Market research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prior working experience in Strategy, Planning and Consulting preferred - Demonstrated strategic thinking abilities, strong analytical and problem-solving skills - Strong analytical skills and holistic strategic mindset

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Always with the big picture in mind
Supply Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - able to think in the big picture and strategically by understanding the dynamics of the business - Out-of-the-box thinking – move quickly to make great ideas happen
Content Acquisitions Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have experience in the market and competitive analysis, and strategic thinking - Have a deep understanding of the international and national media landscapes
Regional Service Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Possess a rare combination of mental agility, analytical thinking, hands-on problem solving, and a customer-service mindset. - Be strategic and proactive. think and plan ahead - Be self-aware, flexible and open-minded. - Have Leadership experience
Customer Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entrepreneurial thinking and behavior as well as the ability to initiate and drive change - Ability to balance deep operational insight with a strategic view on the business - Ability to think strategically to drive complex projects and improvement plans.
Talent Acquisition Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Excellent communication, interpersonal and strategic thinking skills - have a strong business insight and be able to see the big picture
Pricing and Discount Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analytical skills and ability to be resilient - Advanced knowledge of Excel - Strategic thinking / high-level analytical skills with a holistic view with the ability to act on both short and long-term goals - Strategic thinking and Openness are important - Very good analysis and problem-solving skills, Out of the box thinker and forward-thinker - Entrepreneurial thinking as well as a high level of orientation towards target and result
Display and Video Sales Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have ability of thinking out of the box to consider long-term impactful changes
Analysist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have critical thinking and strong cross-functional business insight - A strong ability to understand the market trends and combine the big picture into the details of an analysis

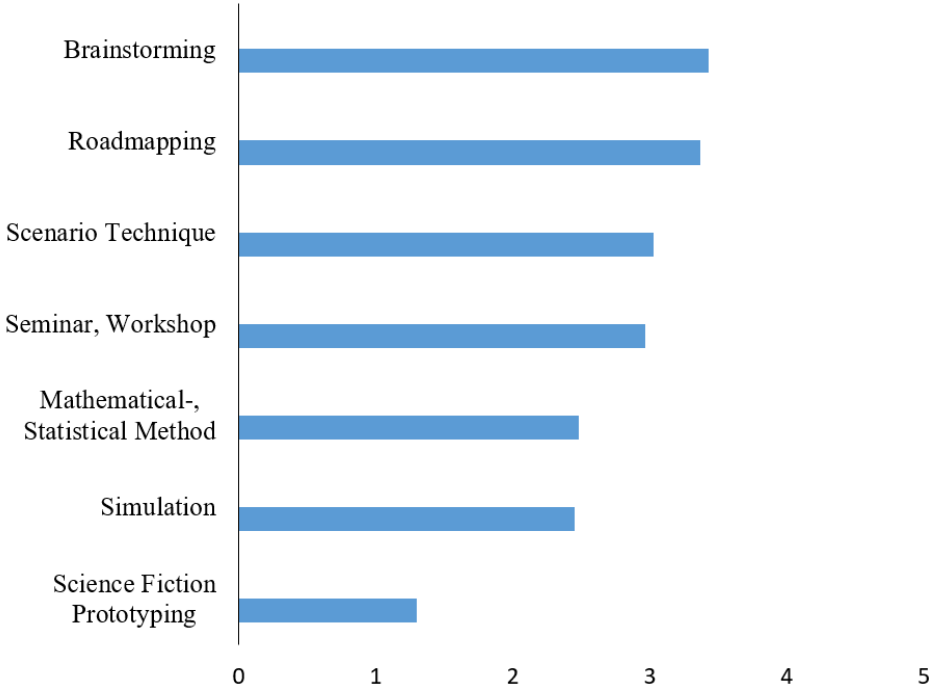
Consultant	- Have strong critical and strategic thinking: not only think beyond borders to have a big picture, but also pay attention to the details
Strategist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have excellent analytical capabilities as well as structured and strategic thinking who can scope and translate messages effectively - Have analytical and creative thinking to solve challenging issues - Experience in concept development with out-of-the-box creative ideas

Appendix 3.3: The Job Title and Qualifications (Sky Deutschland GmbH, Job offers on December 2018 on LinkedIn, entailing strategic thinking competency)

Job Title	Required Qualifications, Competencies, Skills and Dispositions
(Senior) Insight /Business Analyser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability to handle non-routine challenges and resolves issues from the application of previous experience - Ability to Perform analysis to validate business assumptions and requirements - High level of intellectual curiosity and a strong desire to promote new ideas
Retail Field Operations Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrate an ability to be flexible, adaptable and proactive - Strong problem solving and analytical ability, the ability to think strategically
Program Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be able to understand the strategic objectives of companies to priorities and deliver the planned goals - Be open, quick and transparent - Vision driven and the ability to make things happen in an environment full of ambiguity with numerous stakeholders
Digital Optimization and Analytics Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be an enthusiastic and creative problem-solver, able to identify opportunities, develop hypotheses and proactively chase these down to get a result - Be a natural planner, always looking ahead, raising issues, providing solutions and meeting deadlines
Technical Project Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have the ability to think out of the box to understand the cross-functional issues - Have the ability to communicate and collaborate across teams
Group Strategy Senior Analyst	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have the ability of simplifying the complex problems - Have experience in commercial, consulting, finance, and strategy (experience in the telecoms and media sector is supportive but not necessary)
Senior Propositions Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pro-active individual with the ability to self-manage Willing to question and critically evaluate current ways of working
Online Marketing Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have experience in executing planning and evaluating multi-million-pound campaigns

	- Have experience in evaluating and challenging the creative ideas
Business Development Executive	- A keenness to continuously learn and try new ways of working in different assignment need to be adaptable to and embrace change in a fast-paced business
National Account Manager	- Creative talent with the ability to look at things contrarily
Process Improvement Manager	- Self-motivated, pro-active and driven to succeed in the role and continually seek out development opportunities for self et al. - Creative thinker with a structured and logical approach

Appendix 4.1: The frequency of use of various future research methods in companies based on a 5- point Likert scale (Göpfert/Kersting 2019, p. 224)



Appendix 4.2: Some cover pictures of “Science and Invention” and “Amazing Stories” magazine published between 1921, 1927 (Archive.org 2020)



unseres Hörens einzuordnen, daß uns der Umweg über die Netzhaut kaum noch bewußt wird.

Und was wir von der großen Welt draußen erfahren und wissen, tausend losende Ereignisse an jedem Tag, kanonendonnernde Schlachten, krachende Eisenbahnzusammenstöße, kreischende Tragödien des einzelnen und lärmende Parlamentsitzungen: das dringt alles geräuschlos, durch das Auge, in

unser Hirn; das lesen wir in schwarzen, schweigsamen Lettern oder bewandern es in raschen Bildern, und nur blaß und schwach mag unsre Phantasie zuweilen den Lärm des Weltgeschehens dunkel ahnen. Und dann der Film, wildestes Sich-Ereignen geräuschlos vorbeiflimmernd, und das gänzlich unbeteiligte Gehör wie einen störenden Begleiter ablenkend und betäubend mit irgendeiner Musik.



Die Radiostation in der Tasche

Und nun tritt plötzlich der Rundfunk in diese ganz vom Auge beherrschte Welt der Gegenwart; nun soll plötzlich das Ohr wieder von Phantasie begabt sein, soll der verkümmerte Hörsinn, vom Blick in keiner Weise unterstützt, Bilder schaffen im Gehirn, soll aus Ton, Klang und Geräusch die Welt sich bauen, die geräuschlos bisher am Auge vorüberzog.

Das ist das Problem des Rundfunks, kaum in seinen Grenzen genau noch erfaßt; die Menschen müssen wieder hören lernen!

Fritz Ernst Bettauer, der künstlerische Leiter des Breslauer Rundfunks, sagt es irgendwo, daß er jeden Tag neue Entdeckungen mache; daß er Empfindungen, die er noch vor wenigen Wochen als einen einzigen Ton empfand, jetzt als eine Summe verschiedenartiger Geräusche analysiere. „Ich habe bewußt diese Erfahrung nachgeprüft, habe die Sinfonie der Geräusche bei der Abfahrt eines Schiffes, während der Fahrt und bei der Landung in mich aufgenommen und versucht, sie mit Ersatzgeräuschen wiederzugeben; ich habe auf den Friedrichstraßen von Rom und Konstantinopel, Jerusalem und Kairo ganz ähnlich wie ich früher als Feuilletonist das optische Bild mit den Augen einsog, jetzt die Vorgänge als akustische Sinfonie meinem Ohr einverleibt, und ich habe hören gelernt, daß ein Auto über die Schwelungen des Hebrongebirges in anderem Rhythmus fährt, als wenn es vom Piräus über die Döberitzer Heerstraße Athens nach der griechischen Hauptstadt hineinrast.“

Die Hörer des Rundfunks nun mögen noch viel schwerer zu kämpfen haben, aus dem Tönegemisch, das ihr Empfangsgerät ihnen vermittelt, jenes Bild sich zu zeichnen,