Strategy Implementation Process in SMEs: Exploring multiple cases from the KSA

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Lists of Abbreviations

AOM: Academy of Management

AT&T: American Telephone & Telegraph

CEO: Chief Executive Officer

CIA: Central Intelligence Agency

CSF: Critical Success Factor

FandB: Food and Beverage

FMCG/s: Fast Moving Consumers Good/s

FW/s: Framework/s

JMS: Journal of Management Studies

ICI: Imperial Chemical Industries’

GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council

GE: General Electric

IO: Industrial Organisation

KSA: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

MENA: Middle East and North Africa

NGOS: Non Govermental Organisations

PBUH: Peace Be Upon Him

PPBP: Public Private Business Partnership

SAP: Strategizing Activities and Practices

s-as-p: Strategy as Practice recently renamed Strategizing Activities and Practices

SI: Strategy Implementation

SIG: Special Interest Group
SIP: Strategy Implementation Process

S.R.: Saudi Riyals (KSA currency)

SMEs: Small and Medium Enterprises

UK: United Kingdom

USA: United States of America

WTO: World Trade Organisation

Publications
Parts of this thesis have been disseminated in the following publications


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Dedications

Zoubaida Alrifai
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Abstract

Originating in, and framed by, warfare, the term strategic management first appeared in the business literature in the 1950s (Carter et al., 2008). The term then started to gain more importance as organisations’ needs for implementing strategic changes increased significantly. Despite this importance, the concept is still considered to be under-developed, with complications arising from a wide variety of disciplines. In the early literature two major schools of thought could be identified: Porter’s economic deliberate content (Porter, 1979), and Mintzberg’s emergent process view (Mintzberg, 1979). The literature has shown that the majority of studies have mainly focused on large organisations, taking the traditional Porter’s content approach. However, relatively few cases have considered smaller organisations and/or explored cases from the contemporary process view, which is considered more realistic in today’s dynamic world, where extra flexibility and speed are paramount.

This thesis builds on the work of Pettigrew (1987), who viewed strategy implementation (SI) as a process. His work is extensively analysed and some recommendations are made to strengthen his ‘Triangle Model’. These recommendations allow for the development of a primitive framework for SI. The framework provides a deeper understanding of contemporary SMEs and their surrounding contexts, and can be useful for future exploratory studies of undiscovered contexts and/or for organisations of differing sizes.

The paucity of research on SI in SMEs in general, and particularly in the non-Western context (e.g. Middle East, and Gulf Cooperation Council), is the major motivation for this research adopting an interpretive, qualitative and exploratory approach. Using inductive semi-structured interviews, data have been collected on the SI process of SMEs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). SMEs represent 96% of the country’s enterprises and contribute to almost one third of the national economic activity (Bokhari, 2013). Their development is a major concern of the Saudi government, which aims to reduce the dependency on the oil sector (Bokhari, 2013; Sfakianakis, 2014; McKinsey Global Institute, 2015). In addition, SMEs have the potential to contribute to reducing the accelerating unemployment rate among the ever increasing youth population (Bokhari, 2013).

Theoretically, this thesis contributes to a deeper understanding of SI and its enablers/barriers in the SME sector. Following the approach suggested by Stacey (1996a), Mintzberg et al. (1998), and Okumus (2001), this research provides a more holistic understanding of the SI process. It sheds light on the individual dynamics of strategy implementation, as well as the organisational and external environment perspectives. By exploring these factors over the longitudinal process of SI (including initiation, process, and outcome), this research contributes a SI framework based on Mintzberg’s (1979) and Pettigrew’s (1985a) emerging process view.

In so doing, this research adds to the SI process literature at the individual level, as an epistemological tool, and does so in order to consider the dynamic nature of SMEs and the impact that non-controllable events have on their daily routines, on ontological ground (Hart, 1992). At the methodological level, evidence from multiple cases in different Saudi industries is provided, reflecting a developing country context, rather than the dominant Western views (Okumus, 2003; Van der Maas, 2008). From the empirical research, lessons are identified to inform owners of SMEs, policy makers and future research.
Chapter 1: Introduction

“Nothing is more difficult to handle, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage, than to put oneself at the head of introducing new orders. For the introducer has all those who benefit from the old orders as enemies, and he has lukewarm defenders in all those who might benefit from the new orders” (Machiavelli, 1512 in Mansfield, 1998: 23).

1.1 Research background and significance

In highly competitive, dynamic and turbulent environments, the ability to quickly and effectively implement new strategies is what determines an organisation’s success or failure (Drazin and Howard, 1984; Eisenhardt, 1989; Porter, 1996; Sashittal and Wilemon, 1996; Hauc and Kovac, 2000; Gadiesh and Gilbert, 2001). Various authors have argued that today's world is getting more dynamic, turbulent, complex and uncertain; the only constant is change (D’Aveni, 1994; Bettis and Hitt, 1995; Volberda, 1996; Collins and Porras, 1996; Porter, 1996; Hauc and Kovac, 2000; Gadiesh and Gilbert, 2001; Delmar, 2003; Kauser and Shaw, 2004; Duboff, 2004; Xie, Ding, Hu, and Kompella, 2012; Choo, Mazzarol, and Reboud, 2014; Phillips and Moutinho, 2014). Previously long and stable periods of competitive advantages have been replaced with shorter and more frequently interrupted ones (D’Aveni, 1994; Volberda, 1996; Gadiesh and Gilbert, 2001). Consequently, there has been an increase in pressure, interests, concerns, and investments toward more frequent strategic changes (Collins and Porras, 1996; Baden-Fuller and Volberda, 1997; Thomas, 2002). For example, it has been argued that organisations started to deploy Chief Strategy Officers (CSO) on an executive level to increase effort toward
this important matter (Delmar 2003). More recently, it was argued that there is hardly an organisation nowadays without a strategy (Clegg, 2012). However, great strategies are worthless if they do not get successfully implemented (Bonoma, 1984; Schilit, 1987; Hambrick and Cannella, 1989; Owen, 1993; Hussey, 1996; Noble, 1999; Okumus, 1999; Okumus and Roper, 1999; Gadiesh and Gilbert, 2001; Morgan, et al., 2007). Owen (1993: 143) argues that ‘better a first class implementation procedure for a second class strategy than vice versa’. This idea was also supported more recently by Gadiesh and Gilbert (2001). Additionally, Giles (1991 cited in Van der Maas, 2008) confirms that it is the successful implementation of robust strategies that will provide any firm with a substantial competitive advantage.

Strategy implementation has also been found to have a significant impact on the functioning, performance and effectiveness of an organisation, and is essential for its success (Hrebičiak and Joyce, 1984; Sproull and Hofmeister, 1986; Schilit, 1987; Noble, 1999; Choo et al., 2014). Furthermore, the cost of strategy implementation failure could sometimes be fatal for an organisation in terms of benefits lost, formulation expenses, and the firm’s sustainability (Nutt, 1998; Choo et al., 2014). That is why strategy implementation has been considered a vital concern in managing strategic changes (Thomas, 2002).

Ironically, despite the importance of strategy implementation, the literature has shown that many intended strategies have failed to be implemented (Nutt, 1986, 1999; Mintzberg, 1990; Lin, 1997; Miller, 2002; Kaplan and Norton, 2004; The Economist, 2004; Mankins and Steele, 2005; Van der Maas, 2008; Neilson et al., 2008). Shortfalls in, and poor implementation of, strategies were claimed to be the major issues behind these frequent failures (Sashittal and Wilemon, 1996; Hussey,
1999; Mankins and Steele, 2005; Kaplan and Norton, 2008). Other studies have also confirmed that, most of the time, strategy failures occur specifically during implementation, which highlights the importance of exploring the implementation process (Alexander, 1985; Sashittal and Wilemon, 1996; Cravens, 1998; Noble, 1999; Nutt, 1987, 1999; Flood et al., 2000; Miller, 2002; Okumus, 2003; Mintzberg, 2008).

Alexander (1985), for instance, asserts that after a good strategy is formulated, major difficulties are most likely to arise during the implementation process. Since 1975, Churchman and many other scholars have called attention to the “Implementation problem” (Mazzola and Kellermanns, 2010). That is what Nutt’s describes as ‘the all too frequent failure to create change after seemingly viable plans have been developed’ (Nutt, 1983: 600). This idea has grown in the strategic management field and is getting more support (Flood et al., 2000).

Empirically, it was also claimed that the continuous challenge strategic managers have to deal with is ensuring that their strategies are getting implemented successfully (Cravens, 1998). Actually, an economist intelligence unit survey in the USA and Canada¹, sponsored by a consulting company, has shown that only 43% of executives rated their companies to be successful in strategy execution (The Economist, 2004). Moreover, Neilson et al.’s (2008) five year longitudinal study, including 125,000 profiles and representing more than 1,000 organisations in over 50 countries, also find out that 60% of the employees rated their organisation weak at strategy execution. In addition, Nutt (1999) believes that 50% of strategic decisions fail during implementation. Also, Corboy and Corrbui (1999) claim that 70% of

¹ Majorities of theoretical and empirical research conducted in the field are actually from North American context (Shrivastava, 1986; O’Toole, 2000; Schofield, 2004; Saetren, 2005; Van der Maas, 2008) see section 1.2.1
strategies fail to get fully implemented. Furthermore, Kaplan and Norton (2004) report that 70% to 90% of organisations failed to realize success from their strategy. Likewise, Miller (2002) states that more than 70% of strategic initiatives fail to get implemented. These different studies might have limitations, but together they confirm MacLennan’s (2011) recent view that a small portion of strategy gets implemented successfully. In addition, these extensive reports of high failure in strategy implementation, along with the growing concerns of managers toward this issue, reflect clearly the importance of exploring the strategy implementation process (Nutt, 1987; Flood et al., 2000; Okumus, 2003; Van der Maas, 2008; Mintzberg, 2008).

As a result of the high failure reported in the literature, strategy implementation (SI) seems to be complex and difficult (Van der Maas, 2008). The literature demonstrated that the SI is a multifaceted, highly complex organisational phenomenon. Its process is messy, ambiguous, and involves many stakeholders and/or departments. Both academics and practitioners agree that implementation obstacles represent a continuous challenge for management (Guth and Macmillan, 1986; Vrakking, 1995). Researchers have tried to identify the main obstacles facing strategy implementation (see for example Beer and Eisenstat, 2000; Heide et al., 2002; Neilson et al., 2008). Some of these obstacles involve social and political implications, personality differences, conflicts, communication, leadership, and power issues. (Wernham, 1985; Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991; Bergadaà, 1999; Noble, 1999, 1999b; De Kluyver and Pearce, 2003; Schofield, 2004; Van der Maas, 2008).

However, the question that comes to mind is that, despite the vitality of strategy implementation, its complexity, difficulties, and high failure rates mentioned in the literature, the topic has received relatively limited academic attention (Galbraith and
Nathanson, 1978; Hrebinia and Joyce, 1984; Alexander, 1991; Dess et al., 1995; Cravens, 1998; Noble, 1999; Flood et al., 2000; Morgan et al., 2007; Van der Maas, 2008; MacLennan, 2011).

This concurs with O’Toole (2000) who mentions that research focusing on strategy implementation has decreased since 1990. It is also in agreement with Noble (1999) and Okumus (2001, 2003) who state that current researchers are finding it very hard to find solid work in the existing literature on which to base new efforts to help explain the gaps surrounding strategy implementation (Okumus, 2001, 2003; Van der Maas, 2008).

Many reasons were given to explain the scarcity of strategy implementation work (see Alexander, 1985; Aaltonen and Ikavalko, 2002; Kazmi, 2008). One reason was that the focus has been on strategy formulation rather than implementation (Hrebinia and Joyce, 1984; MacMillan and Guth, 1985; Wooldridge and Floyd, 1989; Noble, 1999; Thomas, 2002; Rapert et al., 2002). Some authors argued that this was a result of considering strategy formulation to be more glamorous, exciting, and rewarding (Wernham, 1985; Sproull and Hofmeister, 1986; Aaltonen and Ikävalko, 2002). Other scholars argued that this is caused by the false perception that strategy formulation is considered the only element required for success, while implementation is regarded a straightforward process (Pellegrinelli and Bowman, 1994; Noble, 1999). Such perspectives are mainly influenced by the rational, economic, planning school of thought\(^2\), which was, and still is, the dominant school in the field (Van der Maas, 2008). However, various scholars are of the firm opinion

\(^2\) More details about strategy implementation main school of thoughts are provided in the next Chapter 2: Literature Review
that successful implementation is way more challenging and therefore, requires more focus and attention (De Kuyver and Pearce, 2003; Miller et al., 2004).

Alexander (1991) (cited in Aaltonen and Ilävalko (2002)) believes that an individual’s uncertainty of strategy implementation details, time frame (i.e. where and when it starts and ends), the false idea that anybody can do it, and the lack of conceptual models for strategy implementation, are all reasons that can cause failure in strategy implementation. Moreover, they have suggested that strategy implementation has higher failure rates compared with strategy formulation (Alexander, 1991; Aaltonen and Ilävalko 2002). In fact, it is hard to fail a strategy formulated but not implemented, and human beings naturally tend to avoid uncertainty and risk. Another issue is that strategy implementation research is more difficult practically. Such research involves managers with operational tasks and activities that usually preoccupy them (Aaltonen and Ilävalko, 2002).

It has also been found that the limited research available on strategy implementation is fragmented, prescriptive, and lacks theory (Klein and Sorra, 1996; Noble, 1999; Van der Maas, 2008). Fragmentation could be attributed to the diverse perspectives of scholars across the different fields who have contributed diverse definitions of strategy implementation (Noble, 1999) (see the following section 2.3.1 for more details). Prescriptivity has resulted due to the focus of the majority of research in the area investigating how strategy should be implemented, rather than how it is actually implemented (Skivington and Daft, 1991). In other words, a numerous amount of research, practice and strategy discussion might be available, but very few have explored the actual processes of strategy (Mintzberg, 2008).
Lack of theory was attributed to the circumstance that most suggested frameworks are limited, since they are conceptually built and not empirically tested, and this has kept strategy implementation as a black box (Okumus, 2001; Miller et al., 2004; Van der Maas, 2008; Piening, 2011). For instance, most previous literature, as Sashittal and Wilemon (1996) stated, ‘is rich in insights about what ought to be the content of strategies, but has few guidelines for the process of deployment’ (Sashittal and Wilemon, 1996: 67). They said the literature is still largely silent on how strategy implementation processes unfold and argued that there is a lack of empirical data on the SI processes which coincide with increasing SI failures. Noble and Mokwa (1999) also argued that the limited empirical use of the available knowledge of researchers limited the knowledge of strategy implementation processes and nature. They said it also contributed toward the high failure rate currently available in almost all organisations (ibid). Therefore, in support of Sashittal and Wilemon’s (1996) argument, an essential investigation into the SI process has been conducted.

To sum up, given the importance of strategy implementation, the limited and fragmented research in the area that is mostly prescriptive. In addition to the lack of theory, the SI complexity, difficulties, and high failure rates, there has been a growing acknowledgment of the topic’s importance considered to be the process where most strategic management problems lie (Nutt, 1987; Noble, 1999; Flood et al., 2000; Okumus, 2003; Van der Maas, 2008). That is why Noble (1999: 132) reflected the importance of the topic by saying that ‘strategy implementation is a fertile area for future study’. Van der Maas (2008) also suggested that more research should be done to identify which parts or factors of the strategy implementation process are critical and under what circumstances (i.e. context). This concurs with Pettigrew (1985a and 1987a) who emphasized that it is important that future studies
adopt what he calls ‘the contextual and processual approach’ in order to better understand and evaluate the implementation process. More precisely, Pettigrew suggested investigating the process using a more holistic approach, looking at the strategy process, content, and context concurrently (Pettigrew, 1985a; 1987a). Later, by adapting the holistic view suggested by Pettigrew, Okumus and Roper (1999), added outcome (as will be further elaborated in section (2.5)). In fact, even Henry Mintzberg stated that, although numerous discussions, practices and works about strategy could be found, very few investigated the process by which they actually form in organisations (Mintzberg, 2008). These are all reasons that make this particular research significant. The following sections will demonstrate different reasons that motivated the researcher to study this particular topic.

1.2 Research motivations

1.2.1 General motives

A review of the SI literature uncovers a very strong regional bias (Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992; Okumus, 1999, 2003; Saetren, 2005; Van der Maas, 2008). The majority of research published on this domain includes authors from the States and/or Canada, with mostly a North American empirical focus (Shrivastava, 1986; O’Toole, 2000; Schofield, 2004; Saetren, 2005; Van der Maas, 2008). It was also found that North America, along with Europe, account for at least 90% of all publications in this field (O’Toole, 2000; Saetren, 2005; Van der Maas, 2008).
Similar to strategic management, the majority of strategy and policy implementation literature focuses on North American firms, with a few analysing Western European ones (Shrivastava, 1986; O’Toole, 2000; Schofield, 2004; Van der Maas, 2008). Okumus (1999, 2001, and 2003) also argues that strategy implementation literature is mainly based on conceptual and empirical data from Anglo-Saxon countries, predominantly the USA and the UK.

The majority of these western strategy implementation literatures concentrate on limited factors and their influences on the success of implementation. An increasing number of researchers have suggested adopting a holistic approach to provide a more comprehensive view for the process (Miller, 1986; Pettigrew, 1987a; Bailey and Johnson, 1992; Wilson, 1992; Mintzberg et al., 1998; Okumus, 1999). Few empirical studies have succeeded in offering that holistic view (see for instance Okumus, 1999). However, even those few empirical studies cannot be considered completely applicable in different and/or less explored contexts. To explain “how” the implementation is progressing, the “what” (targeted change) and the “why” (the context within which the strategy is implemented) need to be carefully considered. So, actors and contexts of strategy implementation vary, and accordingly, further work needs to be conducted in uncovering/non-explored areas such as the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region where changes are more frequent and influential.

This issue was also confirmed recently by Richard Whittington. He outlines that the concept of business strategy was born in the USA and disseminated from there to the rest of the world (Whittington, 2012). He also adds that this is peculiar today, as the USA is not even the model economy anymore, and that the focus should be nowadays on China, India and other fast developing economies; such places are
where new ideas, as well as new management practices, might emerge and come from (ibid). Therefore, it is very apparent that there is a lack of research studies conducted in the East or within developing economies that focus on strategy implementation, and that several scholars suggest the need for more research studies to be conducted in these particular contexts.

Furthermore, various studies highlight the importance of the environment, as well as the surrounding culture, and their impact on management theories and practices. For example, theories established in developed Western economies might not fit Eastern developing economies due to differences in cultures, organisational, political, and economical practices (Kiggundu et al., 1983). Not only could understanding these differences highly influence a superior management for local, small, medium, large and multinational organisations (Earley and Stubblebine, 1989), but it would also fill an important gap in the literature (Van der Maas, 2008). The research could hence contribute to the ongoing debate about whether or not Western theories apply to different cultures around the world (Welsh et al., 1993). More specifically, it is expected to enhance strategy implementation awareness, understanding, and management in different unexplored contexts (Van der Maas, 2008).

1.2.2 The lack of a holistic framework

A number of SI frameworks (FWs) have been identified from the literature (see the next chapter 2). However, these frameworks come from different schools of thought and each has its own limitations. An interesting finding is that these frameworks were not comprehensive enough to provide a holistic view and encompass all
influencing factors of strategy implementation within their specified categorizations. For instance, Schmelzer did not consider the content and outcome (Schmelzer, 1992; Schmelzer and Olsen, 1994). Bryson and Bromiley (1993) only considered the context, process and outcomes. Conversely, Pettigrew did not consider outcomes. Another good illustration of this problem is the recent work of Heide et al., in 2002. These researchers have conducted an extended study for a Norwegian company where 220 implementation barriers were identified by 42 participants. A fifth of these 220 barriers were discarded, stating that they were impossible to categorize (Heide et al., 2002). These studies and frameworks might have their own limitations, and therefore, concluding remark is that the literature still lacks a simplified holistic understanding and framework that could organize and include all possible factors influencing the process of strategy implementation in a comprehensive manner.

### 1.2.3 The research context

In addition to the complexity of running businesses, the increasing pace of turbulence in the environment presents further challenges for managers in both developed and developing or transition countries. However, developing or transition countries face more problems than stable economies and may require new approaches to strategy implementation (Hauc and Kovac, 2000); that is why it is essential to broaden the research agenda and include studies about developing economies as well (Van der Maas, 2008).

The limited existing strategic management research in emerging and developing economies mainly focuses on China and some countries in Central and Eastern
Europe (Hoskisson et al., 2000). Less attention has been given to the Middle East in general, and to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)\(^3\) and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) more precisely.

The KSA is a Middle East and a GCC country that is considered the birthplace of Islam, holding within its land two of the three holiest sanctuaries in Mecca and Medina (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 2013). It is also considered as the largest country in the world without a river (ibid). However, its extensive coastline on the Arabian Gulf and Red Sea afford great influence on shipping, especially crude oil (ibid). The majority of its 26,534,504 population is Arab. The official religion is Islam, the official language is Arabic, and the currency is the Saudi Riyal (S.R.) (CIA, 2013). The KSA natural resources consist of petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, gold, and copper (ibid). It is also considered to be the leading producer of oil and natural gas, holding over 20% of the world’s oil reserves (ibid). The following table illustrates some of the specifics about the KSA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specifics about the KSA</th>
<th>Reference(s)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monarchy government type (Top down approach)</td>
<td>(CIA, 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paradigm shifts evolving from a basic agricultural society into a regional and global economic power with a more modern infrastructure.</td>
<td>(Bradford and Linn, 2004; Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 2013)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^3\) Also known as the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, a union of all Arab states of the Gulf except Iraq. That is Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and Kuwait.
The private sector plays a large role nowadays in the economy – accounting for almost 50% of the gross domestic product (GDP) and this is expected to increase. (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 2013)

Doors opened for foreign investments. (CIA, 2013; Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 2013)


The country has been under steady economic transformation. (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 2013)

One of the fastest developing countries in the world. (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 2013)

Saudi Arabia is encouraging the growth of the private sector in order to diversify its economy and to employ more Saudi nationals. (CIA, 2013; Bokhari, 2013)

Large youth population (i.e. from 15-24). (CIA, 2013; Bokhari, 2013)

Huge government spending. For example $373 billion were spent between 2010 and 2014 on social development and infrastructure projects to advance Saudi Arabia's economic development. (CIA, 2013)

As a country with a strong religious base and a harsh environment that is totally different to those countries in the traditionally over-researched Western context, the KSA is a non-typical site worth exploring. In addition, the KSA has recently gone through many economic reforms and much diversification. For example, the
promotion of foreign investments in the kingdom since King Abdallah bin Abdal-Aziz ascended to the throne in 2005 and the KSA accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in December 2005 (CIA, 2013). Entering the WTO pushed the Saudi local companies to think of new strategies to be able to compete on an international level. Therefore, studies about strategy processes, or how strategies can be implemented and be successful, are essential in this regard.

Also, having a youth population which is now better educated and where, in addition to their knowledge and familiarity with the internet and new emerging technologies, most hold higher degree certificates, helps to provide an additional advantage for the KSA companies to benefit from. In other words, this new generation is different to the previous one (i.e. old employees) who are not well equipped with those aforementioned qualifications. Likewise, this younger generation is less rigid and have been proven to be more flexible and effective in accepting strategic changes and are thus worth exploring. Moreover, there is a higher tendency of the youth to take greater risks, which is reflected in the increasing amount of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) established in the country by youths (Al-khotani, 2015). The KSA companies can take advantage of the current generation and new graduates and utilize them and their knowledge in a way that helps and supports implementing new competitive and successful strategies.

Moreover, being an oil producing country means that the financial feasibility is not usually a concern, as the KSA companies do have the sufficient funds to financially support the implementation of new strategies. In fact, when the researcher conducted the pilot study, he found out that the government had introduced many initiatives trying to support local organisations and had placed a special focus on SMEs. Many of these initiatives aim to support these organisations to implement their strategies.
successfully; they also provide and establish events and awards for those who take these initiatives and succeed. Good examples of such initiatives are the funding institutions that the government has founded (the first 5 below) and that have been quickly replicated by private organisations (the last 2):

1- Human Resources Development Fund (صندوق الموارد البشرية)
2- Centennial Fund (صندوق المئوية)
3- Industrial Support Fund (صندوق الدعم الصناعي)
4- Chamber of Commerce Fund (صندوق الغرف التجارية)
5- Credit Bank (بنك التسليف)
6- Abdulatif Jameel Fund (صندوق عبدالطيف جميل)
7- All other local banks

At the same time, the government encouragement for foreign investments in the country means that local companies now are competing globally. This has forced local organisations in general and SMEs more specifically, to give extra care to the entire strategy process. To truly gain competitive advantage and stay in the front line, the government’s actions have meant that Saudi SMEs are not only required to possess the ability to formulate new strategies, but also to make sure that these strategies are implemented successfully. Nguyen (2009) (cited in Alyahya & Suhaimi, 2013) argued that there are three main causes for unsuccessful strategy implementation in SMES. These are i) how strategy should be adopted, ii) misconceptions toward the whole process, and iii) constrained resources. This kind of thinking might be why Saudi organisations started to place a greater focus on the entire SI process and introduced financial incentives for those who contributed toward the success of that entire process.
It would also be interesting to analyse the impact that the KSA monarchy government would have on business strategy implementation. It is most likely that businesses will get influenced, and follow a top down approach, which is actually the traditional and still dominant approach, to business strategy: ‘the planning content approach’ (see the literature review chapter, for more information on different approaches). Also, its economic power and the numerous modern developments, and growth, increases the necessity of having more strategies to deal with the continuous changes. For instance, some Saudi companies who were successful and used to exclusively distribute international goods really suffered with the introduction of the WTO because they did not develop or implement new strategies to go along with WTO entrance. The researcher himself experienced the case of a very wise local distributor in the Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs) sector that has initiated and developed its own brand for over 50 years before the introduction of WTO, and hence, has been able to survive the impact. In other words, when the international company pulled the exclusive distribution right from them, the effect was not fatal. The local company was able to survive by switching the focus toward their own developmental products. Consequently, the company has even introduced many fast moving products missing from their own portfolio.

The quick shift that happened in the KSA from a basic agricultural society into a global economic power, and being one of ten emerging economies and one of three Islamic countries entering the G-20 (Bradford and Linn, 2004) also makes the context appealing. It would be interesting to find out if this context has an impact on the strategy implementation process.
For instance, Saudi Arabia, made registering property/property transfers faster by introducing a new computerized system at the land registry (World Bank Group, 2016).

In a recent 10th edition report by the World Bank titled ‘Smarter Regulations for Small and Medium-Size Enterprises’, which mainly compare business regulations for domestic firms in 185 economies the following was mentioned about KSA.

KSA was ranked 22nd on the worldwide rankings on the ease of doing business (World Bank Group, 2012 a). KSA has been amongst the 50 economies narrowing the distance to frontier the most since 2005 (ibid). It was actually ranked 26th out of the 185 economies reviewed, and was ranked 2nd in the entire MENA region (ibid). Furthermore KSA was ranked 6th in all economies surveyed and 1st in the MENA region on the most improvement in narrowing that distance to frontier in starting a business the most since 2005 (ibid).

It was also argued that entrepreneurs across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) face relatively weak investor and property rights protections (World Bank Group, 2012 a; World Bank Group, 2016). However, KSA was ranked one of the highest in the entire MENA region, on both having stronger legal institutions and simpler and less expensive regulatory processes (ibid). Stronger legal institutions, in the report, refers to the average ranking on getting credit, protecting investors, enforcing contracts and resolving insolvency (World Bank Group, 2012 a). Whereas, complexity and cost of regulatory processes refer to the average ranking on starting a business, dealing with construction permits, getting electricity, registering property, paying taxes and trading across borders (ibid).
In addition KSA were exemplary twice in a table developed that describes best practices around the world in doing business. The first one was related to making it easy to get credit by distributing credit information from retailers, trade creditors or utilities as well as financial institutions (World Bank Group, 2012 a; World Bank Group, 2016). More precisely KSA was among the economies that have scored a 6 out of 6 on the depth of the credit information index (World Bank Group, 2012 a). The second was related to making it easier to enforce contracts by accurately, allowing electronic filing of complaints (World Bank Group, 2012 a; World Bank Group, 2016). KSA was one of the economies that improved electronic systems in their courts. More precisely KSA extended the computerization of its courts introducing an electronic filing system for commercial cases (World Bank Group, 2012 a). This permitted solicitors to submit summons online (ibid). Such electronic systems offer numerous benefit such as speed up the process, prevent loss or concealment of court records, increase transparency, limit corruption in the judiciary among others (ibid).

Another result of the improvements that KSA made in electronic systems was in filing and paying social security contributions (World Bank Group, 2012 a; World Bank Group, 2016). This contributed toward KSA being ranked among the 10 economies with the fewest payments and lowest tax compliance time (World Bank Group, 2012 a). More precisely KSA was ranked 3rd easiest country for paying taxes (ibid). These electronic systems have eliminated excessive paperwork and tax officers interaction (ibid). They also diminish the time organisations spend on complying with tax laws, increase tax compliance and reduce administration cost (ibid). KSA was also among the country with least cost requirement as a percentage of property value essential for registering a property. (ibid)
Having said that, despite all these improvements that have made processes in KSA faster, most of the times these processes are still considered opaque (World Bank Group, 2016). For instance, there is still generally lack of crucial information that has required extra attention being given to risk management in KSA (Chironga et al., 2012). Moreover, many systems still lack transparency with complex mechanisms for resolving disputes. For instance, investor protection is still an issue over there. Unfortunately, protection is still often considered weak because of the limited access to corporate information during litigation (World Bank Group, 2012 a; World Bank Group, 2016). The country acknowledges that matter and is currently working towards resolving it. For instance, KSA has recently used the company law of France, as a model for revising its own law (World Bank Group, 2016). As France was considered to be high and strong in standards of transparency with effective mechanisms for dispute resolution supported by fully digital records available to everyone who need to consult the rules and verify boundaries (ibid).

Moreover, some scholars argue that one reason for SI being harder and problematic is that strategy formulation is primarily an intellectual and creative act, while implementation is more a hands on and action oriented activity that is more difficult and demanding (Noble, 1999; Miller et al., 2004; Van der Maas, 2008; Li, Guohui, and Eppler, 2009). Also, it was claimed that: ‘Unlike strategy formulation, strategy implementation is often seen as something of a craft, rather than a science’ (Li et al., 2009: 3). Hence, a higher failure rate would be anticipated in the KSA, as people there are socially oriented toward high quality of life and wellbeing, as a result of security, stability, and the healthy economy. Consequently, there is a less favourable attitudes towards manual labour, and craft activities. This was clearly found during the field studies (see section 4.2.3 for more details).
In addition, the researcher has lived in the KSA for the majority of his life and has worked there in the area of business strategy development for more than three years. During this time the researcher assisted different companies in developing their strategies and noticed that most of the time these strategies failed or were not implemented successfully. All these previously mentioned actualities motivated the researcher to investigate this area and made the specific case of the KSA a unique one that is worth examining.

1.2.4 Why Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)?

There are many different definitions for what constitute an SME. Some of these definitions define it based on the number of employee in the organisation, while other relate it to the total revenue of the firm. Unfortunately, there is no agreement on a single definition of what constitute an SME which could be attributed to the differences in the size of the market and/ or economy in which it operates (Al-Saleh, 2012).

For example, based on IFC/World Bank enterprises survey results, an average SME has up to 200 employees (Chironga et al., 2012). Also, the same studies argued that based again on IFC/World Bank enterprises survey results, an average SME could be define as an organisation with a revenue of up to $3.5 million (ibid).

The acronym ‘SMEs’ was also standardised and redefined by the European Union (EU) as companies that have 250 employee or less, 40 million Euro ($45 million) annual turnover or less, and 27 million Euro ($31 million) annual balance-sheet total
or less. If one of these criteria is exceeded, the EU does not classify the organisation as an SME, and moves it to the next classification (i.e. large organisation group) (Loecher, 2000).

According to sections 382 and 465 of the Companies Act 2006 in the UK, SMEs are defined as organisations with less than £25.9 million ($36.6 million) turnover, a maximum of £12.9 million ($18.2 million) balance sheet total, and no more than 250 employees (The legislation.gov.uk, 2006).

In Saudi Arabia, it is exactly the same there is no a single SME Authority and hence multiple definitions of what constitute an SME are available (Al-Saleh, 2012; Capitas Group International, 2016; Aljafri, 2016). This research has adopted the SME definition identified by Ossama Al-Mubarak, the director of ‘Kafala program’, the SME Financing Guarantee Program introduced in Saudi Arabia. The ‘Kafalah’ program define an SME as any organisation with an annual revenue that does not exceed SAR 30 million ($ 8 million) (Al-Mubarak, 2016).

Due to the rising pressures in the external and internal environments, strategy has been transformed from a rarefied, high level concern in large corporations, to a necessity in firms of all sizes (Montgomery and Porter, 1991). More recently, researchers conclude that no matter how small an organisation is a business plan must take place (Choo et al., 2014). Also, in a recent Harvard Business Review, Brad Power (2014) reveals how General Electric (GE), a 130 year old company, stays young. The author attributes it to the partnership with small and medium enterprises which has helped GE in finding new ways to be more flexible in order to get better quality products/ services, with less lead time. In other words, they form together a joint venture that can produce better innovative strategic business ideas
and implement them more quickly and effectively (Power, 2014). It is worth mentioning here that this is actually in line with the most recent school of thought, ‘the emergent process school’, which emphasizes the importance of both flexibility and speed (see Chapter 2 for the main schools of thoughts).

SMEs are considered as the economic backbone of every country, playing important roles in job creation and economic growth in most states (Asquith and Western, 1994; OECD, 2012; The Economic Forum, 2010; Gedo 2011; Ates et al., 2013; Gagliardi, et al., 2013; Bamiatzi and Kirchmaier, 2014). They form the majority of firms in any economy and are considered to be the engines of any society (Gagliardi, et al., 2013; Papel and Au-Yong-Oliveira, 2015). Bamiatzi and Kirchmaier (2014) from Manchester Business School recently presented a paper titled “Strategies for Superior Performance under Adverse Conditions: A Focus on Small and Medium Sized High-Growth Firms”. In this paper, the scholars argue that SMEs are critical to economic growth, given their capacity to create new jobs, sustain survival, and mitigate recessionary pressures. They also add that, because of their centrality to economic progress, it is crucial to understand the factors influencing strategy processes (Bamiatzi and Kirchmaier, 2014). Moreover, as it has been demonstrated that SMEs are much more flexible and faster in the process of strategy implementation, and that the most recent school of thought, ‘the process school’ (see chapter 2 for more details), refers to speed and flexibility as crucial elements for success. Investigating these specific organisations will provide more insights into this most recent school of thought, which is given relatively less attention in the literature.

Furthermore, Ates et al. (2013) also argue that SMEs are increasingly significant to maintain strong economic growth and for macro-economic stability. Having said
that, it is believed that SMEs should not adopt the same complex processes as large organisations, but rather they should be supported to unveil strategies that comply with their own characteristics, which are different from large organisations (Hart, 1992). This will consequently support the development of management concepts and practices (Garengo and Biazzo, 2012). Moreover, the literature is now developing in this direction (i.e. supporting the development of managerial practices by supporting SMEs to unveil their strategies, without forcing them to be similar to large organisation). A good example is the bottom-up approach developed by Garengo and Biazzo (2012). Actually, as mentioned before, large organisations are even creating more partnerships with SMEs to learn from their practices (Brad Power, 2014). Therefore, further research is still required to develop SMEs strategic frameworks in order to guide entrepreneurs and managers (Ates et al., 2013). Also, it was noticed that scholarly literature focused mainly on large organisations and only recently have new research studies started to focus on, and involve, SMEs (Garengo and Biazzo, 2013; Ates et al., 2013; Bamiatzi and Kirchmaier, 2014). This is in line with Mirabeau and Maguire (2014) who recommended that future strategic research should explore new contexts such as startup and SMEs organisations.

Adding to all the previously mentioned reasons, the specific case of SMEs in the KSA is worth examining for many reasons. To begin with, these organisations started to get much more support and encouragement from the government. This was not only to reduce the country’s dependence on oil production and exports, but also to increase employment opportunities for the ever increasing youth population (Sohail and Al-Abdali, 2005; Bokhari, 2013; Startup Overseas, 2014b). For instance, as mentioned in the previous section, financially, many funding institutions were introduced. Also, in terms of rules and regulations, it has been argued that the
procedures for starting a small business have never been so simple. Since 2007, the government has both decreased the minimum capital required and the duration it takes to incorporate a company (Startup Overseas, 2014a). The governmental effort has recently been praised by a report produced by the World Bank, announcing the KSA as 23rd out of 178 countries who have created the best environment for SMEs. Such ranking was the highest in the Middle East and was also higher than both France and Austria (Weston, 2011). The increasing effort is clearly having an impact as the KSA was ranked 67th three years before that report (ibid).

For all of the above mentioned reasons, the researcher strongly believes that this research is worth considering.

1.3 Research aims, objectives, questions, and contributions

Based on the discussion above, this research aims to develop a more comprehensive framework to explore the process of strategy implementation in an under-researched context i.e. SMEs in KSA. The objectives of the research are:

1. To explore the factors (drivers and barriers) that influence business strategy implementation processes in an under-researched context.

2. To propose a conceptual framework that portrays the key drivers and barriers that influence strategy implementation processes in Saudi SMEs.

The main research questions, guiding this research are:
1. What are the factors (including drivers and barriers) that influence strategy implementation processes? (see Chapter 2)

2. How do decision makers in Saudi SMEs perceive the factors that influence the process of strategy implementation? (see Chapter 4)

3. To what extent can a holistic framework help in understanding the strategy implementation process in Saudi SMEs? (see Chapter 5 and 6 validating the proposed model)

The following figure provides a summary of this research structure. Also, it demonstrates how the research questions relate to the different chapters.

![Figure 1: Thesis structure and relations of research questions to different chapters](image)

This research has potential contributions on theoretical, methodological, and practical level. Theoretically, it supports the current literature with a more comprehensive record of the factors that influence the process of SI at different
stages (i.e. from initiation till achieving the outcomes), at three distinguished levels (i.e. external, organisational, and individual levels), and within new contexts (i.e. non-Western developing countries). Also, a larger new classification, or overarching themes (King and Horrocks, 2010), is suggested that could include any type of factors and at any stage. Moreover, more lights are shed on the individual dynamics of SI, as well as, the organisational and external environment perspectives that are usually available in the literature. Furthermore, this study provides additional support to the more contemporary understanding of the SI influencing factors, which Pettigrew initiated, by considering drivers as well as barriers. Besides that, this research explores SMEs in KSA, which is relatively under research, as opposed to what most literatures focused on (i.e. large organisations that were mainly in Western countries). Finally, the study also devises a new conceptual framework.

On a methodological stance, this research presents a high rigour case study research with detail explanation of methods and methodology which was argued to be limited in the literature. The research is also, empirically validated, as opposed to the majority of works in the literature which is not. In addition, the study is conducted by a male researcher, which in this case (i.e. a relatively conservative, religious, and gender sensitive context), provided more advantages to the research methodology by facilitating access and increasing the amount of details conveyed. Moreover, some useful methodological recommendations that could help researchers in developing or MENA region in general, and GCC region and KSA more particularly are suggested. These suggestions could also be useful to context with similar conditions, such as monarchy countries. Finally, this research is different to previous ones in terms of the undertaken methods and methodology adopted and the research context explored. Up to the researcher knowledge, this work is one of the preliminary effort that
utilized multi-cases besides thematic analysis to explore factors, both barriers and drivers, that could influence SMEs SI process, working in different industries, in the KSA.

 Practically, this work presented a holistic SI process FW that could classify any influencing factor. The model is also not static as the general classification provides some sorts of flexibility that allow users to utilise it and complement it according to their own interpretations, context, process level. The study also provides a detailed list of different potential influencing factors (both barriers and drivers) that could affect the process which is useful to SMEs owner and managers. Moreover, this work will help future researchers, as it provides support to the current scattered literature that lacks a proper base to build work on it. Finally, this study will benefit policy makers and practitioners’ concerned with the SI processes in general. In addition to those that operates in the KSA or countries that shares similar attributes, like GCC countries, and monarchies.

1.4 Research process

This research starts by providing a review in the strategy implementation area, and tries to make contributions by suggesting a primitive framework which encompasses previous limitations. It then seeks to use the framework to explore a new, relatively under-researched context.

The process was that, after conducting the initial literature review, the researcher conducted a pilot study (more details in section 3.7.1). After conducting the pilot
study, a main issue was including all findings in an organized manner. Just like what was found in the literature (chapter 2), each available framework had its own limitation and it was hard to include all factors mentioned in interviews in one of them. In other words, a comprehensive framework that could organize and include all possible factors influencing the process and success of strategy implementation was still required. Many reasons were behind that, the different schools of thought, and the various beliefs in what has to be considered and what could be discarded. However, as this research aims to explore a new context by trying to involve all salient points mentioned by the interviewees, developing a primitive framework that encompasses previous limitations was still necessary.

To achieve that, after identifying the main schools of thought and their individual limitations, different strategy implementation frameworks developed in the field were also revised and analysed. While revising these frameworks, Pettigrew, a prominent author from the more contemporary process school, and his FW, emerge as an influential one (more details in Chapter 2). That is why his particular work has been further described and analysed. Three main limitations were identified: failing to connect context to process to outcome; the limited treatment of the process analysis; and missing a holistic view. Consequently, three main modifications were finally suggested to his ‘Triangle Model’ to compensate for these limitations. The aim was to enhance the understanding of the strategic implementation process by considering all possible elements (i.e. multi-perspective view) that could influence it.

After the initial primitive framework was developed, it was used to explore a case study of SMEs, using multiple cases from 32 different SMEs in KSA as evidence (Yin, 2013). This process took place also in KSA from April to September 2013.
It has been argued that belief has increased in case studies as a thorough approach on its own (Cassell and Symon, 2004). The research strategy is mainly composed of a comprehensive study of collecting data for phenomena over a time period (ibid). It is considered to be a crucial and a necessary research strategy that increases the contextual understanding (ibid). As a result of the rich data that could be collected in a particular context, Cassell and Symon (2004) also argued that the strategy could best suit research questions that call for exhaustive understanding of organisational processes, which is the main aim of this research. In other words, performing multiple cases for different organisations will help to collect data and develop a comprehensive understanding of the influencing factors that could affect successful strategy implementation in Saudi SMEs. Another reason for choosing this particular strategy is that case studies help to focus on ‘how and why’ questions, or what are alternatively named processes (Cassel and Symon, 2004; Yin, 2003 and 2013). That is also related to the particular focus of this research. It is through the exploration of these multiple cases that the primitive framework has been examined and developed more deeply.

There are quiet extensive methods of data collection that could be used for this particular approach. However, the most common data collection methods for case study are documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artefacts (Yin, 2003, 2009 and 2013). Yin (2013) suggested that there is no one particular method which is ultimately better than the other, but each one has its advantages and disadvantages.

Aiming to answer the research questions, semi-structured interviews have been chosen for the following reasons. It has been argued that in qualitative research, interviewing is one of the most common methods of data gathering. It is also the
most effective in collecting human perceptions and stakeholders’ views in a more holistic way. The goal behind this method is to collect the interviewee’s perspective about a particular research topic and understand why and how they have this particular view (Cassell and Symon, 2004). Kvale (1983) (cited in Cassell and Symon, 2004) identified the following general characteristic for qualitative research interview: low level of structure, predominance of open ended questions, and focus on the specific world of the interviewee. It has also been suggested that interviews with informed professionals could be very useful to dig out information about certain organisations, and enrich the case explored (Cassell and Symon, 2004). Moreover, interviews are considered one of the most flexible methods available and can be used to answer diverse types of research questions. They could be used to address focused questions, as well as examining much broader issues. They are also ideal for examining and exploring different levels of meaning and are considered to be very useful in studying group identities in large organisations, or where complicated patterns exists. Furthermore, they are mostly accepted by the participants (Cassell and Symon, 2004).

In general, the research follows an inductive approach, focussing on practices in their social context (Cassell and Symon, 2004). As the research focuses on a relatively under-researched topic, and in a new context, an inductive approach will generate data, analysis and reflection on theoretical themes advised by the data (Saunders et al., 2009). In other words, the approach begins with observations, tailed by findings and completed with theory (Bryman and Bell, 2003). More details about the research methodology are described in Chapter 3.
1.5 Research outline

This section summarizes the chapters that are included in this research.

Chapter One (Introduction): This chapter introduced the reader to the research background and significance. It also outlined the research motivations, providing justifications for conducting the research, in this particular context, and with this particular focus. Then the research aim, objectives, questions, and contributions were listed. Finally, a summary of how this research was conducted and its content was presented.

Chapter Two (Literature Review): This chapter offers a summary of what has already been conducted in the field of SI. It starts with an overview of the research field and its history. Providing details of how the area of concern has historically developed the major debates, and a glimpse of major works in the field. It then proceeds by summarizing the different approaches taken to understand SI. Starting with definitions suggested, and ending with a presentation of the two major schools of thought identified in the field. After that, a critical review of different existing frameworks and their pros and cons is presented. Then, the work of a prominent author from the contemporary process school, with relatively high influence in the field is presented. Finally, the researcher proposes a new, more holistic framework to be used in this study.

Chapter Three (Research Methodology): This chapter summarizes and justifies the research methodology employed in this research. It starts by identifying the philosophical position adopted. Then the research approaches, methods, and data
collection sources are described. Finally, it exhibits protocols of template analysis and the rationale behind this method of data analysis.

Chapter Four (Data Collection and Analysis): This chapter presents the empirical work of this research. It provides detailed descriptions and analysis for the data collected. These findings are presented theme by theme, with examples from the multiple cases conducted. They are organised under three main sections, external, internal organisational and internal individual factors. In so doing, the first research question is addressed by offering templates of the key factors (both drivers and barriers) that affect the Strategy Implementation Process (SIP).

Chapter Five (Research Findings and Discussions): This chapter encapsulates and discusses the empirical research findings for the fieldwork conducted. At the beginning, the final model of the research (after validation in the Saudi context) is demonstrated. After that, the main drivers and barriers of SI processes in Saudi SMES are listed under the three different identified levels. Then a specific section that further discusses reflections and considerations of the research findings is provided. This specific section compares the empirical findings with previous research and highlights contributions.

Chapter Six (Conclusions): This chapter concludes the research by reviewing its process, and addressing its main contributions. Finally, the research limitations are discussed and recommendations for future research are provided.
2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to review the existing literature in order to develop a more holistic primitive framework that could be used to explore the factors influencing the strategy implementation processes of SMEs in the context of the KSA. The first section (2.2) starts by illustrating the historical development of the field, followed by some of the major debates in the area. After that, summaries of major works conducted in the field related to one of the two main schools of thought in SI are presented. The next section (2.3) places further focus on SI by demonstrating the different approaches taken in the literature to understand the concept. It starts by summarizing the definitions of key terms and finishes by identifying the two major approaches adopted to understand and evaluate the strategy implementation process. These are the content and the process approaches. After that, section (2.4) gives a brief review of the factors that influence the SI process identified in the literature. It then ends by identifying that most of these FWs were relying on the process school of thought and the work of Pettigrew more precisely. That is why the following section (2.5) more deeply describes and analyses the strategy in accordance with the process school, and particularly the work of Pettigrew, a prominent author of the more contemporary process school. After that, some modifications to his framework are suggested and a modified, holistic primitive framework is presented in section (2.6). Finally, section (2.7) concludes the chapter.
2.2 Historical development, debates, and major works

As a result of war being a matter of strategy for far longer than business, most of the primary ideas about strategy have been framed by warfare - the spiritual heartland of strategy. Carter et al. (2008) argued that a straightforward, linear history and the progressive building of a coherent body of knowledge are not available for strategy. They said the idea might have initiated from the ancient Greeks 500 years before the birth of Christ. Etymologically, Cummings (2003) argued that strategy is derived from the ancient Greeks and is composed of two parts: ‘stratos’ meaning army, and ‘agein’ meaning to lead.

Carter et al. (2008) specified that the history of strategy cannot be traced through a seamless continuity of development from the ancient Greeks to today. They said, for example, that Machiavelli and Clausewitz did strategize, but with differing objectives and in different contexts. At the same time, Carter et al. (2008) indicated that there is much more in strategy than the art of war. As Machiavelli recognized, war advantages could be realized much more economically through other means. They claimed that this is the idea that actually made Clausewitz famous, as he stated that war is simply a continuation of politics by other means. They said that similarly, it could be argued that strategy is the continuation of military planning by other means. As the aim at the end is still the same, which is to win the battle, the only change that might happen is in the field or arena. To sum up, Carter et al. (2008) argued that competition is war by other means and strategy is required to win it. So, it could be said that the origin of strategy is in the military, including definitions that mostly contain goals, winning, resource utilization, and policy implementation (ibid).
In the world of business, the term ‘strategy’ appeared in the 1950s, when many executives with military experiences from World War II started to apply their knowledge in business (Carter et al., 2008). The first authors who developed the meaning of the term, in business management, were industrial giants, such as Alfred Dupont Chandler (related to the Dupont Chemicals family) and Chester Barnard (American Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T) among others (ibid)).

Also, Carter et al. (2008) argued that the term ‘strategy’, evolves from ‘business policy’, and hence the meaning of the term might have appeared before the 1950s. For instance, Hambrick and Chen (2008) argued that it was in the 1920s when Harvard first introduced a course in business policy (Carter et al., 2008). This was developed further when, in 1970, ten professors developed the business policy and planning division of the Academy of Management (ibid). After that in 1979, the business planning division was renamed as strategy (Carter et al., 2008). Furthermore, in 1980, the Strategic Management Society, along with, the Strategic Management Journal, were created (ibid).

The following sections will summarise the historical development, the main debates, and major works conducted in the field.

### 2.2.1 Historical development

In 1999, Hoskisson et al. used the metaphor of the swings of a pendulum to demonstrate the different theoretical and methodological evolution in strategic management. This is shown in figure 2. They claimed that early developments started with Chandler (1962) (Strategy and Structure, The Visible Hand) and
Ansoff’s (1965) Corporate Strategy (Hoskisson, Hitt, Wan, and Yiu, 1999). In his 1962 book ‘Strategy and Structure’, Chandler reviewed the administrative history of seventy of the largest companies in America. He examined mainly one economic problem: the historical effective administration of the expanding business. Then he examined the modern decentralized corporate structure of four companies in greater depth. He also argued that family businesses were much slower in adapting to change, both strategically and structurally, and were more likely to prefer to stick with their old ways. He then stated that it is the next or younger generation that were more prone to accepting more flexibility. In addition, he found out that in almost all corporations reviewed, top executives were more involved in operational activities when they were closer to changes. Furthermore, he identified that historically American industrial organisations went through four phases. These phases were as follows:

1) Initial expansion and resources accumulation.
2) Rationalization of resources uses.
3) Expansion into new markets and lines in order to assure full utilization of resources.
4) New structural development to facilitate the mobilization of resources effectively and to be able to interact and react with market demands, short-term changes and new long term market trends (Chandler, 1962).

Chandler said that, despite each organisation having its own history, almost all follow these patterns. He suggested this might be because they all share the same external environment (ibid).
In 1977, Chandler then wrote ‘The Visible Hand’ which reflects the managerial revolution in American businesses. He suggested that in many economic sectors, the visible hand of management substitutes Adam Smith’s idea of the invisible hand of market force. He said that it is the more frequent changes, in technology, markets, production, and demand that gave the chance of management’s business domination (ibid). Chandler argued that it is actually the visible hand of management, through managerial coordination and administrative structure, rather than the invisible hand of market forces, that forms the core developmental and structuring momentum for modern business enterprises (Chandler, 1977). Despite demand for goods and services still being produced by the market, modern business enterprises took over goods flow coordination, as well as allocation of funds and personnel (ibid). Hence, modern business enterprise became the most powerful institution, and its managers the most influential decision makers in the American economy; this, in turn brought with it managerial capitalism (Chandler, 1977).

Industrial organisation economics was then introduced, with the work of Porter being particularly influential (Hoskisson et al., 1999). After that, came the organisational economics perspective which supplied the field with transaction costs, economics, and agency theory. Finally, more recent works started to focus on the resources based view. These phases are demonstrated in the following figure 2.
Hoskisson et al. (1999) argued that the strategy discipline emerged in the 1960s and historically, three academic styles have risen and influenced the field. These are institutionalists, economists, and behavioralists (ibid). Institutionalists were dominant in the mid-1960s to the early 1970s (ibid). Examples of such academics include Alfred Chandler (1962) and Rumelt (1974) (Hoskisson et al., 1999). Their focus was mainly on strategy elements, processes within a firm, and looking out at the external environment from a top management perspective (inside – out perspective). Then, in the late 1970s and 1980s, came the economists view, predominantly represented by Porter (1980). Firms’ problems were analysed on the basis of industrial organisation economics, and more precisely, by looking at features of the particular industries they operate in (outside – in perspective). After that, came the game theorists, who are considered to be a later generation of the economists.
These explored concerns raised within the competitive environment and concerns linked with competitive rivalry and industry competition. Examples of such academics include Saloner (1991), Dixit and Nalebuff (1991), and Camerer (1985, 1991) among others. The last influencing groups are behavioural scientists, who gained strides in the 1980s and 1990s. This group included a wider range of sociologists, political scientists, organisation psychologists, cognitive scientists, and population ecologists; they focused on the operating performance and survival of the organisation, and the behaviour and networks adopted by its people. It has been argued, that nowadays, it is more essential, to integrate these groups, to obtain a more comprehensive understanding, and cope with strategy fundamental questions (i.e. what makes some firms more successful than others? and how to make an organisation more successful) (Pettigrew et al., 2001).

2.2.2 Five major debates in strategy

Recent empirical research trying to identify how strategists work in action, interviewed 84 strategists ‘who do strategy’ from 75 different organisations (small, medium, large and well established) and revealed that strategizing is the art of balancing tensions and can be portrayed mainly through five major themes (Dameron and Torset, 2009).

1) Strategy definition (Plan/ Social):

The study found that mainly interviewees described strategy as an analytical plan (classic) or social practice (modern). The first mainly depended on content and classic definitions from industrial economics authors, whereas the latter relied more
on strategic process and change ideas (more details about these two major schools of strategy is discussed in section 2.3.2).

2) Social orientation (Solitude/ Sharing):

For many years, the classic views considered strategy making an individual process. However, more recent work shows that the process takes account of different stakeholders inside and outside of the organisation.

3) Process focus (Market ‘leaders’/ Organisation focused ‘managers’):

Dameron and Torset (2009) argued that leaders underlined the importance of external factors (market focus), whereas managers focused on the internal organisational issues. They also argued that, referring to Chandler (1962) strategy – structure debate, leaders have a strategy dominant view, whereas managers take the structure dominant view.

4) Cognitive orientation (Intuition/ Analysis or rationality in strategizing):

It is one of the oldest debates, with the traditional, rational and analytical view, argued by Ericson et al. in 2001, to be more widely accepted. However, Mintzberg (1994) claimed that the traditional approach was more formal, and limited creativity by dehumanizing strategic thinking. Dameron and Torset (2009), in their empirical research, said that they could not confirm Mintzberg view, but found that intuition was essential for strategist and mainly leaders.

5) Process dynamics (Action/ Thinking):

This debate, could be referred to some extent to the action - decision dispute of the 1980s and 1990s. Despite the academic complexity in seeking to ascertain a straight
causal link between the two poles, it has been found practically that strategists favoured the action view. This consequently supports Wittington’s (2003) interest in the practice oriented view in strategy formation (Dameron and Torset, 2009).

The following figure illustrates the five major themes of how strategy and its activities is experienced and described.

![Figure 3: Five major tensions that describe strategy and its activities (adapted from Dameron and Torset, 2009)](image)

It is worth mentioning that these tensions are dialogic, as extremes of the same theme could be developed by strategists (Dameron and Torset, 2009).

The following sections will highlight some of the major works of scholars in the field.
2.2.3 Major works in the field

2.2.3.1 Henry Mintzberg

Mintzberg said that the majority of the strategy formation literature were theoretical and not empirical (Mintzberg, 1978). Even though traditionally, strategy used to have a distinguished meaning, the term has been used differently. Later on, having different recognized definitions helped individuals to work their ways through this complex field (IFM, University of Cambridge, 2012). Unavoidably, Mintzberg also argued that strategy could be defined in a certain way, but will, most likely, be used in a different one. He said that if, for example, you ask a planner to define the term he/she will describe it as a plan or direction toward the future. On the other hand, if the same person were asked to illustrate the strategy practised in the past, he/she will still be happy to answer the question, not realizing that he/she has just contradicted his/her own definition (Mintzberg, 1994; Mintzberg et al., 2008). Mintzberg argued that strategy literature mainly falls into one of three theoretical groupings or modes.

1) Planning mode: This encompasses the majority of the literature and mainly describes the process as neat, ordered, integrated; strategies are delivered on time, and as planned, in order to reach the goals of a focused organisation.

2) Adaptive mode: In contrast to the planning mode, the adaptive, popularized by authors like Lindblom, Cyert and March (cited in Mintzberg, 1978), describes the process as one which involves different decision makers, with contradicting objectives, negotiating with each other to come up with a group of incremental and disjointed decisions.
3) Entrepreneurial mode: This mode is described in a number of classical economics and contemporary management literature as a process where an influential leader with a specific vision for the future of his organisation, takes brave and risky decisions. (Mintzberg, 1978)

The first mode corresponds to the traditional content approach and the following second and third modes match up with the more contemporary process approach (more details of these two major schools of thought are given in section 2.3.2).

Also, Mintzberg claimed that most of his studies showed two main patterns in strategy formation which are superimposed on each other. The first one is the strategy life cycle, moving from conception and elaboration to decay and death. The second is the incidence of cyclic change and stability within the cycle (Mintzberg, 1979). These two patterns identified by Mintzberg validate the two axes developed in the holistic FW offered by this research that cover these aspects. The process axis takes care of the strategic life and the context axis explains the incidence that could happen on three distinguished levels (see section 2.6 for more details about the holistic FW).

Moreover, Mintzberg also claimed that strategies could be intended or realized and could be combined in three ways as figure 4 shows. These are:

1) Intended strategy and realized (Deliberate strategy).
2) Intended strategy, but not realized (Unrealized strategy).
3) Realized strategy that was never intended (Emergent strategy) (Mintzberg, 1979).
Again, the first two combinations cover the traditional content school, and the last one corresponds to the more contemporary process school (check section 2.3.2 for more details).

Furthermore, Mintzberg also challenged the planning theory assumption (which corresponds to the content school of thought). This theory assumes that the strategy is developed at high levels in the organisation, while implementation is left to subordinates at lower levels. He said that this assumption is based on two other assumptions which are, most of the time, mistaken. These assumptions were as follows:

1) The strategy maker is completely knowledgeable, or at least as good as the implementer.

2) The environment is stable or predictable, which means that reformulation would be unnecessary (Mintzberg, 1979).

In addition, Mintzberg suggested moving away from the formulation – implementation dichotomy and preferred to use the adaptive mode (the contemporary process school) as an alternative to planning (the traditional content school). He also used to say that ‘a strategy is not a fixed plan, nor does it change
systematically at prearranged times solely at the will of management’ (Mintzberg, 1979: 947).

Mintzberg also argued that the strategy field is a difficult one, and relying on a single definition of strategy is not reasonable. He said that recognizing multiple definitions could help both researchers and practitioners by giving them some flexibility. Hence, he presented what he calls ‘the 5 P’s of strategy’. These ‘5 P’s’ actually define and describe the characteristics of strategic planning in five different ways.

1) Strategy as Plan: intentional and purposeful choice of action with two main characteristics
   a. Made in advance
   b. Developed consciously and purposefully

This definition corresponds more to the traditional content view.

2) Strategy as Ploy: outwit rivals and/or opponents with an intended and particular manoeuvre.

3) Strategy as Pattern: consistency in actions and/or performance with or without intention. This definition corresponds with the contemporary process school of thought.

4) Strategy as Position: way of locating products and/or organisation into specific markets and/or environments (locating the organisation within the external environment).

5) Strategy as a Perspective: a concept, theory of the business, or embedded way of perceiving the world. In other words, the methods, manners, and means taken to provide services or goods (Mintzberg, 1994; Mintzberg et al., 2008).
Mintzberg argued that these 5 P’s are complementary, as each provides a significant contribution to the overall understanding of strategy and encourages more fundamental questions into the topic (Mintzberg, 1987).

It is also important to note that, despite being sometimes able to define the term, strategy is a word which is unavoidably used in ways different to the definition. Understandings of strategy also develop with time. For example, in 1971 Mintzberg used to favour the following definition of strategy ‘a pattern in a stream of decisions’ which he later changes to actions (Mintzberg, 1987).

Mintzberg argued that, historically, strategy could be categorized under ten major schools (Mintzberg, 2003): design, planning, positioning, entrepreneurial, cognitive, learning, power, culture, environmental, and configuration (ibid). He also stated that these schools follow either a descriptive approach (i.e. answering what is questions) or a prescriptive approach (i.e. answering what should be questions) (Mintzberg, 1977, 2003).

2.2.3.2 Andrew Pettigrew

Andrew Pettigrew argued that the roots of strategic management lie in US academia and practice (Pettigrew, Whittington, and Thomas, 2001). He said that the field began to take its shape in the 1960s with writers like Chandler (1962), Ansoff (1962), and Andrew (1971). Academic roots were supported by US based consulting agencies such as Mckinsey, BCG, and Bain, who actually helped in developing and spreading strategy language, methods and tools. Also, in 1969, the first doctoral programme specializing in strategic management was developed by Dan Schendel.
Then, in 1980, the first volume of Strategic Management Journal was published and the Strategic Management Society was created (Pettigrew et al., 2001).

In 1985, Pettigrew wrote ‘The Awakening Giant’, a book that studied Imperial Chemical Industries and how it reacted with the political, social, and economical change in the environment (Pettigrew, 1985). In contrast to Porter’s economic view (the strategy content school), Andrew Pettigrew adopts Mintzberg’s incremental view, arguing that strategy formation is a continuous process and is contextually based (the strategy process school) (Pettigrew, 1977; Sykianakis, 2012). Pettigrew is among the few researchers to have considered the political, culture, social, and human aspects. He said that strategy is a continuous process by which organisational actors analyse changes in the external environment and act upon it (Sykianakis, 2012). He also added that ‘Strategy may be understood as a flow of events, values and actions running through a context’ (Pettigrew, 1977: 79). So basically Pettigrew followed Quinn’s (1978) logical incrementalism ideas on how strategy develops, stating that present strategy is always based on past strategy and experience. He also suggested that strategy could be influenced by the context. He used to distinguish theoretically between strategy formulation and implementation, but later he adopted Mintzberg’s view of the continuous interplay between the two phases (Sykianakis, 2012).

2.2.3.3 Michael Porter

Michael Porter is a Harvard professor who started to bring his Harvard economics training in the field of strategy in the 1980s. It has been argued that Porter’s contribution was the introduction of industrial organisation (IO) economics,
language to the field of strategic management, switching the strategists focus from the firm to the industry structure i.e. ‘from inside out to outside in’ (see section 2.2.1) (Pettigrew et al., 2001). His work was described as one of the most significant contributions to the development of strategic management (Hoskisson, Hitt, Wan, and Yiu, 1999).

It was argued that the Porter approach towards strategy is more deliberate when compared with Mintzberg who gave greater emphasis to emergent strategy. Moore (2011) said that Porter’s deliberate approach worked well back in the 1980s and part of the 1990s, when the nature of the world was a bit more helpful in predicting the future. He further argued that, in today’s world, emergent strategy would be more convenient. He said that for 11 years he teamed with Mintzberg in strategy lectures, where he used to present Porter’s ideas as opposed to Mintzberg contrasted thoughts. He added that in the last years, it became much easier for Mintzberg to knock him down and more executives began to agree with Mintzberg’s idea. Moore, then supported his argument with the following supports:

1) Controlling the variables that affect business decisions is less feasible.

2) Mintzberg’s emergent strategy reflects the fact that plans will fail, which is more common.

3) Industry analysis became harder, as boundaries turned out to be more fluid. This made the identification of what industry an organisation operates in less crystal clear than it used to be (Moore, 2011; Moore and Lenir, 2011).

In the world we live in, Porter’s idea might still be relevant, but not for a long term plan (i.e. 5 years or more); Mintzberg’s emergent strategy is, from Moore’s view, much more relevant (Moore, 2011). Moore and Lenir (2011) argued that strategic
flexibility is now essential. They also said that emergent strategy operates in a different way, since it is more dynamic, exploratory, and developed internally. That is why everyone within the organisation will have a role to play, including managers at all levels, as well as employees that have direct contact with customers and/or suppliers (Moore and Lenir, 2011).

In 1979, Porter also identified five industry competitive forces that together demonstrate the intensity of competition and profitability. These five forces are as follows:

1) Threat of new entrants (competition).
2) Threat of substitute products or services.
3) Bargaining power of buyers.
4) Bargaining power of suppliers.
5) Intensity of competitive rivalry (Porter, 2008).

The following figure 5, shows these five fundamental competitive forces, in an industry, developed by Porter.
Also, Porter introduced three possible alternative generic strategies to cope and deal with the five competitive forces in order to outperform other firms. These are cost leadership, differentiation, and market segmentation or focus (Porter, 2004).

Porter’s five forces and theoretical structure were developed in a 1979 Harvard Business Review article trying to determine strategic positioning based on environmental and corporate sector analysis. Later on, in 1980, Porter wrote ‘Competitive Strategy’ as an extension to his thoughts. Then, in 1985 ‘Competitive Advantage’ was written, addressing the micro-economic dimensions gap that was in his previous thoughts. Finally, in 1990 he wrote ‘The Competitive Advantage of Nations’ as a generalisation of his theoretical thoughts to national industrial policies and development. It was also argued that, in contrast to all the strategists that preceded him, Porter was a supporter of strategic positioning for business in identified industry (Aktouf, 2008).
2.2.3.4 Richard Whittington

Whittington suggested that strategic management could have four distinctive approaches. These are Classical, Processual, Evolutionary and Systemic approaches (Whittington, 2001). Whittington, along with Scholes and Johnson, identified three key success criteria to evaluate strategic options. These criteria are suitability, feasibility, and acceptability (Johnson, Scholes, and Whittington, 2008). As strategy is something people do, Whittington recently suggested adopting a practice orientated perspective in strategy research. He argued that current researchers give attention either to strategic activity within intra-organisational level, or on its consequences on extra-organisational level. Therefore, he suggested a new, more integrated, strategy research framework. His framework incorporated both levels (intra and extra) and was based on praxis, practices and practitioners, which form the famous ‘three P’s’ of the strategy as practice (s-as-p). It was argued that, in giving more focus to the purely organisational performance or advantage matters, this practice perspective goes beyond the traditional concerns. The emphasis on both levels, intra-organisational and extra-organisational, in the practice perspective is what differentiates it. Moreover, Whittington also proposed that the intra-organisational and extra-organisational levels are actually linked (Whittington, 2006).
2.2.3.5 Strategy as practice (s-as-p)

Strategy as practice is a new theoretical background that takes on a new empirical and multi-level strategy paradigm, and in so doing, goes beyond traditional debates. Its foundations lie on shifting the strategy focus from something a firm has, to something that a firm and the people in it do (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Whittington, 2006). It has been argued that the s-as-p special interest group (SIG) has emerged from earlier process studies, like those of Mintzberg and Pettigrew (Clegg, 2012). Generally, it observes and learns from practitioners’ viewpoints and daily practices. Despite not having a stable conceptual framework, it has been argued that, to date, s-as-p is the most inspiring and motivational way to learn about strategy (Dameron and Torset, 2009). On the one hand, it has been argued that the majority of the literature has considered strategic management as ‘something that organisations have’. On the other hand, the s-as-p perspective treats strategy as ‘something people do’ and focuses on both the practice of formulating strategy and how to put it into action (Lancaster University, 2012). It has been stated that s-as-p is concerned with ‘the doing of strategy; who does it, what they do, how they do it, what they use and what implications this has for shaping strategy’ (Jarzabkowski, 2008: 365). It has been argued that the field of research arose as a response to the growing frustration with conventional strategy theory (ibid). Despite the fact that people do strategy, there was a questionable absence of the human perspective in most theories (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). This gives a justification for the individual level added to the holistic FW offered by this research (see section 2.6 for more details). Even those few who have taken the human perspective into consideration have focused just on top management (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). It was argued that praxis, practices,
and practitioners are three research parameters, or ‘the 3 P’s’ for the s-as-p field as the following figure 6 illustrates.

Praxis represents the processes and/or activities taken to realize strategy (Jarzabkowski, *et al.*, 2007). Praxis could be on the micro level (individual or group experience of a specific episode), the meso level (organisational or suborganisational level), and/or the macro level (institutional level) (ibid). These practical ideas are one reason for the three distinguished categories suggested in the context axis of the holistic FW, where the process of doing strategy (i.e. praxis), is divided into three levels (see section 2.6 for more details). Practices refers to tools that strategy works through and include social and symbolic tools (Jarzabkowski, *et al.*, 2007). Finally,
practitioners are those who do strategy, or more widely, those that influence it directly (like managers and consultants) and indirectly (policy makers, media, gurus, and business schools) (ibid).

Ontologically, two main dimensions have been identified for practitioners. The first dimension focuses on the unit of analysis and identifies that a practitioner could be an individual (e.g. CEO, CFO.) or aggregate actor (e.g. top management, middle management, engineers) (Jarzabkowski, et al., 2007). The second dimension differentiates between practitioners according to their location in relation to the organisational boundaries and suggests that a practitioner could be internal (having a hierarchy within the organisation) or external (e.g. environmentalists, consultants, institutional actors, regulators, media) (ibid). Whittington argued that strategy practitioners are ‘those who do the work of making, shaping and executing strategies’ (Whittington, 2006: 619).

Scholars in the area summarize the whole idea of the s-as-p framework using these three parameters i.e. that it is all about studying people (i.e. practitioners), doing strategy (i.e. praxis), with stuff (i.e. practice) (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2012). The s-as-p research shares an interest in the ‘doing’ of strategy and, whilst it might draw on different theories, the research mostly adopts theories relating to micro (i.e. individual micro activity), meso (i.e. organisation), and macro (society) activities (Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2012).

Also, it is important to note that from a s-as-p perspective, strategy has been defined as ‘a situated, socially accomplished activity, while strategizing comprises those actions, interactions and negotiations of multiple actors and the situated practices that they draw upon in accomplishing that activity’ (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007: 7-8).
In other words, it has shifted the meanings from what strategists should do to what actually they do do (Clegg, 2012).

**2.3 Different approaches toward an understanding of Strategy Implementation**

This research is concerned with the specific issue of strategy implementation. Strategy implementation research history, has been labelled as limited, fragmented and eclectic (Noble, 1999; Li et al., 2009). While many studies have considered the importance of strategic change and its implementation (Eisenhardt, 1989; Porter, 1996; Hauc and Kovac, 2000; Gadiesh and Gilbert, 2001), research conducted into the latter is, however, still viewed as limited (Thompson and Strickland, 1986; Cravens, 1998; Noble, 1999; Flood et al., 2000; Morgan et al., 2007; MacLennan, 2011). Moreover, those limited and fragmented strategy implementation studies are mostly prescriptive and lack a theory (Yang et al., 2009; MacLennan, 2011).

The strategy implementation research area is complex, with numerous contributions to the field coming from different perspectives. It has been argued that researchers focusing on the area will easily identify the lack of a cohesive body that a research can be based on (Noble, 1999; Carter et al., 2008). Just like strategy, there is still no universally accepted definition for implementation (Wernham, 1985; Yang et al., 2009).

The following sections will try to give a summary of the main terms in the research field and the major schools that contributed to it.
2.3.1 Definition of terms

It has been contended that strategy has applications in government and non-government organisations with low, or even no, marketing and sales activities (Dettmer in Cox and Schleier 2010). Furthermore, it has been stated that the concept has other applicability (ibid). From what has been stated above, it should be clear that the term has wide applications and this explains why many different strategy definitions could be found in the literature (see for example, Chandler, 1962; Clausewitz, 1968; Learned et al., 1969; Pettigrew, 1977; Hofer and Schendel, 1978; Andrews, 1980; Quinn, 1981; Ohmae, 1982; Van Cauwenbergh and Cool, 1982; Mintzberg, 1987, 1994, 2008; Peter Drucker, 1994; Murray and Grimsley, 1994; Barney and Hesterly, 2006; Thomson and Strickland, 2006; Chaharbaghi, 2007; Hitt et al., 2007; Jarzabkowski, et al., 2007; Grant, 2008; Johnson, Scholes and Whittington, 2008; Carter et al., 2008; Eli Goldratt in Cox and Schleier 2010; Martin, 2013). These definitions might be different, but looking at all of them, the following could be noticed.

Some of these definitions follow David’s (2007) argument that strategy consists of three phases. That is evaluation, formulation, and implementation (see for example Peter Drucker, 1994; Carter et al., 2008; Martin, 2013). This is also in line with the classic rational planning perspective which will be detailed later (see section 2.3.2). Other authors agreed that strategy is about answering Goldratt’s (1984) three fundamental questions of change. That is what to change, what to change to, and how (see for example, Chandler, 1962; Clausewitz, 1968; Mintzberg, 1987, 1994, 2008; Grant, 2008; Johnson et al., 2008; Cox and Schleier 2010; Martin, 2013).
Another set of definitions agrees with Pettigrew’s (1985) thoughts that in depth understanding of strategy cannot be done without considering three dimensions, namely the process, the content, and the context (see for example, Pettigrew, 1977; Mintzberg, 1987, 1994, 2008; Grant, 2008; Johnson et al., 2008; Cox and Schleier 2010; Martin, 2013). Boal and Bryson (1987) then complement Pettigrew’s framework by saying that it is also essential to look at the outcome. They claimed that how process, content, context, and outcomes are related is not known. That is why later, Bryson and Bromiley (1993) used outcome in addition to the context and process to categorize the different variables empirically investigated and found to affect project planning and implementation. The importance of considering the outcome in understanding strategy has also been elaborated by a number of researchers (see, for example, Mintzberg, 1987, 1994, 2008; Johnson et al., 2008; Martin, 2013).

Other sets of definitions have also considered the who of strategy. This reflects the evolving work of the s-as-p which contends that the starting point of the s-as-p field is very much the micro level and getting close to what practitioners are actually doing (i.e. the who of strategy) (Whittington, 2012) (see for example, Chandler, 1962; Hofer and Schendel, 1978; Murray and Grimsley, 1994; Thomson and Strickland, 2006; Jarzabkowski, et al., 2007; Grant, 2008; Carter et al., 2008; Cox and Schleier 2010; Martin, 2013).

One final point is that more recent definitions are getting more and more comprehensive, covering and including more elements than classical definitions. A good example is Martin (2013) who defines strategy as one integrated set of choices by answering the following five key questions: what is our winning aspiration; where will we play; how will we win; what capabilities need to be in place; and what
management systems must be instituted? His definitions hence cover almost all of
the previous elements identified, although the s-as-p practitioners element is missing.
This was logical, as the majority of work in the area was on large organisations
where individuals have minimum influence. These more comprehensive recent
definitions are one factor that suggests that a holistic view would be more capable of
understanding the concept.

Out of the different definitions given, not a single one covered all the different
elements together, therefore indicating that there is still a lack of a single
comprehensive definition. This also illustrates how scattered the work within this
field has been. As suggested by Carter et al. (2010) strategy can be viewed as an
interdisciplinary term since many different disciplines have written in the field
(Carter et al., 2010). It also supports Carter et al’s. (2008) argument that strategy
meanings and/or activities might alter in different contexts.

Henry Mintzberg also argued that many different definitions of strategy are
available. However, most of the time they share the theme of determining future
decisions by a purposeful and mindful set of guidelines, or in other words, a plan
(Mintzberg, 1978). He stated, for example, that to Drucker, strategy is ‘purposeful
action’, and to Moore ‘design for action’, or he described it as, in essence, a
‘conception preceding action’ (Mintzberg, 1987). He then elaborated more, stating
that strategy, in game theory for example, corresponds to the regulations that
administer and direct players’ moves. In military theory, strategy represents the
planning, development, and employment of all country forces in war and peace in
order to guarantee safety and triumph. Finally, he said that in management theory,
strategy is setting long term organisational goals, and embracing the resources and
tasks required to achieve those (Mintzberg, 1978). He also argued that strategies are
usually recognized as ‘deliberate plans conceived in advance of the making of specific decision’ (Mintzberg, 1978: 934). This argument has remained valid even after 30 years, as Carter et al. (2008) also agreed with Mintzberg’s argument, stating that despite strategy definitions coming from different disciplines, they all share four common characteristics:

1) Strategy is about the future, a plan or goals you want to achieve. It has been argued that without a goal you cannot score.

2) It is about how to get to these goals, using resources allocation.

3) It is competition that makes strategy essential.

4) It is related to top management’s business (Carter et al., 2008).

These ideas are also consistent with what was found during the research field work conducted in Saudi Arabia (more detailed is available in section 5.5.1).

Regarding strategy implementation definitions in the literature, execution, or the actualization of the goals was employed, but not frequently used by managers (Sashittal and Wilemon, 1996). A recent review conducted by Yang et al., in Mazzola and Kellermanns (2011), points out the factors (i.e. enablers and barriers) that influence SIP. The research reviewed top journals (like the Strategic Management Journal, the Academy of Management Journal, the Journal of Management Studies, Long Range Planning, the Journal of Management, the Academy of Management Executive, Human Relations, the Sloan Management Review, and the Journal of Marketing among others) from the most widely used databases (like EBSCOhost, ProQuest ABI, Sciencedirect, JSTOR and Wiley Interscience).
The reviewed articles were selected based on the following criteria. First, any article with keywords like strategy implementation, or execution, or where the title included one of these compounded terms were selected. Further related articles were identified by analysing the reference sections of these selected articles. Finally, articles were checked to see if they explicitly discussed factors that impede or enable strategy implementation. Based on these criteria, 60 articles were included in the review and an interesting increasing trend of published research in the area was identified (i.e. 13 papers published in the 1980s, 23 in the 1990s, and 24 between 2000 and 2007 (Mazzola and Kellermanns, 2011). This supports the previous proposition concerning the increasing significance of SI these days.

The review also indicated that the majority of articles used implementation, although none differentiated between the terms but rather used them interchangeably. In fact, some used them as exact synonyms. For example, in 2006, Hrebiniak stated that ‘Formulating strategy is difficult. Making strategy work – executing or implementing it throughout the organisation – is even more difficult’ (Hrebiniak, 2006: 12). Also, Thompson and Strickland (2003) (cited in Schaap, 2006) said that ‘strategy-implementing / strategy-executing task is the most complicated and time-consuming part of strategic management’ (Mazzola and Kellermanns, 2011: 4).

Furthermore, the review disputed that there is no universally accepted definition for ‘strategy implementation’; instead three distinct perspectives were identified. The first one includes definitions that define strategy implementation from a ‘process perspective’, with a focus on the sequence and/or the consecutive steps planned and taken (see for example Kotler, 1984 in Noble, 1999b; Wernham, 1985; Reid, 1989 in Schaap, 2006; Lehner, 2004; Hrebiniak, 2006; Harrington, 2006). The second contains those that identify strategy implementation and examine its actions from a
‘behaviour perspective’ (see for example, Gringer and Spender, 1979 in Wernham, 1985; Hrebiniaik and Joyce, 1984 and Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992a both in Noble 1999b; Varadarajan, 1999 in Homburg et al., 2004; Dekluyver and Pearce, 2003 in Schaap, 2006; Schaap, 2006). Finally, some authors took a more comprehensive ‘hybrid perspective’ combining both in their definitions (Mazzola and Kellermanns, 2011) (see, for example, Wheelen and Hunger, 1992 in Smith and Kofron, 1996; Galbraith and Kazanjian, 1988 in Sashittal and Wilemon, 1996; Govindarajan, 1988 in Sashittal and Wilemon, 1996; Singh, 1998; Mazzola and Kellermanns, 2011). This again gives another example that more recent research needs to follow scholars’ advice and be more comprehensive or holistic in explaining the concept.

The previous definitions reviewed reveal that most of them stress only the role of top management and their critical role in SI. It was clear that definitions lack a holistic view that incorporates all stakeholders, but Mazzola and Kellermanns’s (2011) definition claims to have covered this gap. It was clear from their definition that the authors support the notion of including non-senior managers and their effect on strategy implementation. Also from the definition, it could be concluded that researchers in the area are still adopting the approach of Pettigrew (1985) and Chakravarthy and White (2001), where context is split into external and internal factors (more details about Pettigrew’s work will be in the following section 2.5).

Further, by looking into the different definitions provided and the schools of thought that have influenced them (see the following section 2.3.2 for more details), the following could be observed. The majority of strategy implementation definitions encompass the two major and fundamental schools of thought, namely the rational content and the emerging, learning school. This clearly shows that, despite theoretical development in the field, these two major schools are still dominant.
Moreover, some authors did reflect upon the importance of achieving a fit. However, very few definitions encompass ideas that incorporate a holistic, flexible, and/or configuration idea.

Finally, it is noticeable that none of the previous definitions took all schools of thought into consideration. This is despite the stress from the literature acknowledging that these schools are actually not independent and that taking all of them into consideration is more advisable. This again shows a need for a more holistic definition that encompasses all previous limitations.

From all that has been stated above, it is clear that the terms in the area are still complex. However, by analysing the literature, two major perspectives or schools of thought have been identified in relation to strategy implementation. The first one is the more prominent; the content, planning or rational perspective. The second is the more contemporary, namely the process, learning, incremental, or emergent perspective (Okumus, 1999, 2001). Mintzberg (1990) argues that schools of thought in strategic management are best described by chronological evolution; this is because researchers have continuously tried to identify new schools that could overcome the limitations of the current thinking. Hence, the following sections will try to critically analyse these two schools of thought, their strategic focus, contexts, key variables, and limitations in relation to strategy implementation in a chronological way.
2.3.2 Two main schools of thought

2.3.2.1 The Content, Planning, Rational, Building perspective

This school is considered the oldest, most influential, and most dominant in the strategic management field (Whittington, 1993; Okumus, 1999, 2001; Khemarangsan et al., 2006). In this perspective the main emphasis is on the significance of planning to achieve clear objectives. Strategy development and implementation follows a formal, analytical, and top down approach. It focuses on planning, formulation, internal resources and environment. The ultimate aims and objectives of the strategy implementation process are mainly financial. The implementation nature is more sequential and revolutionary. This perspective takes the stance that strategy implementation is a process that starts after formulation. Key implementation variables identified by this perspective focus on analysis, clear planning and procedures, formal structure, monitoring, leadership, formal and top-down communication, formal resource allocations and financial resources. The central actors are head office, top management and/or senior executives and the organisational structure is centralized, mechanistic and bureaucratic. This perspective also assumes the stable and predictable environment that characterised the 1960s and early 1970s.

Scholars have suggested different names for this school, like linear model (Chaffee, 1985), programming (Berman, 1980), rational (Kay, 1993; Stacey, 1996a), deliberate (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985; Chia and MacKay, 2007), classical (Whittington, 1993; Rouleau and Seguin, 1995), planning (Johnson and Scholes, 1998; Mintzberg et al., 1998), economic deliberate (Porter, 2008; Moore, 2011; Moore and Lenir, 2011), and building mode (Chia and Holt, 2006). Some of its leading authors include

Many authors support this view and argue that the content, planning approach is still the best way to successfully develop and implement business strategies (Giles, 1991; Kaufman, 1992; Ansoff, 1994; Kotter, 1995; Senior, 1997). However, after the 1970s, this school of thought started to receive more critics. Scholars such as Quinn (1980), Mintzberg (1987), Knights and Morgan (1991) and Stacey (1996a) argued that this approach was too linear and rational, and it was therefore not applicable in dynamic and complex contexts. Moreover, strategy development and implementation were seen as two completely different phases. The approach does not emphasize the importance of non-managerial roles, culture, and politics.

Furthermore, the focus is mainly economic, with emphasis on tangible financial objectives, whilst ignoring equally important non-tangible assets. Such critique led to the emergence of a process oriented approach to strategy (Okumus, 1999, 2001).

2.3.2.2 The Process, Learning, Incremental, Emergent, or Dwelling perspective

This perspective emphasizes strategy development and implementation as a learning, crafted, and incremental process that emerges from decentralized, organic, and flexible structure, and includes operational managers at lower levels (Okumus, 1999, 2001). Sminia (2009) argued that since the early 1980s Mintzberg and Waters had started to look at how a strategy actually comes about. This concentration on the strategic management process was different to the main traditional strategy research stream that was, and still is, preoccupied with strategic content.
Mintzberg and Water (1985) and many other case studies such as Grinyer and Spender (1979), Burgelman (1983), Pettigrew (1985a), Whipp and Clark (1986) and Sminia (1994) have all shown that the strategy implementation rarely conforms to the ideal of the ‘content view’ of rational decision making and subsequent planned change (Sminia, 2009). Pettigrew for instance, provided a rather processual understanding of strategy implementation, suggesting that it is a social process which consists of stratified, humanistic but, as yet, unspecified features that usually lead to a mutually agreed outcome (Sminia and De Rond, 2012).

The process approach focuses on political issues, local demands and culture, resources and implementation. Although it also focuses on financial results, it considers non-tangible factors and places more emphasis on political and cultural issues. The approach assumes an unstable, diverse, complex and dynamic environment which better captures contemporary times. It mainly considers strategy implementation as an incremental process that starts along with strategy formulation. Key implementation variables focus on organisational culture, politics, organisational learning, bottom up and informal communication, and demand from operational level and gives greater emphasis to the role of middle, frontline and lower level managers and employees.

This view contradicts the formal ‘Content View’ of strategy implementation and claims that the process emerges in a rather pragmatic way through learning and compromise. Empirical research (such as James, 1994; Pettigrew, 1992; Pettigrew et al., 1992) lends support to the idea that the learning school would be more appropriate than the planning school, as the process implementation is a more interactive and incremental activity. Scholars have also suggested different names for this perspective, including the process view (Chia and MacKay, 2007), emergent
(Mintzberg and Waters, 1985), learning, and incremental (Okumus, 1999, 2001), and dwelling (Chia and Holt, 2006).

Some scholars criticize this approach and argue that it does not provide practical solutions (Grant, 1991; Kay, 1993; Eccles, 1993; Ansoff, 1994). For instance, it has been described as a muddling through perspective as it involves going through iterating stages of political negotiation and compromise. As a result of the absence of a clear direction, there is also a high risk of strategy drift (Freedman, 2003). Furthermore, as it adopts a trial and error approach, energy, time, and resources could be wasted (Mintzberg et al., 1998). These critics demonstrate that development is still required, both in this approach specifically, and in the area in general (Okumus, 1999, 2001).

This section has tried to identify the current main thoughts on strategy development and implementation. Two different schools of thought in relation to strategy implementation have been considered and evaluated. One interesting finding is that both approaches recommend the consideration of multiple issues in strategy development and implementation. Supporting this, Stacey (1996) states that despite the convenience of the content approach with stable context, and the suitability of the process approach with a dynamic environment, a comprehensive understanding, consideration and utilization of all approaches is recommended to avoid their individual limitations.
2.4 Factors that influence the SI process

The studies that looked into factors (both enablers and/or barriers) influencing the SI process can be categorised into two different types. The first type focuses on separate singular factors (section 2.4.1) and the second type emphasizes the big picture (section 2.4.2) and how these different factors interconnect together in the entire process (Li et al., 2009). First a summary of the main singular factors most frequently mentioned in the literature will be described, followed by some studies that focused on more comprehensive FWs and/or models.

2.4.1 Strategy implementation influencing factors (drivers and barriers)

There are many studies that look into singular factors that influence the SI process. For instance, Viseras et al. (2005) identified 36 factors and categorised them into three categories: people, organisation, and systems related factors. A more recent review, spanning the last twenty four years, has been conducted to review the influencing factors that both enable or impede effective strategy implementation (Li et al., 2009). They found that nine singular crucial factors were most frequently cited in the literature on influences in the SI process (ibid). These factors included soft (i.e. people oriented factors), hard (i.e. institutional) and mixed factors (i.e. those that contain equally hard and soft factors), and ranged from the people who communicate and implement strategy to the systems in place for coordination and control (ibid). Soft factors included strategy executors (managers and employees), the communication activities, the employed implementation tactics, the consensus and the level of commitment regarding the SI (Li et al., 2009). Hard factors included
organizational structure and the administrative system in place (ibid). Finally, strategy formulation process and the relationships among different units/departments and different strategy levels were considered as mixed factors (ibid). The following sections will present some of the most common influencing factors mentioned in the literature using Li et al.’s (2009) categories (i.e. soft, hard, and mix).

2.4.1.1 Soft factors

The first soft factor category included issues related to executors. Many studies argued the critical influence people (including their attitudes, skills, experiences, and capabilities) have on the SI process (Alexander, 1985; Govindarajan, 1989; Peng and Litteljohn, 2001; Viseras et al., 2005; Harrington, 2006). Some of these studies focused just on top management (Hrebiniak and Snow, 1982; Smith and Kofron, 1996; Schmidt and Brauer, 2006; Schaap, 2006). Others emphasised the importance of middle managers (Gupta and Govindarajan, 1984; Guth and MacMillan, 1986; Govindarajan, 1989; Judge and Stahl, 1995; Waldorsee and Sheather, 1996; Wooldridge and Floyd 1997; Heracleous, 2000). Finally, relatively few studies explored the impact of lower or non-management on SI process (Gronroos, 1985; Alexander, 1985; Noble, 1999).

The second soft factor classification included issues related to communication, coordination, consensus and commitment. This is one of the factors that were most frequently mentioned in the literature (Alexander, 1985; Rapert and Wren, 1998; Noble, 1999; Peng and Litteljohn, 2001; Heide et al., 2002; Rapert et al., 2002; Forman and Argenti, 2005; Schaap, 2006). For instance, both Alexander (1985), and more recently both Heide et al.(2002) and Schaap (2006), found that communication
was the most singular factor mentioned as crucial in SI process. In his study Heide et al. (2002) stated that communication problems represented the key barriers to SI. It has been found that 70% of the implementation barriers raised by the respondents were somehow related to communication (Heide et al., 2002). Also, in other research, poor communication and coordination have been identified as two of the six silent killers for the SI process (Beer and Eisenstat, 2000).

The third soft factor category included matters related to consensus. Many authors have emphasised the importance of consensus on the SI process (Nielsen, 1983; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992a; Dess and Priem, 1995; Rapert et al., 1996; Noble, 1999; Dooley et al., 2000). It was argued that this SI issue could be overcome by increasing both understanding and commitment (Li et al., 2009).

The fourth soft factor category included issues related to commitment. Many studies have highlighted the strong influence commitment has on the SI process (Alexander, 1985; Guth and MacMillan, 1986; Rapert et al., 1996; Noble and Mokwa, 1999).

The fifth factor mentioned under this category was implementation tactics. Many studies have related the effect of implementation tactics on the SI process (Nutt, 1989; Bourgeois III and Brodwin, 1984; Lehner, 2004; Sashittal and Wilemon, 1996; Akan et al., 2006)

Finally, the last factors most frequently mentioned in the literature (and which could be categorised under the soft factor categories) are learning, training and development (Alexander, 1985; Heide et al., 2002). It was argued that acquiring the required skills and knowledge is crucial for employees involved in the SI process (Alexander, 1985; Heide et al., 2002). Learning and development were also referred
to as essential parts of any SI process (Alexander, 1985; Heide et al., 2002). Heide et al. (2002) identified learning as the third most influential factor on the SI process.

2.4.1.2 Hard factors

The first hard factor is organizational structure. Heide et al. (2002) identified the organisational structure as the second most influential factor on the SI process. According to David (2007), across all the different kind and size of organisations, applying greater formality in the strategic management process gives better results in terms of comprehensiveness, cost, accuracy, and success. Many different authors have also highlighted the influence of organizational structure (Drazin and Howard, 1984; Gupta, 1987; Noble, 1999; Olson et al., 2005; Viseras et al., 2005; Schaap, 2006; Hrebiniak, 2006) and power structure (Hrebiniak, 2006).

Administrative and control systems related factors were also considered to be crucial influencing factors for the SI process (Drazin and Howard, 1984; Govindarajan, 1988; Govindarajan and Fisher, 1990; Roth et al. 1991; Nilsson and Rapp, 1999; Viseras et al., 2005). Factors related to this category could also include rewards and/or incentives (Schaap, 2006).

Moreover, the uncontrollable factors in the external environment were considered to have influences on SI process. This includes factors like external environment (Alexander, 1985; Wernham, 1985), political factors (Mintzberg and Quinn, 1991; Heide et al., 2002) and culture (Heracleous, 2000; Heide et al., 2002; Schaap, 2006).

Furthermore, many authors have identified material resources as an important factor that has a strong influence in the SI process (Alexander, 1985; Wernham, 1985;
Heide et al., 2002). For instance, Heide et al. (2002) argued that if the required resources and competencies were not available, implementing strategy might be difficult, if not impossible.

Finally, there are other factors that could also be categorised as hard factors such as a firm's size (Harrington, 2006) and market orientation (Homburg et al., 2004).

2.4.1.3 Mixed factors

Many studies have mentioned that strategy formulation and/or the actual process of how the strategy was developed influence the SI process (Alexander, 1985; Kim and Mauborgne, 1991, 1993; Singh, 1998; Hrebiniak, 2006; Allio, 2005). Some factors that could also fall under this category are implementation stages (Wernham, 1985) and internal guidelines (Alexander, 1985; Govindarajan and Fisher, 1990; Hrebiniak, 2006).

Moreover, different studies have considered relationships among different units/departments and different strategy levels (including control and reward systems) as an important factor that affects the SI outcome (Walker and Ruekert, 1987; Gupta, 1987; Slater and Olson, 2001; Chimhanzi, 2004; Chimhanzi & Morgan, 2005).

Finally, other important factors have included those related to personnel management and leadership (Alexander, 1985; Heide et al., 2002). In Heide et al.’s (2002) case, these factors were the fourth most reported as influential in the SI process. It was argued that if a strategy disregards these issues, it is more likely that it will face huge resistance during the SI process (Heide et al., 2002).
Li et al. (2009) argued that it is very hard to include a full list of all factors that affect the SI process. However, some of these factors are much more frequently mentioned and are analysed in greater depth in the literature (ibid). This section has tried to present those factors that were most frequently mentioned and most deeply analysed in the literature.

2.4.2 Strategy implementation frameworks

As mentioned before, the second type of studies, identified in the literature has looked into the multiple factors organised together to offer a purportedly single comprehensive FW or a model (Li et al., 2009). Li et al. (2009) argued that these studies either simply list factors under different categorisations (like Skivington and Daft, 1991; Noble, 1999; Noble and Mokwa, 1999; Beer and Eisenstat, 2000; Okumus, 2001 cited in Li et al., 2009), and/or by showing relations between these factors, often using a graphic FW (Noble, 1999b; Higgins, 2005; Qi, 2005; Brenes et al., 2007 cited in Li et al., 2009). This section will discuss a number of these SI frameworks/models identified in the literature. These frameworks were predominantly conceptually developed, but some of them were empirically tested. These frameworks have used different terminology to identify key areas in their frameworks. For instance, Thompson and Strickland (1995) refer to these key areas as tasks. Other scholars used elements (Stonich, 1982; Hrebinjak and Joyce, 1984; Galbraith and Kazanjan, 1986; Hambrick and Cannella, 1989; Aaker, 1995), whilst others utilize variables (Waterman et al., 1980; Galbraith and Kazanjan, 1986; Hambrick and Cannella, 1989; Miller, 1990, 1997; Alexander, 1991; Skivington and Daft, 1991; Schmelzer, 1992; Bryson and Bromiley, 1993; Schmelzer and Olsen,
Another group of scholars employ the term components (Skivington and Daft, 1991; Thompson and Strickland, 1995) and others utilized factors (Waterman et al., 1980; Miller, 1990, 1997; Schmelzer, 1992; Bryson and Bromiley, 1993; Schmelzer and Olsen, 1994; Aaker, 1995).

In 1999, Okumus reviewed a number of SI frameworks in both the strategic management field and the international management field. More recently, Van der Maas (2008) reviewed six SI FWs. This section will try to give a brief overview of some SI FWs mentioned in the literature and the factors that they cover.

Among the first frameworks developed in the strategic management field were the FWs developed by Stonich (1982), Hrebiniak and Joyce (1984) and Galbraith and Kazanjan (1986). These frameworks were mainly composed of factors that were considered crucial for SI and were all conceptually developed, not empirically tested. They consist of quite similar factors, but were mainly concerned with the internal organisational level. Also, they all argued that implementing strategies are achieved by using and adjusting these factors. For instance, Galbraith and Kazanjan (1986) identify six factors that have to be considered by firms to ensure successful SI processes. These factors are tasks, information, people, structure, decision processes, and reward systems. They argued that these factors should all be consistent internally and with an organisation’s strategy (ibid).

Following the works of the 1980s, Aaker (1995), Alexander (1991) and Thompson and Strickland (1995) also conducted their own conceptual studies. In their studies, they mention similar SI factors to the previous 1980s frameworks and were also mainly concerned with internal organisational factors.
The literature also shows some linear models such as Lewin (1951) and Vascencellos eSa (1990) that mainly identified and proposed tasks to be achieved in different phases of the SI process. Lewin (1951) proposed a three stage model and Vascencellos eSa (1990) suggested a ten step model to execute the SI process. These authors also illustrated quite similar SI factors, namely those that are considered to be internal organisational factors, like culture and structure.

Another widely cited framework is the one developed by Waterman et al. (1980) and Peters and Waterman (1982). These authors defined SI as the relationship between seven factors: strategy, structure, systems, style, staff, skills and superordinate goals. This framework is one of the most cited frameworks and is also referred to as the 7S or Mckinsey 7S framework (Waterman et al., 1980; Peters and Waterman 1982; Van der Maas, 2008).

The framework was developed on the basis of an extensive study of America’s best run companies and was empirically tested (Waterman et al., 1980). The authors highlighted the famous debate over the relative importance of strategy and structure. The debate was started by Chandler in 1962 and asked whether leaders with a strategy dominant view are more crucial than managers that take the structure dominant view (Chandler, 1962). Waterman et al. (1980) asserted that, although both are important, successful SI is no longer just a matter of strategy and structure only, rather success is also dependent on the relationship between strategy, structure, systems, style (i.e. management style), staff (i.e. people or individuals), skills and superordinate goals (i.e. whether or not goals were available, clear, understood and disseminated) (Waterman et al., 1980). In other words, they claim that effective SI processes depend on the relationship between these seven factors (ibid). Also, they argued that strategy and structure alone are incapable of explaining all causes that
affect the SI process; instead, successful SI often depends on these other variables. Waterman et al’s (1980) framework therefore provided a more comprehensive understanding for SI processes (ibid). Pearce and Robinson (1991) argued that these seven factors are the key components that managers have to consider for increasing the probability of SI success. Again, all these factors were mainly related to internal organisational factors.

Hambrick and Cannella’s (1989) FW is also a widely mentioned FW in the literature. They argued that strategy could be implemented through using a number of variables. Different to previous frameworks, this one highlighted the importance of external and internal communications during SI processes. They claimed that their framework was empirically developed, but did not provide clarifications of their research methodology. They also claim that their findings support the frameworks and suggestions made by Hrebiniak and Joyce (1984) and Galbraith and Kazanjian (1986). They identified five factors or areas that must be considered and that could affect SI processes. These factors are subunit policies and programs, structure, people, resource commitments and rewards. In contrast to previous FWs, they additionally suggested the careful assessment of some implementation obstacles.

In 1990, Miller also explored SI processes. She examined the SI processes of eleven strategic decisions in six public and private organisations. She did not develop a SI framework, but used her interviews to identify and evaluate ten SI variables and categorize them into enablers and realisers. Also, she argued that realisers are more crucial for SI processes. She argued that enablers are more heterogeneous and that their joint effect is not as crucial as realisers. She identified backing, assessability, specificity, cultural receptivity and propitiousness as realisers; whilst familiarity,
priority, resource availability, structural facilitation and flexibility were considered to be enablers (Miller 1990, 1997).

As an effort in developing a more holistic FW, Pettigrew suggested three broader categories. These categories involve content, context (divided into outer and inner) and process. His argument was based on the point that managing a strategic content of any new strategy unavoidably entails managing its context and process (Pettigrew, 1987). It was argued that his framework was composed of five factors that should be considered in SI processes. These factors are environmental assessment, human resources, linking strategic and operational change, leading change and coherence (Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991). The specific work of Pettigrew will be discussed in more details in the following sections.

In 1991, Skivington and Daft examined 57 strategic decisions in petroleum, healthcare and integrated circuits organisations. They identified a number of implementation variables that need to be used to implement differentiation or low cost strategic decisions. Also, they categorize these variables into two main categories. These categories are framework and process categories (Skivington and Daft, 1991). They argued that a SI framework must be comprehensive and include multiple factors from both these categories (ibid).

In the 1990s, Schmelzer and Olsen developed a SI framework and empirically tested it in three restaurants. They identified 14 SI variables and categorized them under process and context variables, which were then further divided into primary and secondary variables (Schmelzer, 1992; Schmelzer and Olsen, 1994). They mentioned that SI is a development from context to process and that they have to be considered together to implement strategies (ibid).
Bryson and Bromiley (1993) empirically explored the factors that influence strategy formulation and implementation in public companies. They categorized these factors under three main categories: context, process and outcome (ibid). They have even tried to illustrate the relationship and influence context factors have on process factors and consequently, on outcome (ibid).

In 1996, Pennings developed a SI FW and argued that his FW is simple and could help managers to understand the essential variables that could influence SI. He identified six factors that, if taken into account and adjusted to support the SI process by management, would help an organisation have a better chance of successful SI (Pennings, 1996, 1998). These factors are organisation structure, selection and socialization, culture, control and information systems, reward systems, power and politics (Pennings, 1998). He also argued that these identified factors help an organisation to learn from its own implementation effort (ibid). Looking at these factors also indicates that most of them are related to internal variables only two of them (i.e. powers and politics) are related to external categories.

Noble (1999b) identified five factors that influence the SI process. These factors are leadership, goals, structure, incentives and communications (Noble, 1999b). Also, all these factors can be considered internal factors.

Hussey (1996) identified eight factors that managers should observe in SI processes. These factors are tasks, culture, people, decision processes, structure, information systems, control systems and reward systems. Also, like most scholars, he argues that these factors are interrelated and that they interact and influence each other (ibid). These factors can all be considered internal.
In the international management field, fewer studies in SI have been conducted (Okumus, 1999, 2001).

For instance, Hrebiniak (1992) suggested a framework of SI for global organisations. He integrated the preceding variables explored in his previous study, Hrebiniak and Joyce (1984) and complemented it with extra variables for global SI. These extra variables include developing global managers, leadership, facilitating global learning, working with alliance or external companies and having a matrix structure (Hrebiniak, 1992).

Also, Yip (1992) developed a conceptual SI FW, identifying four main factors that are crucial in developing and implementing global strategies. These factors are organisational structure, culture, people and management processes (Yip, 1992).

In 1991, Roth, Schewieger and Morrison empirically identified six implementation variables that should be designed in a specific manner in order to implement global or multi-domestic strategy. These variables are coordination, managerial philosophy, configuration, formalisation, centralisation and integrating mechanisms. Also, they argued that global and multi-domestic strategies have different implementation prerequisites (Roth et al., 1991). Moreover, they proved that strategies are more easily implemented and goals achieved when the appropriate fit is achieved between the strategy, capabilities and administrative mechanisms (ibid). Hence, they recommended that administrative mechanisms and capabilities have to be continually re-considered to match the intended strategy (ibid).

Bertsch and Williams (1994) did not propose a FW but analysed how CEOs of global organisations implement their strategic initiatives. They identified five factors to be considered when implementing global strategies. Those factors are personal
involvement of top management, formulating objectives, changing systems, legitimacy and managing reviews (Bertsch and Williams, 1994). Also, these variables are all related to just internal factors.

To sum up, by looking to these different SI FWs the following can be observed. Firstly, the majority of FWs do not include strategy as an important element of the FW. The only exception to this is Waterman et al. (1980). This is in line with the argument highlighted previously, that the dominant view in the literature remains the content view (see section 2.3.2) which considers SI as a separate phase, isolated and coming after strategy formulation (Van der Maas, 2008). This is also identical to the findings of this research, as the majority of the participants claimed that their cases had two separate phases of strategy formulation and implementation (see section 5.5.2 for more details). Nevertheless, more recent studies (like Mintzberg, 1990; Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991; Miller, 1997; Noble, 1999; Van der Maas 2008) are increasingly arguing that these phases are intertwined, a view that is more in line with the process school (see section 2.3.2).

Secondly, the majority of FWs did not focus on the individual or human aspect. For instance, only five FWs out of the seventeen FWs reviewed mentioned the importance of people (Waterman et al., 1980; Galbraith and Kazanjan, 1986; Hambrick and Cannella, 1989; Yip, 1992; Hussey, 1996). This highlights the point that the majority of the FWs in the literature did not consider the soft aspect or the individual level (more detail is available in section 2.3.1 and 2.5). This could be a consequence of previous studies merely focussing on large organisations where the individual influence is much smaller than in SMEs (Hart, 1992). The literature, however, increasingly points to the importance of the individuals in the SI process.
Thirdly, only one FW (Bryson and Bromiley, 1993) mentioned the importance of including outcome in the FW. This is in-line with the recent literature which identifies the lack of studies including outcome factors in their SI process analysis or FWs, despite its importance (Pettigrew, 2012; Sminia and de Ron, 2012). For instance, Pettigrew (2012) argued that despite the importance of having outcome in the analysis of SI, rarely did any studies link it with the SI process (see section 2.5 for more details). He also said that this might be because adding outcome could add complexity (ibid).

Fourthly, the majority of FWs focus on single factors and therefore lack a more general holistic view. For instance, Van der Maas (2008) in his review argued that the majority of FWs in the literature focus on top management. In his view, most FWs follow a top-down approach and it looks like most of the FWs were developed for top management (ibid). This top-down approach is in line with the traditional content and dominant school of thought (section 2.3.2). Even Pettigrew’s work, despite showing linkage between context, process and content, had a specific focus on leadership (Sminia, 2009) (more details will be provided in section 2.5). He has, however, recently acknowledged the importance of having a more holistic view, arguing that ‘no single factor is sufficient to explain variability in performance’ (Pettigrew, 2012: 1311).

In other words, it could be said that the majority of these FWs were highly influenced by the traditional content view (see 2.3.2) and concentrate on the identification of specific variables that could be used by top management as concrete factors, or what Li et al. (2009) call it ‘hard factors’ to implement strategy. Examples of these factors include structure (mentioned by almost all FWs), control and reward among others. Further, there is not a single FW that included factors covering the
whole SI process (i.e. from initiation to outcome) and which also included all possible context influences (i.e. on an external, organisational and individual level). For example, only one FW (Pennings, 1998) included politics and power, two important external influencing factors (i.e. outside the organisation) that truly influence the SI process. Almost all FWs included variables that were focusing just on the internal organisational level.

A fifth interesting point is that the majority of older studies offered their factors as a definitive list. More recently, however, studies (like Okumus, 1999; Van der Maas, 2008; Pettigrew, 2012) disagree with that view and argue that the factors identified could only be viewed as common suggestions to be considered in SI processes. Almost all of these researchers have pointed to the importance of looking at the big picture and the need to consider all the variables and ensure the correct fit to secure SI success (Stonich, 1982; Roth et al., 1991; Thompson and Strickland, 1995; Aaker, 1995). That is why looking at the whole process is more significant, as it is essential to constantly match and fit the factors on the different process levels and context categories.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that some of these FWs did categorise their factors under main categories. For example, Hrebiniak and Joyce (1984) categorise their factors under planning and design. Miller (1990) used realisers and enablers and Miller and Dess (1996) employed contextual, system and action levers. Schmelzer (1992) and Schmelzer and Olsen (1994) engage context and process. Skivington and Daft (1991) utilised framework and process components. Lastly, Bryson and Bromiley (1993) categorise them under context, process and outcomes. Okumus (1999) argued that the majority of previous FWs in the area of SI appeared to have categorized their SI components based on the work of Pettigrew. He said that
Pettigrew himself argued that researchers and executives should use a more holistic approach and look at the strategic content, context, process and outcome concurrently in order to understand and evaluate the SI process (Pettigrew 1985a, 1987 cited in Okumus, 1999). Pettigrew himself calls this approach the contextual and processual approach (Pettigrew 1985a, 1987). That is why the specific work of Pettigrew, from the process school, will be further analysed in the coming section 2.6.

2.5 SMEs and Strategy

As mentioned before, SMEs are considered the economic backbone of every country, playing important roles in job creation and economic growth in most states (Asquith and Western, 1994; OECD, 2012; The Economic Forum, 2010; Gedo 2011; Ates et al., 2013; Gagliardi, et al., 2013; Bamiatzis and Kirchmaier, 2014). SMEs also form the majority of firms in any economy and are considered to be the engines of any society (Gagliardi, et al., 2013; Papel and Au-Yong-Oliveira, 2015). SMEs are critical to economic growth, given their capacity to create new jobs, sustain survival, and mitigate recessionary pressures (Bamiatzis and Kirchmaier, 2014). SMEs account for around 90% of organisations and employ more than 50% of the world (World Bank Group, 2012 b). Predominantly subsequent to the global financial crisis, SMEs have been considered the key engines for creating new jobs, and for economic growth especially in developing economies with high labor such as KSA (Sharma, 2011; World Bank Group, 2012 b). That is why, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), which is part of the World Bank Group, have stated that ‘Creating opportunities for SMEs in emerging markets is a key way to advance
development and reduce poverty, and a strategic priority for IFC’ (World Bank Group, 2012: 1). Other authors have even argued that because of their centrality to economic progress, it is crucial to understand the factors influencing its strategy implementation processes (Bamiatzi and Kirchmaier, 2014).

Some debates could be found in the literature about SMEs and whether or not they do strategize. More recent findings are increasingly suggesting that SMEs definitely need strategy in order to survive and flourish (Sharma, 2011). However, the level of sophistication in their strategies are highly influenced by the process complexity (ibid). Having said that, SMEs should not adopt the same complex processes as large organisations, but rather they should be supported to unveil strategies that comply with their own characteristics, which are different from large organisations (Hart, 1992). This will consequently support the development of management concepts and practices (Garengo and Biazzo, 2012). Moreover, the literature is now developing in this direction (i.e. supporting the development of managerial practices by supporting SMEs to unveil their strategies, without forcing them to be similar to large organisation). Actually, as mentioned before, large organisations are even creating more partnerships with SMEs to learn from their practices (Brad Power, 2014). Therefore, further research is still required to develop SMEs strategic frameworks in order to guide entrepreneurs and managers (Ates et al., 2013). Also, it was noticed that scholarly literature focused mainly on large organisations and only recently have new research studies started to focus on, and involve, SMEs (Garengo and Biazzo, 2013; Ates et al., 2013; Bamiatzi and Kirchmaier, 2014). This is in line with Mirabeau and Maguire (2014) who recommended that future strategic research should explore new contexts such as startup and SMEs organisations. These previous studies were also mainly from the West (Okumus, 2003; Van der Maas, 2008),
which leave a clear gap for similar research in developing eastern economy such as Saudi Arabia.

In Saudi Arabia SMEs currently formed 96% of the country’s enterprises and contribute to almost one third of the national economic activity (Bokhari, 2013). Their development is a major concern of the Saudi government, which aims to reduce the dependency on the oil sector (Bokhari, 2013; Sfakianakis, 2014; McKinsey Global Institute, 2015). In addition, SMEs have the potential to contribute to reducing the accelerating unemployment rate among the ever increasing youth population (Bokhari, 2013). This younger generation is less rigid and have been proven to be more flexible and effective in accepting strategic changes and are thus worth exploring. Moreover, there is a higher tendency of the youth to take greater risks, which is reflected in the increasing amount of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) established in the country by youths (Al-khotani, 2015). Also, the government encouragement for foreign investments means that local SMEs now are competing globally. This has forced local SMEs to give extra care to the entire strategy process to truly gain competitive advantage and stay in the front line. The government’s actions have meant that Saudi SMEs are not only required to possess the ability to formulate new strategies, but also to make sure they understand the entire SI processes, and how to adopt and implement them as Nguyen (2009) argued (Alyahya & Suhaimi, 2013). This kind of thinking might be why Saudi organisations started to place a greater focus on the entire SI process and introduced financial incentives for those who contributed toward the success of that entire process.

Hence, by considering all these elements in a comprehensive manner, the framework that this study recommends will better suits enterprises that nowadays increasingly require more flexibility in general and SMEs, which currently form the majority of
enterprises in the entire world, more particularly. Previous limited research that
looked at the issues of SMEs SI mainly attribute their failure to financial constrain
(World Bank Group, 2012 b). This was not always the case in the context of KSA.
Hence, this thesis will aim to contributes toward a deeper understanding of SI and its
enablers/ barriers in the SME sector taking the precise case of an under researched context.

2.6 A Prominent author of the process school: (Andrew Pettigrew)

This section will further review the work of Andrew Pettigrew which is considered
as one of the foundations for almost all work developed in the process school. There
were many reasons behind the choice of looking further into the specific works of
Pettigrew. First, Andrew Pettigrew is considered one of the leading authors in the
contemporary process view and his ‘Triangle Model’ serves as a base for the
majority of works in the SI area (Okumus, 1999; Sminia and De Rond, 2012).
Second, as strategy implementation is considered highly complex (Harrigan, 1983;
Wernham, 1985; Noble, 1999), it has been claimed that, by merging process, content
and context, his works could help in obtaining a more in-depth understanding of
strategy implementation (Pettigrew, 1985). This merging helps when looking into
the interactive effects of context (in his case firm level and industry sector level
variables) in explaining the content and processes of change. Third, his FW is
relatively more comprehensive than the other FWs found in literature and hence,
would have a greater potential in facilitating the presentation of all factors explored.
Fourth, unlike most FWs, his FW embraces both external and internal factors. Fifth,
it considers potential antecedent conditions that might have influenced the explored
phenomena, including the environment, an element that has been neglected by the majority of the FWs analysed above (see section 2.4). Finally, Pettigrew has claimed that his approach helps in understanding the origins, development and implementation of organisational change (i.e. the how or the process of SI) which is part of aim of this research (Pettigrew, 1985b, 1987). So, based on these reasons, Pettigrew’s work was chosen to be further analysed in order to contribute toward the development of a holistic primitive FW.

Pettigrew argues that seeing strategic change as a rational, linear process is too narrow. Explaining change needs to consider continuity, change, exogenous (i.e. external) and endogenous (i.e. internal) factors, actions, structures, chance and surprise. Similar to Bower (1970), Mintzberg (1978) and Burgelman (1983), Pettigrew saw strategic change as a multilevel and continuous process, situated in context, or in other words, ‘as an iterative, multilevel process, with outcomes emerging not merely as a product of rational or boundedly rational debates, but also shaped by the interests and commitments of individuals and groups, the forces of bureaucratic momentum, gross changes in the environment and the manipulation of the structural context around decisions’ (Pettigrew, 1987: 658). Pettigrew’s work provided little evidence to support Chandler’s (1962) dictum that structure follows strategy. In his case it was much more complex and it was the other way around, with strategic changes emerging after changes in belief, structure, systems and rewards (Pettigrew, 1987).

Pettigrew’s seminal work started with a longitudinal investigation of Imperial Chemical Industries’ (ICI), which was the largest manufacturing organisation in the United Kingdom (UK). This study was recorded in his landmark book ‘The Awakening Giant: Continuity and Change in Imperial Chemical Industries’

This ICI project was fundamental in establishing the ‘Pettigrew’ brand of management process research, or what Pettigrew calls ‘contextualism’. His process research can be described as large scale, close-up, longitudinal and contextualist process studies into ‘why, what and how’ questions of management praxis (Sminia, 2009; Sminia and de Rond, 2012). The research was developed as a result of Pettigrew’s critique that the majority of previous organisation change research was ‘acontextual’, ‘ahistorical’ and ‘aprocessual’. This had caused most studies to be preoccupied with the details of narrow changes, rather than a more holistic and dynamic analysis of changing (Pettigrew, 1987). To overcome the previously mentioned weaknesses, research that is contextualist (or vertical analysis) and processual (or horizontal analysis) in character is encouraged (Pettigrew 1985b cited in Pettigrew, 1987). In other words, to produce more comprehensive study, strategic changes, transformations or implementation questions should involve the three categories together; content, context and process, along with their interconnection. The underlying point of this analysis of strategic change is the idea that formulating the content of any new strategy unavoidably entails managing its context and process.

The study concluded with what is called ‘Pettigrew’s triangle’ of content, process and context (subdivided into inner and outer context). The triangle is presented in figure 7 below (Pettigrew, 1987; Sminia and De Rond, 2012).
Pettigrew’s work suggests taking content, process and context into consideration when researching a specific organisation (Sminia and de Rond, 2012). He divided the context (why of change) into two levels:

1) Outer: referring to ‘the social, economic, political and competitive environment’ (Pettigrew, 1987: 657-8) in which the firm operates.

2) Inner: referring to ‘the structure, corporate culture and political context within the firm’ (Pettigrew, 1987: 657-8) through which ideas for change have to proceed.

He also identified the content (what of change) as ‘the particular areas of transformation under examination’ (Pettigrew, 1987: 657-8) (e.g. technology, manpower, products, geographical positioning or corporate culture). Lastly, he defined the process (how of change) as ‘the actions, reactions and interactions from the various interested parties as they seek to move the firm from its present to its future state’ (Pettigrew, 1987: 657-8).
Pettigrew has conceptualized changes and transformations of organisations in terms of linkages between the content, context and process and has done so with a specific regard to leadership behaviour. However, he clearly stated that leadership behaviour is only one of the ingredients in a complex analytical, political and cultural process of challenging and changing the core beliefs, structure and strategy of the firm (Pettigrew, 1987). In contrast to previous studies, which basically viewed context as a constraining force (barriers), Pettigrew conceptualizes it also as an enabling force (ibid). However, a limitation of his interpretation lies in the amount of detail, he provided, in the context, for enablers and barriers. His main focus was solely on the environment.

The Pettigrew triangle framework is what guided him in his ICI project and in his further research. Also, it is what many successive other scholars have taken advantage of (Okumus, 1999; Sminia and De Rond, 2012). For instance, using ‘Google Scholar’, Sminia and de Rond (2012) identified a sample of 241 papers that had cited the book and/or the paper and found that scholars included in the sample were from different disciplines, mainly including those interested in strategy implementation, change management, the implementation of information technology and sports management (Sminia and De Rond, 2012). In addition, Sminia and de Rond (2012) argued that these papers used Pettigrew’s work for different purposes. Predominantly Pettigrew’s work was used to either give an example of a processual case study, to stress the contextuality of their research, or to spell out that their research included a context, process and content aspect. Others had used it to strengthen their argument that organisational and management process is a political, cultural and/or cognitive process. Conversely, some studies used Pettigrew’s works in order to criticize his rather too rational and/or linear understanding of process. A
few refer to the study as an example of structuration theory. Another minority refer to the study as an example of evolution, incremental, revolution and/or radical change.

Sminia (2009), when comparing Pettigrew’s work with Mintzberg and Van de Ven (two other process oriented researchers), claimed that the nature of explanation of both Mintzberg and Van de Ven could be generalized, whereas Pettigrew’s work was more contextualist (Sminia, 2009). That is, out of these three major process researchers, Pettigrew was the only one that took a contextualist, rather than a generalist, nature of explanation. Pettigrew lately defended his position, arguing that ‘[g]eneralizations are hard to sustain over time; they are even tougher to uphold across organisations and international and cultural borders’ (Pettigrew, 2012: 1325). Consequently, that is why he believed that a contextual approach would be more appropriate and that is another reason why Pettigrew’s approach is more convenient to develop the new, primitive framework. It will serve as a base that could be flexible and effective for explorative research in different context.

In general, Sminia and de Rond’s (2012) argument (which was re-stated by Pettigrew) is that Pettigrew’s work ‘became part of a humanizing force and trend in strategy as a stream of authors championed strategy process research and weakened the role rational theories of choice and planned theories of change had on the field of strategic management’ (Pettigrew, 2012: 1306). Also, Pettigrew recently argued that ideas of his work predominantly guided by ‘The Awakening Giant’ are still relevant today and his work was reissued by Routledge in 2011 (Pettigrew, 2012). Furthermore, Sminia and de Rond (2012) consider the emerging strategy-as-practice interest group work, which is an interest group at the Academy of Management
(AoM) dedicated to develop research into the practice of strategy, to be the natural heir to Pettigrew’s works.

2.5.1 Limitations of Pettigrew model

Pettigrew (2012) has recently admitted two deficiencies in his work. One is failing to connect context and process to outcome in his studies and in process scholarship more generally. Also, he admitted the limited or very narrow treatment of the process analysis method that his work proposed (Sminia and de Rond, 2012; Pettigrew, 2012). Thus, Sminia and de Rond (2012), at the end of their JMS paper, suggested that ‘because it is the process that explains the outcome, further research should go into process courses to see whether and how strategic management activity could direct the course to a favourable outcome’ (Sminia and de Rond, 2012: 1344). Sminia (2009) in his comparison of three distinguished process scholars, that is Mintzberg, Pettigrew and Van de Ven, also stated that details or elaborated answers to the how question is what is essentially missing in their work. For instance, if Mintzberg’s argument of the importance of configuration fit, or Pettigrew’s capacity for change or Van de Ven’s facilitation of innovation activity is what counts, what are the things management does to achieve and maintain it? Also, what configuration should be intended? In addition, it might be important to maintain capacity for change, but a decision on the direction of change and understanding the process that might lead to innovation is what makes strategic management more effective (Sminia, 2009).
To sum up three main limitations of the process research generally and Pettigrew’s work specifically, were identified and hence the following three modifications are recommended for his model.

2.5.1.1 Adding the outcome perspective

Okumus (1999) conducted an extended review for a number of frameworks that divided implementation variables into categories or groups (such as Miller, 1990, 1997; Pettigrew, 1991, 1995a; Skivington and Daft, 1991; Schmelzer, 1992; Boal and Bryson, 1987; Bryson and Bromiley, 1993; Schmelzer and Olsen, 1994; Miller and Dess, 1996). He found that most previous researchers appear to have adopted their groupings mainly from Pettigrew's works on managing strategic change (See Pettigrew, 1985a, 1985b, 1987; Whipp et al., 1987). Based on that, he used Pettigrew’s three categories and suggested adding outcome, although, at the time, he did not provide any justification for this.

As mentioned before, Pettigrew himself recently admitted that a deficiency of his work was that it fails to link context and process to outcome. He said that, if a study is trying to link patterns in a process or identify how and why outcomes do vary accordingly, it is recommended to introduce some outcome variables in the analysis (Pettigrew, 2012). It was argued that process research does produce valuable ‘how to’ knowledge, but it is only by including outcome in the analysis that determinants of outcome variation in context and process terms can be realized (Pettigrew, 2012). He also argued that rarely did studies link process and outcome as it adds complexity (ibid). Pettigrew (2012) then suggested that to manage studies aiming to link context and process to outcome, it is essential to provide a comparative investigation, control
for some feature of the investigated field and a constant definition for the outcome variable, conceptually and operationally. In other words, keeping control for something, as described by Pettigrew himself to the author of this research at a recent conference. He suggested that a form of control could be achieved by one or more of the following.

First, he suggested specifying the form of strategy explored, which for this research, were all strategies of introducing new products or services in the KSA. He also suggested that another form of control could be achieved by unifying the size of the organisation explored, which for this research were all SMEs in the KSA. Moreover, he said that more control could be achieved by specifying the phase of development of the businesses explored which, for this research, were all first generation firm (i.e. the person that started the business is still running the business). Finally, he also advised that using an affirmative primitive framework adds to the level of control for the study; this was also in line with Hartley’s (2004) suggestion. That is why this research developed and used a primitive framework.

In addition, as all outcomes are contestable, the analysis has to show the reasons behind this specific outcome (Pettigrew, 2012). This argument was in line with Rumelt et al.’s (1994) statement that ‘studies of the policy process rarely, if ever, connect attributes of the process with quality of outcome’ (Rumelt et al., 1994: 527 cited in Sminia and de Ron, 2012). Sminia and de Ron (2012) also recommended that further process research in strategy should tackle both issues of process quality and process outcome. That is why outcome will be added to the Pettigrew triangle.
and this will make sure that all SI process variables are covered in a more holistic and comprehensive manner.

2.5.1.2 Adding a further level to the context perspective

Different to previous studies, Pettigrew contributed to the literature by arguing that context could be viewed as an enabling force, as well as a constraining one (Pettigrew, 1987). His studies looked into the effects of context on explaining the content and the process of change. However, these studies considered only industry sector and firm level variables (Hendry and Pettigrew, 1987; Sparrow and Pettigrew, 1987 cited in Pettigrew, 1987). Consequently, Pettigrew’s triangle divided the context into two outer and inner levels. One limitation identified in his outer context lies in his interpretation or the amount of details he provided for enablers and barriers under that category and which mainly focused only on the environment.

Another important observation is related to his inner division of the context which mainly focused on organisational factors. These considerations might have been reasonable for these specific studies since most of them focused on large organisations. These large organisations are more stable and hence individuals play a less influential role in their process (Hart, 1992). In other words, outside context and inner organisational context are actually the main categories, that contains almost all influential factors in their processes (ibid). However, that is not the case for other types of organisations such as SMEs. In these organisations, individuals form the main context meaning that they have a wider influential impact on the SI process (ibid).
Hence, this study will further divide the inner or internal level into two subcategories in order to include more specified elements on an organisational level and to add the equally important individual level. This individual level will hopefully encompass the increasing recommendations calling for the inclusion of the social and humanistic aspects of change generally (Miller et al., 2004) and in SMEs more specifically (Hart, 1992).

2.5.1.3 A more comprehensive and holistic detailed view

In previous sections it was shown that Pettigrew provided an explanation of change by showing the linkages between context, content and process but with a specific focus on leadership behaviour. Pettigrew clearly stated that leadership behaviour has been just one ingredient of that complex process and further suggesting the consideration of other alternatively important aspects (Pettigrew, 1987). More recently, also Sminia, in his review of three prominent process scholars, found out that details or elaborated answers to the how question is what is essentially missing in their work (Sminia, 2009). Pettigrew (2012) has since agreed with Sminia review, stating that ‘no single factor is sufficient to explain variability in performance’ (Pettigrew, 2012: 1311). Pettigrew argues that there are five capacities that distinguish high performing organisations from others. These are the way they conducted environmental assessments, led change, linked strategic and operational change, managed their human resources as assets and liabilities and managed coherence in the overall process of competition and change (Pettigrew, 2012).

After realizing the importance of including outcome in the process, studies by Pettigrew and Whipp (1991) (cited in Pettigrew, 2012) provided some explanation
for relative performance. They argued that two qualities are necessary for an organisation to be able to compete. Firstly, they argued that organisations need to understand competitive forces in detail and recognise how they change over time. Secondly, they need to be able to mobilize and manage the resources required to achieve the competitiveness chosen over time. In other words, organisations need to become what he called ‘receptive organisations’, such organisations have a faster pace for change\(^5\) (Pettigrew, 2012).

In addition to that, some elements included in Pettigrew’s model were limited. For instance the outer context was confined to social, economic, political and competitive environment and inner context to the structure, corporate culture and political context within the firm (Pettigrew, 1987). Further details will potentially be allowed to be explored and incorporated in this inductive research. As the field work will use open ended questions (see chapter 3 for more details), and hence, participants will be able to talk about any elements they believed were influential.

### 2.7 Toward a holistic framework

As clearly demonstrated, Pettigrew’s framework has strengths, along with some weaknesses. The previous sections have identified some areas for developing the Pettigrew’s triangle. The first suggestion was to add the outcome perspective. This will make the framework more holistic by covering the whole process of SI i.e. from initiation to outcome. This will make sure that any factor during the whole process will be covered on the horizontal axis, as depicted in figure 8. Moreover, more

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\(^5\) Pettigrew identified 8 signs for receptive organizations see Pettigrew, 2012 for more details
details were suggested by adding a further level, that is the individual level, to the context perspective (i.e. the vertical axis). Many scholars have argued that focussing on both context and process (i.e. the contextual and processual approach) provides a more holistic view and a better understanding for the complicated SI process (Dawson, 1994; 1997; Pettigrew, 1992, 1997, 2012). Okumus (1999) also said that ignoring the context provides an inadequate understanding of the issues and the definite causes. That is why the holistic FW will include two main axes. That is, a horizontal axis that covers the whole process from initiation to outcome. In addition, to a vertical axis will cover all different types of contexts; that is the external, internal organisational and internal individual levels as depicted in figure 8.
This primitive framework provides an attempt to override previous limitations identified in the literature reviewed in general and in the work of process scholars and Pettigrew’s work more specifically. The FW provides more details and allows for the possibility of incorporating further factors with more comprehensive categorization and extra flexibility. It is more holistic as it covers the whole SI process (i.e. the x-axis, including initiation, process and outcome) and the different
available contexts (i.e. the y-axis, the external, internal organisational and internal individual levels). This will hopefully provide a more comprehensive view of the SI process. Also, the FW has added a crucial subcategory to include the soft aspect under the internal division (the individual level). At the same time, the framework links the content, context and process to the outcome and performance. Consequently, this primitive framework will provide a better lens for the exploration of different cases in future research as it covers the major flaws identified in previous frameworks.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the existing strategy literature with respect to strategy implementation; it has done so in order to develop a more holistic primitive framework to be used to explore the influencing factors affecting SI processes of SMEs in the context of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). It started by giving a briefing on the historical development of the area, followed by major debates and works. After that, different definitions of the terms and approaches toward understanding the strategy implementation process, available in the literature, were described and a specific interest in the more contemporary process view was expressed. This view was considered to be under-utilized in the literature, despite the growing belief of its effectiveness. Then, different strategy implementation FWs were reviewed and it was found that most of these frameworks were influenced by the more contemporary process school and the work of Pettigrew in particular.

Many researchers have considered Pettigrew work as a base for their work (Okumus, 1999, 2001) and this is why further attention was then given to Pettigrew’s
prominent work. His work was further analysed and areas of development were identified, for example the different strategic orientations required for SMEs (i.e. flexibility, speed and including individual influences).

Consequently an affirmative primitive framework was developed in order to add to the level of control for the study (Hartley, 2004; Pettigrew, 2012). It is believed that this framework will provide a better base for future researchers as it encompasses for the following. First, unlike Pettigrew’s work which has mainly focused on leadership issues, the framework offers opportunities to explore a variety of different issues. Second, the framework provides an equal chance to include both internal factors (which have been the main focus of previous research) and external factors. As Pettigrew argued and as demonstrated in the analysis, most previous frameworks and research were acontextual and focused only on the more controllable internal factors. Third, since the majority of previous frameworks have followed the content school, which was not suggested to be the best approach, especially for SMEs, the framework takes the contemporary process view and considers the whole process of SI from initiation till outcome. Fourth, consideration of soft aspects has been allowed through the addition of a further level to the previous internal subdivision identified by Pettigrew. Fifth, the framework provides opportunities to cover more factors as enablers and barriers under context. This goes beyond Pettigrew, who mainly focused just on the environment. Finally, the framework has considered outcome, which will allow for the exploration of the different connections that this category might have with the context, content and process, and thus encompasses the whole SI process.
Overall, the framework developed is believed to be more comprehensive and holistic, providing supplementary details that were lacking in previous frameworks and that could, therefore, benefit future exploratory studies in the field.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Having now introduced the reader to the research, and given a summary of what has already been conducted in the field chosen, this chapter summarizes the research methodology adopted to achieve the research purpose. The chapter is divided into four main parts. The first part starts by identifying the main philosophical paradigms and research approaches. After that, different qualitative and quantitative methods are presented, along with a number of data collection sources. The second part then provides justifications for the choices made in this research. Following that, the third part describes the sequence and the details of the data collected and how they contributed to this specific research. Finally, the last part describes the sequence and the details of how the data were analysed.

3.2 Philosophical paradigms

Two main philosophical paradigms are Positivist and Interpretive (Lee, 1991; Ryan et al., 2002). The positivist research is mainly influenced by reductionism, repeatability and refutation (Oates, 2006). Its principles are that science is value free, and therefore observers should be independent, and view the world objectively. Whereas the interpretive approach sees science as driven by human interests, accordingly, researchers are part of what is observed, and hence, the world is subjective and socially constructed (Chacko and Nebel, 1990; Easterby-Smith et al., 1991; Saunders et al., 1997). Researchers taking a positivist approach focus on facts;
they look for causality and fundamental laws, reduce phenomena to the simplest elements, formulate a hypothesis and then test it. Conversely, the interpretive approach gives attention to meaning. Interprevists try to understand what is happening by looking at each situation comprehensively, and to then develop ideas and concepts (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991; Saunders et al., 1997). Positivist research is more formal, and structured whereas interpretive is more flexible and evolves throughout the research (Saunders et al., 1997). The positivist data sample is mostly quantitative, statistical, large and representative, whilst an interpretive sample is mostly small, purposive, and descriptive, using notes and the participants’ own words (Chacko and Nebel, 1990; Easterby-Smith et al., 1991; Saunders et al., 1997; Hussey and Hussey, 1997). Moreover, the process of positivist research is deductive, whereas for interpretive is generally inductive (Hussey and Hussey, 1997; Collis and Hussey, 2009).

Each paradigm has its own advantages and challenges. For instance, on the one hand, in testing hypotheses, the positivist paradigm helps to generalize previous research and to keep the research process under control. On the other hand, the interpretive approach is more flexible, is useful in understanding social process, in answering how, why, as well as what questions, and is recommended when knowledge is limited (Chacko and Nebel, 1990; Saunders et al., 1997). Regarding challenges, the positivist is weaker in understanding social processes, less flexible, and practicable in terms of research findings. Whereas the interpretive problems include the time it takes, accessibility of data and it is considered to be more difficult in relation to data reduction and analysis (Chacko and Nebel, 1990; Easterby-Smith et al., 1991; Saunders et al., 1997). Finally, it has been argued that the aim in interpretative research is not to generalize from the setting to a population, which is contrary to the
positivist view (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991); rather, the purpose is to explore and deeply understand the phenomenon and this understanding could then be used to inform other settings (ibid). In other words, these findings could be transferred to other contexts with similar characteristics (Ryan et al., 2007).

3.3 Research approaches

One of the major classifications for research approaches is qualitative versus quantitative (Morgan and Smircich, 1980; Myers, 1997; Easterby-Smith et al., 2002; Myers and Avison, 2002). It was argued that qualitative research is subjective and associated with interpretive and critical positions, whilst quantitative is more objective and is related to the positivist paradigm (Bryman, 1984; Creswell, 1994; Crossan, 2003; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

The qualitative approach developed in social science with the aim of exploring cultural and social phenomena, whereas the quantitative approach aimed to examine natural phenomena and was developed in natural science (Myers, 1997; Myers and Avison, 2002). In terms of data, the qualitative approach produces rich descriptive data to understand and describe social phenomena, while quantitative depends more on statistical and numerical information (Oates, 2006; Boeije, 2010). Qualitative approaches collect and analyse qualitative data such as pictures, texts, and artefacts, whereas quantitative depends more on numeric data (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Qualitative research is considered to be more flexible, giving attention to the quality of entities, processes, meanings, and aim to answer ‘how’, ‘why’, and ‘what’ questions, or find meanings in a context (Bryman, 1984; Harvey and Myers, 1995;
Merriam, 1998; Banyard and Miller, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). Quantitative research, however, relies on fixed measurements and hypothesis testing with a view to breaking phenomena down into more quantifiable entities, and searching for causal relationships (Bryman, 1984; Harvey and Myers, 1995; Oates, 2006).

Qualitative samples are usually selective and small, and the qualitative process is mostly inductive. This is in contrast to quantitative samples which tend to be larger and random and follow a deductive process (Creswell, 1994; Merriam, 1998; Boeije, 2010). The following table summarises some of qualitative and quantitative characteristics.

Table 2: Characteristics of qualitative and quantitative research

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<tr>
<th>Point of comparison</th>
<th>Qualitative research</th>
<th>Quantitative research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus of research</td>
<td>Quality (nature, essence)</td>
<td>Quantity (how much, how many)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophical roots</td>
<td>Phenomenology, symbol interaction</td>
<td>Positivism, logical empiricism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associated phrases</td>
<td>Fieldwork, ethnographic, naturalistic, grounded, subjective</td>
<td>Experimental, empirical, statistical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal of investigation</td>
<td>Understanding, description, discovery, hypothesis generation</td>
<td>Prediction, control, description, confirmation, hypothesis testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design characteristics</td>
<td>Flexible, evolving, emergent</td>
<td>Predetermined, structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>Natural, familiar</td>
<td>Unfamiliar, artificial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Small, non-random, theoretical</td>
<td>Large, random, representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection</td>
<td>Researcher as primary instrument, interviews, observations</td>
<td>Instruments (scales, test, surveys, questionnaires, computers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode of analysis</td>
<td>Inductive (by researcher)</td>
<td>Deductive (by statistical methods)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>Comprehensive, holistic, expansive</td>
<td>Precise, narrow, reductionistic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Merriam 1988 cited in Danermark et al., 2002)
3.4 Qualitative and quantitative methods

There are a number of methods that falls under qualitative and quantitative research. Ethnography, action research, grounded theory, and case study are methods associated with qualitative approaches (Myers, 1997; Myers and Avison, 2002; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

Developed in the 1920s, ethnographic research implies the immersion of the researcher in the research context to understand the phenomenon culturally and socially (Merriam, 1998). Its main advantage is that it provides in depth understanding of the specific phenomenon (Harvey and Myers, 1995); its main disadvantages are the time it requires and sometimes the lack breadth (Myers, 1999).

Action research was developed in the 1940s, with the aim of contributing both to peoples’ practical concerns and to social science’s goals (Rapoport, 1970; Oates, 2006). Oates (2006) argues that action researchers do not only observe and describe, but also aim to make a difference by cooperating with active participants.

Grounded theory was developed in the 1960s with the aim of collecting data and coming up with a theory grounded in the analysis of the data and using no preconceived concepts (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Finally, a case study is ‘an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident’ (Yin, 2003:13). A case study allows the researcher to use multiple sources of data, obtain in depth information and details, and is useful in exploring complex phenomena and in providing answers for how and why questions (Benbasat et al., 1987; Oates, 2006). There are three types of
case studies: descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory (Yin, 2003). Oates (2006) argued that descriptive case studies are used when detailed information about the phenomenon and its context is required. Explanatory cases are used to explain specific results, and exploratory cases are employed when only limited literature is available (ibid). For all three types of case study, a single case or multiple cases could be used (Benbasat et al., 1987; Yin, 2003; Oates, 2006). A single case study is used when a unique case is investigated, to test a theory, or for revelatory cases that were previously inaccessible (Yin 2003). Whereas, multiple cases are preferable in describing, testing or building a theory, or when it is required to identify similarities and differences among cases (Benbasat et al., 1987; Eisenhardt, 1989b).

Quantitative methods include surveys, and laboratory experiments (Myers, 1997; Myers and Avison, 2002). Surveys are used to gather the same type of data from a large sample systematically. Then the researcher tries to identify patterns and to generalize their results (Oates, 2006). These surveys could be conducted by phone, post, using a website, email, or in person (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). Experiments are used to examine causal relationships and prove or disprove a hypothesis. This examination allows the researcher to explain what happened and to predict future results (Oates, 2006).

### 3.5 Data collection

A number of sources have been identified in order to collect the data required for a specific research. For instance, questionnaires include a list of questions to collect information from individuals (Oates, 2006). Archival records, which may be
comprised of any registers and documents produced such as map, plans, charts among others (Yin, 2003). Tests and measures are used to identify how and what participants think and use predefined, often closed questions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). Documents include pre-existing sources, as well as documents created by the researchers, and may include written materials, video, pictures, among others (Oates, 2006). Focus groups involve engaging a group of participants selected by the researcher to give their interpretation about a specific phenomena (Powell and Single, 1996). Field notes are records produced by the researcher during data collection (Mulhall, 2003). Observations are another source of data collection and could be from either an outside observer or participant observer (Walsham, 1995). Physical artefacts include tools observed or collected during the case study (Yin, 2003). Finally, interviews are considered to be the key data sources within interpretive case studies, as they provide specific views of participants about a phenomenon (Walsham, 1995).

Interviews are considered to be open meetings, guided by the researcher to explore a specific phenomenon and to get detailed information (Oates, 2006). Walsham (1995) advised that a balanced between being passive and active has to be maintained during interviews. The main types of interviews include unstructured, semi structured, and structured (Hancock et al., 2009). In unstructured interviews, a topic is proposed and then interviewer listens to the interviewee’s views. In semi structured interviews, a list of topics and open ended questions is prepared for exploration but the researcher is open to move through the questions in a flexible way and/or to even add more questions if required in the interview. Finally, structured interviews involve a set of questions to be answered by all interviewees (Oates, 2006; Hancock et al., 2009). Yin (2009) argued that, for case studies,
interviews, observations, archival records, documentation and physical artefacts could be used. In this research, interviews, field notes and documentation have been used.

3.6 Justification for research methodology selection

This study has taken an interpretive, qualitative stance and used multiple case studies as a research method. Every case involved semi structured interviews, field notes and documentation. Justifications for these selections are presented in this section.

3.6.1 Justifications for the interpretive approach

Based on the research aim, objectives and questions identified in chapter one, an interpretive, philosophical stance was taken. An interpretive paradigm provides opportunities for exploration and for getting a profound understanding of the subject by realising participants’ views (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991; Easterby-Smith et al, 2002). As this research tried to find out the understanding of Saudi SMEs in relation to the enablers and barriers of strategy implementation, an interpretive stance was favourable. This stance ensured that the researcher was exposed to the richness of participants’ views as to what could influence and impact strategy implementation processes in Saudi SMEs.

A positivist stance was not appropriate as the research is not using an existing theory or testing hypotheses, but was conducting research to explore and describe factors and categories perceived by the participants, and to understand the phenomenon in
depth. In addition to that, the positivist association with a singular reality is inappropriate since the research aimed to explore different perceptions of enablers and barriers of strategy implementation, and to do so from different aspects.

3.6.2 Justifications for the qualitative approach

Many reasons were behind the choice of a qualitative approach, which is, in fact grounded in the interpretive paradigm. First, the qualitative approach provides richer descriptions and deeper information (Hoepfl, 1997; Boeije, 2010; King and Horrocks, 2010) of the strategy implementation process. Second, as the research context of developing countries broadly, and the KSA specifically, is relatively under-researched a qualitative approach was more appropriate as it is better when little is known about the phenomena (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Third, the qualitative approach is better when the research seeks to interpret participants’ insights (Banyard and Miller, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005), and hence this approach was more appropriate here as this research aimed to understand participants’ views and perceptions of what factors (i.e. enablers and barriers) influence the process of strategy implementation. Fourth, qualitative research is favourable when there is an aim of understanding social and cultural meanings in specific context (Harvey and Myers, 1995). This fit with the research aim of exploring social, cultural, and organisational characteristics of strategy implementation process in the KSA. Fifth, qualitative analysis is usually interpretive and inductive, where themes are explored and findings produced (Creswell, 1994). The analysis process starts by analysing texts, and then themes are constructed to produce meanings (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). This was the analysis process for this
research. The data collected through semi-structured interviews, field notes and observations were analysed and then the findings were presented within categories. Finally, qualitative approaches help in understanding a phenomenon gradually through a number of exploration procedures. That is, by creating, comparing, sorting and categorizing patterns of the study (Miles and Huberman, 1994); this was in line with the research procedures adopted here.

A quantitative approach was not chosen as it works with numbers and relies on statistics, rather than generating rich descriptive data (Oates, 2006). Also, it gives importance to hypothesis testing (Bryman, 1984) and focuses on causal relationships, rather than contextualised indepth meaning (Harvey and Myers, 1995).

3.6.3 Justifications for the case study approach

The most appropriate method for this research were case studies for the following reasons. First, case studies are encouraged when a limited number of studies have been done in the area (Benbasat et al., 1987). Second, they permit the research to explore the phenomenon within its context (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Third, they allow for an understanding of the complexity of a phenomenon’s nature by answering why and how questions (Benbasat et al., 1987). This complexity aligns with the research aim, objectives, and questions mentioned in chapter one. Fourth, it was argued that case studies allow the researcher to closely collaborate with participants, which allows a better understanding of their actions (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Fifth, case studies are recommended for contemporary phenomenon when the researcher has less control over it (Yin, 2009). Finally, case studies offer in depth and rich information by using multiple data sources, which helps to improve data
credibility and to ensure that the various aspects of the phenomenon are disclosed (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Yin, 2009). These features consequently support research findings and conclusions (Benbasat et al., 1987). In this research, semi structured interview was used as the main data collection source. Field notes and documents were also used as complementary data collection sources to reveal multiple aspects about the strategy implementation process in Saudi Arabian SMEs.

Multiple case studies were used as it was recommended over a single case. This is because multiple cases make the findings more robust and hence the probability of extending the generalizability of the findings is increased (Yin, 2003); a single case is vulnerable and cannot be extended to other settings (Lee, 1989a; Yin, 2003).

3.6.4 Justifications for data collection

In case studies, two types of data are collected namely, primary and secondary data (Parikh, 2002). Primary data are the data collected by the researcher for the research, while secondary data are data available, not collected by the researcher him/ herself, but which could be useful for the research. It has been argued that secondary data save the researcher both time and money (Saunders et al., 2007).

The primary data collection source for this research was qualitative semi-structured interviews. This data collection source was used for the following reasons. First, it is argued that interviews represent the major data collection tools for qualitative research (Myers and Newman, 2007). Second, qualitative interviews enable the researcher to explore in depth personal experiences and feelings (Oates, 2006). Third, interviews provide an opportunity for exploring sensitive matters that
participants might object to disclose by other means, and thus allow for the collection of detailed information (ibid). Finally, semi-structured interviews provide flexibility for the researcher to alter the flow or add questions based on each case (Oates, 2006).

The second source of data were documents. In addition to the semi-structured interviews conducted, the researcher relied, in some cases, on a diverse range of documents provided by the interviewee, and these were used as complimentary sources or secondary data. A wide range of documents was reviewed for most cases, including websites, organisational structures, publications, internal reports, minutes of meeting, and emails. This helped in identifying various aspects for some cases such as objectives, strategies, projects, services.

The final source of data was field notes. During the semi-structured interviews and while examining documents, the researcher was taking notes about each case. Every thought and elaborations were noted, as it was difficult at the time for the researcher to identify what would be useful in the future. It has been argued that such notes could help the researcher when identifying lessons learnt and in determining what make the cases different from each other (Eisenhardt, 1989b).

3.7 Description of the data collected

3.7.1 The pilot study

The researcher conducted the pilot study in the KSA between August and September 2012. The initial aim was to explore one SME and another large organisation in the
KSA. The SME pilot study started with an initial meeting, organized with the vice president of a small private wealth management office, investing in venture capital, real estate and public equities. In the first meeting, the vice president presented all the group companies and three cases, which took place in phases that follows each other, within one of their companies were chosen. In addition, access to documents and archive was also then approved.

The company chosen was a local tourism organisation, founded in 2007 to support the tourism industry by raising awareness about the KSA and increasing tourists’ knowledge about places to visit within the KSA. The company first launched a hard copy tourist guide, providing a valuable resource for tourist programs and contributing to the promotion of tourism in the KSA, and in Jeddah specifically. The company tried to provide services in compliance with the standards of international tourism combined with local traditions such as:

- Providing information about new tourist locations in Jeddah.
- Providing information and data about tourist facilities.
- Providing enjoyable tourist and organised program of activities.
- Providing information about events and festivals held in Jeddah.
- Intending to provide services for organizing tourist trips.

The company vision was to be the first leading Saudi company in the tourism industry in the KSA for both visitors and nationals. Its mission was to fully integrate internal and foreign tourist packages, and work in cooperation with governmental agencies and private sectors to serve the industry. Its main goals were: first to provide information about the Kingdom through tourist products; second, to contribute in supporting the country efforts to develop the tourism industry; third, to
participate in marketing tourism products; fourth, to provide a reference for foreign tourist offices about applicable laws and regulations relating to tourism; fifth, to form an alliance with all parties operating in the tourism industry and to provide the best tourist packages and prices; sixth, to provide information about new and unique tourist experiences; and finally, to participate in creating job opportunities in the tourism industry.

Nine semi-structured interviews were conducted, with three representatives from the company to explore three cases that took place in three consecutive phases that the company had been through. The first one, was the printed case, where the company used to develop just printed products. This case was considered a failure according to the interviewee. The second one, was the hybrid case, where the company used to produce both a printed, and a soft copy of the work. This phase was considered chaotic by the interviewee. Finally, the third one, was the application case (i.e. only soft copy), which was considered to be a hassle free and successful case by the CEO and the employee within the company. One interesting point that came out of this pilot study is that the business owner and general manager of that SME gave much more detail and in depth input toward the different cases investigated. This could be attributed to fear of talking from lower level employee, or even the lack of an overall or detailed knowledge of the entire process.

The large organisation case was initially scheduled with both a Fast Moving Consumers Goods (FMCG) organisation and a hospital. Unfortunately, after arriving to the KSA in August 2012, and after having an initial meeting, both organisations decided not to proceed. The main reason identified by both organisations was confidentiality. Constrained by the time, the researcher was forced to use an alternative option. Thankfully, this was possible through connections and
relationships. Another interview was secured with a director of an international FMCG. However, after exploring this large organisation, the author found that the participant from this large organisation mainly focused on internal organisational influencing factors, and had very limited input to the two other categories (i.e. the external and the individual).

The majority of his speech was about the system this large organisation uses and its advantages and disadvantages. This was in line with the literature that has shown a clear bias toward internal organisational details, at the expenses of both the external and internal individual factors (see chapter 2 for more details). That is in addition to the idea that large organisations are better established, and hence, most of them have a specific system to follow, which was evident in the large case here. Individuals in large organisation had to follow the well-established available system in the organisation, and not the other way around (i.e. individual influences were minimal).

Also, the participant inputs about external influences over the SI processes were minimal. These findings were in line with the work of Hart (1992) which argued that individuals do have more influences on SI processes in SMEs. Thus, after conducting the pilot study, the researcher chose to shift the focus solely onto SMEs and that was for the following reasons. Firstly, despite the importance of SMEs to the economy, and the recent call for more specific focus on SMEs (Ates et al., 2013; Mirabeau and Maguire, 2014), the majority of previous studies focus on large organisations. (see chapter 1 for more details). Secondly, SMEs are much more flexible and are faster in the process of strategy implementation, and the most recent school of thought ‘the process school’ refers to speed and flexibility as crucial elements for success. Thus, investigating these specific organisations will give more insights towards the most recent school of thought in the literature (see chapter 2 for
more details). These reasons are an addition to all the previously mentioned specific reasons making the investigation of SMEs in KSA in particular worthy of examination (see chapter 1 for more details).

Another main issue arising from the pilot study was the large amount of data that was produced and the difficulties in categorising this. Consequently, this highlighted the importance of including all findings in a simplified and organized manner, or the need to use a somehow comprehensive framework. Reflecting the literature, each available framework had its own limitation and it was hard to include all factors mentioned in interviews in one of them. Also, as this research’s aim was to explore a new context, trying to involve everything mentioned from the interviewee with minimum influences from the researcher, the use of a primitive framework addressing existing limitations was necessary.

As most frameworks revised were influenced by the work of process scholars in general, and the work of Pettigrew in particular, his specific research was revisited and three main limitations were identified. The first limitation was failing to connect context and process to outcome. The second limitation was the limited treatment of his process analysis and specific regard to leadership behaviour. Also, his work was criticised for not being contextual enough. He mainly focused on the environment and internal organisational context, considering just industry sector and firm level variables. Consequently, three main modifications were finally suggested to his ‘Triangle Model’ to compensate for these limitations. The aim was to enhance the understanding of the strategic implementation process by considering all possible elements (multi perspective view) that could influence it (see chapter 2 for more details).
After developing the primitive framework, it was used for the field work conducted from April till September 2013 to explore 32 different cases in the KSA as mentioned in the following sections.

3.7.2 Pre-data collection phase

As the aim of this research was to get in depth information of strategic implementation cases in the KSA, a fieldwork approach was chosen. The fieldwork was conducted over a period of 6 months from April to September 2013. A total of 32 semi-structured interviews were conducted, with a total length of more than 71 hours.

3.7.2.1 Sampling and access

In contrast to quantitative representative random sampling, qualitative sampling is more purposive and participants are mainly selected based on the amount of information that they could contribute to help answer the research questions (Miles and Huberman, 1994). It has been argued that random sampling in qualitative research is inappropriate as the aim is to explore the phenomenon in depth rather than to generalize (Oates, 2006). The purposive sampling could then be followed by other sampling techniques, like snowball or convenience sampling (Fossey et al., 2002). This study started by a purposive sampling and then snowball and convenience sampling followed. This is demonstrated in figure 9.
For instance, one of the reasons behind the selection of SMEs was that they are more affected by influencing factors and hence would be better at identifying them. Most of the semi-structured interviews were conducted with the business leader or owner (i.e. the one in the front). As it was found during the pilot study that first the business leader provided much more detail and in depth information (see section 3.7.1). Second, the business leader was not afraid to talk and was more open in giving information about barriers, failures, and mistakes, which was part of the aim of the study (i.e. identifying both enablers and barriers). Also, the researcher was able to secure two very important interviews with senior members in the government who have established some small businesses themselves. One of these interviews was with a deputy minister, and the other with a senior strategy advisor and representative of a Saudi municipality.

The first pilot study, as stated, was arranged through relations with a vice president of a private wealth management office, who is currently a CEO of a new organisation launched specifically to support Saudi SMEs. After each interview,
contacts of persons who potentially would have good experiences and knowledge in the area were suggested by the interviewee. This is what Oates (2006) called snowball sampling: where suggestions come from the initial participant targeted, who then suggests others with good awareness of the topic and so on. For the last couple of interviews, the researcher adopted a convenience sampling approach, selecting participants based on their availability and willingness to contribute to the research (Oates, 2006). It is also worth noting that the primary data collected covered all SMEs main categories available in the KSA, in addition to two interviews conducted with government representatives that also have their own SMEs.

According to both the General Director of the Saudi Industrial Development Fund\(^6\), and the president in charge of ‘KAFALAH\(^7\)’, the majority of Saudi SMEs fall within five main sectors (Almubarak, 2012; Alayed, 2012). The first is the construction sector, which includes contractors, and heavy and industrial equipment dealers. The second is the service sector, which is the largest one, and includes organisations that provide a variety of services such as human capital, recruitment and manpower, management advisory, catering, education, Haj and Umrah\(^8\), and advertising services. The third sector is the commercial sector and includes traders, distributors, retailers, and wholesalers. The fourth is the industrial sector, which contains manufacturing organisations, and factories. The fifth is the tourism and entertainment sector, which includes organisations such as travel and tourism, shelter services, coffee shop and restaurants, recreational services, and entertainment.

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\(^6\) A funding agency affiliated with the Ministry of Finance and National Economy, SIDF grants medium and long-term, soft loans for private industrial project as well as administrative, financial, technical, and marketing consultancy services to help develop and enlarge the industrial base of the Kingdom.

\(^7\) A joint initiative between the Ministry of Finance and Saudi banks to enhance the productivity and competitiveness of SMEs and to provide job opportunities

\(^8\) Haj and Umrah are religious Islamic pilgrimage and are considered religious tourism
Table 3 provides a summary of the participants who contributed to this study. Codes are used to maintain anonymity. Also, the table specifies the type of each organisation, in which sector it falls, the specific role of the interviewee, the location and the total duration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category/Sector</th>
<th>Case Code</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Participant role</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Total Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>AJ</td>
<td>Contractor</td>
<td>Owner/ General manager (GM)</td>
<td>Café in KSA</td>
<td>3 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Ey Sad</td>
<td>Contractor</td>
<td>GM</td>
<td>His office</td>
<td>2 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>TK</td>
<td>Recruitment and Manpower</td>
<td>Owner/ GM</td>
<td>His office in the KSA</td>
<td>3 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Management Advisory</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>His office in the KSA</td>
<td>2 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>HQ</td>
<td>Education service</td>
<td>Founder/ GM</td>
<td>His office in KSA</td>
<td>2 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Aar</td>
<td>IT service</td>
<td>Program management office manager</td>
<td>Café in KSA</td>
<td>3 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>IT service</td>
<td>IT managing director</td>
<td>His office in KSA</td>
<td>2 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>MK</td>
<td>Catering services</td>
<td>Owner/ GM</td>
<td>His office in KSA</td>
<td>3 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Abos</td>
<td>IT service</td>
<td>Innovation Team Leader</td>
<td>Café in KSA</td>
<td>2 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Hay Da</td>
<td>Hajj and Umrah services</td>
<td>Project manager</td>
<td>His office</td>
<td>3 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Om Sh</td>
<td>Health Care Development Services</td>
<td>Director of Business Development &amp; Corporate</td>
<td>Café in KSA</td>
<td>1 hr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Office Location</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Um</td>
<td>Advertising Agency Development director</td>
<td>His office</td>
<td>2 hrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>Neb</td>
<td>Management Advisory Founder/ GM</td>
<td>His office</td>
<td>2 hrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Alb</td>
<td>IT Cofounder/ GM</td>
<td>Café in KSA</td>
<td>2.5 hrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>HM</td>
<td>Trader and Wholesaler Cofounder/ GM</td>
<td>Café in KSA</td>
<td>1 hrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>KG</td>
<td>Retail Executive managing director</td>
<td>His office in KSA</td>
<td>1.5 hrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Abd</td>
<td>Distributor Owner/ GM</td>
<td>His office</td>
<td>1.5 hrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Ob</td>
<td>Distributor Supply chain manager</td>
<td>His office</td>
<td>1.5 hrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Ta</td>
<td>Distributor Owner/ GM</td>
<td>Café in KSA</td>
<td>2 hrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Niz</td>
<td>Wholesaler Owner/ GM</td>
<td>His office</td>
<td>1.5 hrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>AaL</td>
<td>Manufacturing (Factory) GM</td>
<td>His factory in KSA</td>
<td>3.5 hrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>MB</td>
<td>Manufacturing (Factory) Factory manager</td>
<td>Café in KSA</td>
<td>2 hrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism and Entertainment</td>
<td>GD</td>
<td>Restaurant Owner/ GM</td>
<td>His office in the KSA</td>
<td>2 hrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism and Entertainment</td>
<td>AM</td>
<td>Restaurant Founder/ GM</td>
<td>One of his restaurants in the KSA</td>
<td>3 hrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism and Entertainment</td>
<td>HaKa</td>
<td>Industrial equipment trader + Restaurant GM/ cofounder</td>
<td>Café in KSA</td>
<td>2 hrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism and Entertainment</td>
<td>AbM</td>
<td>Entertainment Co-founder/ CEO/ Executive producer</td>
<td>His office in KSA</td>
<td>2 hrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism and Entertainment</td>
<td>AhM</td>
<td>Tourism Vice president</td>
<td>His office in KSA</td>
<td>5 hrs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism and Entertainment</td>
<td>AT</td>
<td>Food and Beverage (Coffee shop)</td>
<td>Co-founder/ marketing director</td>
<td>Café in KSA</td>
<td>3 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
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<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism and Entertainment</td>
<td>Ba</td>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>Cofounder/ GM</td>
<td>His office</td>
<td>3.5 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism and Entertainment</td>
<td>Mo</td>
<td>Islamic Tourism (Haj and Umrah)</td>
<td>HR director</td>
<td>His office</td>
<td>2.5 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ha</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government representative</td>
<td>AH</td>
<td>Province municipality</td>
<td>Municipality Advisor</td>
<td>His office in KSA</td>
<td>1 hr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government representative</td>
<td>TB</td>
<td>KSA ministry</td>
<td>Undersecretary of the Ministry</td>
<td>His office in KSA</td>
<td>1 hr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Luborsky and Rubinstein (1995) argued that it is unlikely that the sample size and techniques used in qualitative study will be predetermined, but rather will develop during the field work. In qualitative research, it is hard to determine the sample size, which is why most researchers depend on data saturation, that is the point when neither new themes, nor information, emerge (Guest et al., 2006). Guest et al. (2006) argued that the number of interviews conducted before reaching saturation depends on the participants’ homogeneity, claiming that this usually could be reached after twelve interviews. Conversely, Yin (2009) said that this usually happens after eight interviews. The researcher believes that data saturation was reached after conducting fifteen interviews. The probable reason behind this delay, when compared with the previous scholars’ suggestions, might be that the variety of SME organisations meant that the participants were not so homogeneous and, consequently kept new information emerging. As this research was exploratory in nature, the researcher chose to conduct more interviews to make sure to cover all possible factors that may influence the strategy implementation process in KSA. This increase in the sample
size, and not being so much homogenous, is helpful to reduce the research bias and improve its reliability; bias and reliability can sometimes be issues in qualitative studies (Stake, 1995; Lam, 2005).

3.7.3 Semi-structured interviews

As mentioned before, in order to obtain indepth information and explore the particular situation in SMEs in the Saudi context, thirty two semi-structured interviews were conducted (see table 3). These interviews formed the main method for the data collection and took place during the field work from April to September 2013. Each interview took at least one hour, and the longest lasted for five hours. With the permission of the interviewee, all but two of these interviews were recorded. These two participants informed the researcher that they did not wish for the interview to be recorded. Recording the interviews is very useful for the research as it provides a full description of what has been said (Walsham, 1995). For almost all interviews, it is the researcher who ended the task when data saturation was reached, that is, when information provided became repetitive. Only in five interviews, it was the interviewee who ended the interview due to an emerging situation requiring an immediate response such as a phone call or unplanned meeting with others. In these cases, another date and time were agreed with the interviewee to complete the task.

In almost all of the interviews conducted, participants were very enthusiastic, reflecting an interest in the topic and considering it crucial. All participants were keen to reflect upon their particular experiences, demonstrated willingness to be approached again if required and asked if they could get a copy of the findings at the
end. This has clearly demonstrated that the SMEs organisation were keen on gaining insights into what could support their sustainability, and what the literature showed of high failure in Saudi SMEs (Al-Saleh, 2012; Ahmad, 2012; Bagaber et al., 2014; Yalcin, 2014).

As mentioned previously, the research builds on the literature reviewed, and more precisely the process school and the highly cited Pettigrew model, to build a framework that served as a conceptual lens and guideline during the semi-structured interviews. A copy of these open ended guiding questions and themes can be found in Appendix 2. Although having a sort of guideline before conducting field work research and not going empty handed was suggested (Eisenhardt, 1989b; Hartley 2004; Pettigrew, 2012), the researcher tried to avoid referring to the literature in order to minimize any possible bias. This was done by giving the interviewee the lead in the discussion, and only interfering when required. In addition to that, there was a set of questions that allowed the participants to give their own interpretation of the main explored themes. The semi-structured interview guidelines included the following themes:

1. Information about the interview, such as date, location, starting and finishing time

2. Demographics, including the name, title, gender, age, marital status, education, position, type of organisation, industry, the name of the organisation, years of experience generally and in the last specific position, contacts, email and whether or not recording was permitted.

3. General information about the nature of the work and how the business is run.
4. Participants’ understanding of different terms in the field such as strategy, formulation, implementation, success and failure.

5. Questions related to the context, including external and internal on organisational and individual level.

6. Questions related to the strategy content, giving information about the strategic initiative described.

7. Questions related to the process comprising roles taken during the process, what went well, what not and why?

8. Questions related to the outcome, including the extent to which the goal was achieved, whether it is considered a success or not, and what did influence the outcome precisely from the participant view.

9. The last theme allows the participant to give his own interpretation of what factors influence or hinder successful implementation in his/her case.

During the interviews, the researcher was committed keeping the focus of the research to the topic explored, despite many interesting topics arising. This was mainly to maintain reliability and validity, as it was argued that data quality depends a lot on the researcher’s capability to keep the focus on the research interest (Parikh, 2002). At the end of each interview, the researcher asked the participant whether he/she would like to add anything, if they have any documents that could support the study, ask if they could be approached for further queries if any and to offer a copy of the findings at the end of the study. Interestingly, all participants asked to be provided with a copy of the findings, which again reflect the enthusiastic toward the topic and their belief in its importance.
3.7.4 Ethical procedures

It is recommended that researchers follow ethical principles such as informed consent, privacy, confidentiality and anonymity (Longhurst, 2009; Boeije, 2010). That is why the researcher provided each participant with a participant information sheet and a consent form. The participation information sheet involved information about the research title, who will conduct the research, the aim of the research, why the participant had been chosen, what would be asked if participation was accepted, what will happen to the data collected, how confidentiality will be maintained, the optional choice of refusing to participate or withdraw at any time without giving reasons, explaining if any compensation is involved, the duration of the interview, its location, whether the findings will be published or not, and an option of receiving an executive summary of the findings. After reading the participant information sheet, time was given to participants to discuss any issues they might have or clarifications they required. After that, a participant consent form that includes a declaration of understanding the participant information sheet, the information that participation is voluntary, and that withdrawal is possible at any time without clarification, was given and participants were given the choice of signing the agreement and participating in the research. Copies of the participant information sheet and participant consent form are available in appendix 3 and 4 respectively.

This research has also used document reviews and field notes to increase the study reliability. As many authors have suggested that using more than one method in case study research will enhance the results and findings reliability (Benbasat et al., 1987; Eisenhardt, 1989b).
3.7.5 Documents

In addition to the semi-structured interviews which formed the main source of data collection, the researcher was able to get access and review a number of useful documents. Some of these documents were specifically related to each case, such as brochures about the company/ project, presentations, strategic plans, information memorandums, financial performance documents, and company websites. In addition to these, the researcher reviewed a number of documents that had general relations with all cases. The following table 4 summarizes some of the documents reviewed.

**Table 4: A summary of the documents reviewed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documents Type</th>
<th>Documents Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alanbar University Journal for economical and management science 2013</td>
<td>- The support strategy for small and medium-sized industries in Saudi Arabia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research conducted by Dr. Abdullah bin Hamad Alsalia Assistant Professor at King Saud University</td>
<td>- Small Industries In Saudi Arabia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Economy and Planning</td>
<td>- Studies toward the support of private organisations and SMEs in KSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Introduction to planning and development achievements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The achievements of the development plans Facts and Figures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Economic and social development indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The development of the private sector and the policy of privatization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles published in a variety of newspapers</td>
<td>- Experts call for accelerating the implementation of the 10th development plan as a response to the new budget plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
such as Okaz, Mubasher.info, Alriyadh, Arabian Business.com, and Alyaum among others

- How could SMEs address the issue of unemployment?
- Saudi banks prefer not to finance SMEs
- Economists stressing the importance of increasing non-oil revenues.
- Dr. Abdullah Almaghlouth demanding the development of small and medium enterprise sector increases its contribution to the GDP, and the development of employment.
- Needs to develop specialized institutions that could support SMEs in their planning and implementation.
- A call to link government support for private organisations and SMEs based on their strategic development and implementation capability.
- ‘Kafalah’ sign a consulting services contract with ‘Maxwell Stamp’
- Maxwell Stamp responsible for preparing an executive strategic plan for Kafalah
- The Ministry of Finance as a direct supporter to ‘Kafalah’
- Banks added 4.8 billion riyals to finance small and medium-sized enterprises
- Current changes in the global economy add new pressures on small and medium-sized enterprises
- The Shura Council approve the establishment of a General Authority for SMEs as a step forward to overcome the inconsistency and lack of coordination among government agencies.
- Kafalah President: Inability of financial and administrative planning as a cause for SMEs failure
- ‘Kafalah’ likely growth rates of bank lending for SMEs to 20%
- Almubarak: the average write-off records of SMEs for the last five years is ‘One in three’.⁹
- The Saudi Hollandi Bank opens the first branch of specialized sales and services for SMEs.

⁹ 30% http://www.alriyadh.com/73
The general documents provided the researcher with a strong support toward the findings from the interviews. The documents also helped in establishing an up-to-date overview of the topic investigated in its context. This included main issues, players in the field, historical background, projects, and future plans. The specific documents that were precisely related to each case also provided the researcher with further information to support the issues previously mentioned during the interviews.

3.7.6 Field notes

It was argued that field notes are very useful to keep records and observations of everything that happen during the interview, especially for exploratory studies where it is hard to predict which piece of information will be useful in advance (Eisenhardt, 1989b). That is why, as suggested by Walsham (1995), broad notes were taken during all the semi-structured interviews conducted, and then directly after each interview, more details were noted. All these notes were organized with the help of the research conceptual framework (See appendix 2).

These notes provided the research with many benefits. First, as many cases were conducted, the field notes helped the researcher to clearly, quickly, and precisely identify each case from the others. Second, the field notes served as a support for some unclear parts of the recorded interviews. Third, they served as a good recall for the two interviews that were not recorded. Fourth, they were useful for the researcher
to record his own observations and impressions about what had been said during the interview. Fifth, they offer what Eisenhardt (1989b) suggested, that is, a useful record, especially when it is hard to identify which information is important. Finally, they served as guarantors in case of recording failure or data loss, which has happened when all my data were stolen. In that case, some field notes served as a very good support, especially for interviews that had to be rescheduled.

3.8 Data analysis

It was argued that no qualitative analysis is passive (Murray, 2003; King and Horrocks, 2010). Murray (2003) said that, generally qualitative analysis follows two phases. The first is descriptive, focussing on becoming familiar with the structure and content (like possible boundaries or ordering). The second phase is interpretative, by drawing in broader theoretical literature to help interpret what happened.

There are many different types of approach to qualitative analysis (Cortazzi, 1993, Mishler, 1995, and Riessman, 2005 in King and Horrocks, 2010). A crucial point is that the qualitative analysis process should never follow rigid and specific instructions, but rather can be amended, depending on the research requirements, both theoretical and pragmatic (King and Horrocks, 2010). Content and thematic analysis have been chosen for this research. It was argued that this approach is useful

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10 During the field trip and more precisely on 22/06/2013, the researcher’s recorded data were stolen.
for theorising across cases/interviews which might lead to valuable typologies (ibid) which is the aim of this research.

As mentioned before, 32 cases were explored, with a total of over 71 hours of interviews. The majority of these interviews were recorded, as suggested by Saunders et al. (2012), to facilitate data collection and provide more space for concentration and to minimise interruption to the interviewees.

3.8.1 Thematic analysis

It was argued that little discussion is available in the literature about the term ‘theme’ (King and Horrocks, 2010). However, King and Horrocks said: ‘It is often used in a commonsense way to refer to patterns in the data that reveal something of interest regarding the research topic at hand’ (King and Horrocks, 2010: 149). Also, King and Horrocks (2010) agree with Braun and Clarke (2006) that, although it is very difficult to set hard and fast guidelines on what should be recognized as a theme, some guidelines could be offered. First, it strongly depends on the researcher’s choice and interpretation. Second, the term ‘theme’ indicates repetition across two or more cases/interviews, although, identifying themes unique to particular cases could be useful. Third, themes must be different from each other with clear boundaries, although slight unavoidable overlap is acceptable. With these guidelines the following definition of a ‘theme’ was suggested in thematic analysis: ‘Themes are recurrent and distinctive features of participants’ accounts, characterising particular perceptions and/or experiences, which the researcher sees as relevant to the research question’ (King and Horrocks, 2010: 150). Having said that, the right
balance has to be maintained between within-case and cross-case analysis and this will depend on the research emphasis.

### 3.8.2 Theme organisation

King and Horrocks (2010) argued that listing themes alone is not beneficial, rather a researcher has to organise these themes, and reflect on how they conceptually relate to each other. Actually, it was argued that one of the foremost reasons for developing a thematic structure for the analysis is to support the researcher in explaining to other people his/her thinking about the data (King and Horrocks, 2010). That is why themes must be well defined, and distinct, and thematic structure clear and comprehensible (ibid). There are different ways of presenting the theme structure to the reader, for example through lists, tables, and tree diagrams. The simple way that works best for studies with a large number of themes and levels, as in this research, is either a list with a numbering system, or a table, with indentation, or columns to signpost the different levels (King and Horrocks, 2010).

King and Horrocks (2010) argued that the thematic analysis process does not evolve purely in a sequential way, but that it is very common to cycle back and forth. Also, they said that the mechanics of the process are usually up to the researcher (ibid). However, they suggested three main stages in this type of analysis as figure 10 shows.
Stage one: descriptive coding
Read through transcript
Highlight relevant material and attach brief comments
Define descriptive codes
Repeat for each transcript, refining descriptive codes as you progress

Stage two: interpretive coding
Cluster descriptive codes
Interpret meaning of clusters, in relation to research question and disciplinary position
Apply interpretive codes to full data set

Stage three: overarching themes
Derive key themes for data set as a whole, by considering interpretive themes from theoretical and/or practical stance of project
Construct diagram to represent relationships between levels of coding in the analysis

Figure 10 Stages in the process of thematic analysis (King and Horrocks, 2010: 153)

Stage one: descriptive coding

The goal of this stage is to identify those parts of the data that could be helpful in addressing the research question (King and Horrocks, 2010). The focus should be just about describing interesting input from the participant, and not yet interpreting its possible meaning (ibid). As demonstrated in figure 10, the first step is to read through the transcript, and while reading, highlight any relevant material that might help in understanding the participant’s view, experience, and perception. After that, it is suggested to add a short comment, indicating what is interesting in that highlighted text. Then, these preliminary comments are used to define descriptive codes. After identifying the descriptive codes, the researcher should read through these codes again, and identify any overlap where descriptive codes could be
merged. Then, go to the next interview, till the last one, and if the descriptive comments could be incorporated in an available code, use it, or otherwise define a new one.

The following table (table 5) gives an example of the descriptive codes identified in TK’s interview. TK is the owner and GM of a recruitment and manpower organisation in the service category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government support for Saudi businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good international relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security and stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs exist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huge governmental spending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support (Bedooin culture)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governmental representative ignorant attitude (That is us if you don't like it go out)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favouritism (can be governed through rules, control &amp; automation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability and abundance of Tech needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The availability of expert, and/or certifying bodies (ISO, etc…)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No other type of visa i.e. Visiting visa (only Haj &amp; Umra)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment regulations and labour laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of manpower and talents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects, once started can't be withdrawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of extraction of the commercial register</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of exercising activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governmental transactions, modifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process and arrangement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A system to control manpower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemising work, replacing 1 man show or centralization (to ensure quality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative, agile, and able to reinvent themselves according to needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manpower competencies (Lack of leadership and technical resources…)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opt MGT involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactors instead of being pro-actors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praying Fajr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allah support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start early in the morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agile and act according to demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to clients, or customer satisfactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building stakeholder relationship (suppliers &amp; clients) Vs only a 1 time deal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership commitment and visibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is important to note that this process could be endless, but King and Horrocks (2010) suggested that, if it is taking long time to just make minor changes, then that might be an indication that the codes are good enough and that you can move to the next stage.

Stage two: interpretive coding

At this stage, the researcher should define codes that go beyond the pure description of the participants and focus on the interpretation of their meaning (King and Horrocks, 2010). The researcher should cluster descriptive codes with similar meaning, and interpret the meaning of clusters in relation to the research questions and disciplinary position for the whole data set. The following table (table 6) gives an example of the interpretive coding stage of TK’s case.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive codes</th>
<th>Interpretative codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government support for Saudi businesses</td>
<td>Political issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good international relations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security and stability</td>
<td>Economic issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs exist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huge governmental spending</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support (Bedooin culture)</td>
<td>Social issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governmental representative Ignorant attitude (That is us if you don't like it go out)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favouritism (can be governed through rules, control &amp; automation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive Vs Reactive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability &amp; abundance of Tech needed</td>
<td>Tech. issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The availability of expert, and/or certifying bodies (ISO, etc…)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No other type of visa i.e. Visiting visa (only Haj &amp; Umra)</td>
<td>Legal issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment regulations and labour laws</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of manpower and talents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects, once started can't be withdrawn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of Extraction of the commercial register</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of exercising activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governmental transactions, modifications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process and arrangement</td>
<td>Organisational issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A system to control manpower</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemising work, replacing 1 man show or centralization (to ensure quality)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative, agile, and able to reinvent themselves</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>According to needs</td>
<td>Delegation, decentralized vs centralized (1 man show)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manpower competencies</td>
<td>Competence issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be focused</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agile and act according to demands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership commitment and visibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manpower &amp; People Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive involvement</td>
<td>Commitment issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opt MGT involvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee involvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to clients, or customer satisfactions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building stakeholder relationship (suppliers &amp; clients) vs only a 1 time deal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactors instead of being pro-actors</td>
<td>Initiative issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start early in the morning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agile and act according to demands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>Religion issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praying Fajr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allah support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Developed for this research*
**Stage three: overarching themes**

At this stage, the researcher should derive key overarching themes for the whole data set. These are themes that characterise key concepts in the analysis and the researcher should consider the interpretive themes from the theoretical and/or a practical stance of the project. In other words, overarching themes are derived from the interpretative themes, but at a higher level of abstraction (King and Horrocks, 2010). Also, King and Horrocks (2010) suggested limiting the number of overarching themes, as much as the data allow, and suggested that two to five is the norm. They also said that a diagram might help the reader to understand how different levels of coding are related (ibid). Table 7 gives an example showing all three coding levels and how they relate to each other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive codes</th>
<th>Interpretative codes</th>
<th>Overarching theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government support for Saudi businesses</td>
<td>Good international relations</td>
<td>Political issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security and stability</td>
<td>Needs exist</td>
<td>Economic issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huge governmental spending</td>
<td>Financial support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support (Bedeoin culture)</td>
<td>Governmental representative Ignorant attitude (That is us if you don't like it go out)</td>
<td>Social issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 Illustrations for all three coding levels
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Favouritism (can be governed through rules, control &amp; automation)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proactive Vs Reactive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability &amp; abundance of Tech needed</td>
<td>Tech. issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The availability of expert, and/or certifying bodies (ISO, etc…)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No other type of visa i.e. Visiting visa (only Haj &amp; Umra)</td>
<td>Legal issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment regulations and labour laws</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of manpower and talents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects, once started can't be withdrawn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of Extraction of the commercial register</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of exercising activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governmental transactions, modifications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process and arrangement</td>
<td>Organisational issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>A system to control manpower</td>
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<tr>
<td>Systemising work, replacing 1 man show or centralization (to ensure quality)</td>
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<td>Delivery process</td>
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<td>Sales process</td>
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<td>Innovative, agile, and able to reinvent themselves according to needs</td>
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<td>Delegation, decentralized Vs centralized (1 man show)</td>
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### Manpower competencies
- Be focused
- Innovative
- Agile and act according to demands
- Quality
- Leadership commitment and visibility

**Manpower & People Development**

### Commitment issues
- Executive involvement
- Opt MGT involvement
- Employee involvement
- Commitment to clients, or customer satisfactions
- Building stakeholder relationship (suppliers & clients) Vs only a 1 time deal

### Initiative issues
- Reactors instead of being pro-actors
- Start early in the morning
- Agile and act according to demands

### Religion issues
- Spiritual
- Praying Fajr
- Allah support

**Developed for this research**

The final three coding levels containing 68 themes for this study can be found in appendix 5.
3.9 Summary

This chapter summarised the research methodology adopted for this research. It started by identifying the two major philosophical paradigms. Then various research approaches, methods, and sources for data collection were presented. After that, justifications were provided for the specific choices made in the research. The sequence and kind of data collected, and how they contributed to the research, were also discussed. Finally, the last part described how the data were analysed.
Chapter 4: Data Collection and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

After introducing the reader to the research, reviewing relevant literature in the field chosen, outlining the research methodology adopted, this chapter will provide a detailed description and analysis for the data collected (i.e. the empirical work).

It was argued that the most common way of writing up the findings of thematic analysis is to present it theme by theme with examples (King and Horrocks, 2010). Also, King and Horrocks (2010) said that when you have a large number of cases/interviews it is better to present your analysis theme by theme, rather than case by case. The reason for this is that presenting the findings case by case for a large sample will make the presentation repetitive and very long (ibid). King and Horrocks (2010) argued that a qualitative study with 30 or more hours of interviews is considered to be large, and said that four to five cases would be the ideal to be described in details case by case. As this research conducted 32 cases, for more than 71 hours in total (see chapter 3), the chapter will describe and discuss the data collected and the findings of the thematic analysis theme by theme.

Influenced by the literature reviewed and the issues that evolved during the pilot study, this research used the previously identified conceptual lens (i.e. in chapter 2) to explore and organize the factors influencing strategy implementation process in Saudi SMEs. The findings are organized into three main categories. These categories are: external, internal organisational and internal individual issues. The categories represent factors identified in a macro, meso, and micro level in s-as-p terms.
The aim of this chapter is to contribute to the available literature, and fill the research gap by providing the issues/factors affecting SMEs SI processes in a holistic manner. This requires including the entire process of strategy implementation, from initiation to reaching the outcome (i.e. considering input, the process itself, and the output) and explored it in three distinguished levels (i.e. external, internal organisational, and internal individual). As previously mentioned in the literature review (Chapter 2), most studies are preoccupied with the details of narrow changes, rather than a more holistic and dynamic analysis of changing (Pettigrew, 1987; Okumus and Roper, 1999; Bey et al., 2013). It was also highlighted that previous research in the area, especially those influenced by the content school, has mainly focused on the internal organisational level issues. The reason behind this focus was the belief that, if internal organisational issues were identified, then organisations will be more able to manage their businesses.

Another reason was that the internal organisational level contains factors that are mostly controllable by organisations. It is Pettigrew, who identified this limitation, and encouraged future research to also include influencing factors from the external context. He made it clear that businesses could not operate independently of the context they are immersed in, and hence, must identify issues related with it. He further made another contribution by making the assertion that contextual factors are not just barriers, but could include enabling factors in the SI process (Pettigrew, 2012; Sminia, 2015) (see chapter 2 for more details). However, his main focus of the external context just concentrated on environmental factors.

This study’s first contribution to previous work is the provision of a broader and more comprehensive understanding of external factors (i.e. including factors related to politics, social, technological, rules and regulations in addition to environmental
factors). This is achieved by including all external factors that organisations and employees could not control, but that, at the same time, have an influence on the SMEs SI process. The second contribution is the addition of factors in at a further, more micro level; that is by including soft individual factors which were rarely previously considered. This was mainly as a result of the increasing contemporary research in the area, including s-as-p, which identified the important influence individuals could have on the SI processes. This was especially important in SMEs where individuals actually play a greater influence part of the process, when compared with individuals’ influence in large organisations (Hart, 1992). The third contribution is adding to the available literature and filling the research gap by providing the issues/factors that affect SMEs SI processes in a holistic manner. This means including the entire process of strategy implementation from initiation to the outcome (i.e. considering input, the process itself, and the output which is the x-axis in the developed FW) and exploring at three distinguished levels (i.e. external, internal organisational, and internal individual, which is the y-axis in the developed FW).

As mentioned previously, this was an exploratory study, and therefore issues were not previously identified. However, issues were explored and induced during the semi-structured interviews. The following sections present the main issues explored in the field work organised in three main sections corresponding to the three distinguished levels suggested for this research (i.e. external, internal organisational, and internal individual factors). The first section identifies the main external issues explored that influence the SI process in Saudi SMEs, or in other words, those issues outside the control of an organisation. The second section summarizes the internal organisational issues identified in the entire SI process. That is, the issues which an
organisation can control. Finally, the last section classifies the internal individual issues recognized. This is the issues related to the practitioners themselves.

4.2 External factors affecting the SI process in Saudi SMEs

It was argued in the literature that most strategy and change research is acontextual, and it was Pettigrew who first highlighted the importance of considering both the external context, as well as the internal context (Pettigrew, 1985a; Pettigrew, 2012; Sminia, 2015). This was concurrent with numerous studies that recommended considering external factors, or what some other researchers referred to as environmental scanning (Babatunde and Adebisi, 2012; Sminia and De Rond, 2012; Pettigrew, 2012; Sminia, 2015). For instance, Babatunde and Adebisi (2012) argued that strategic environmental scanning is strongly related and has a high impact on organisational performance. They also said that strong attention should be given to strategic environmental scanning, periodically and continuously (Babatunde and Adebisi, 2012).

This research also showed that external factors do have strong influences on the SI process. In fact, the field work clearly demonstrated that external factors do not have only negative influences (i.e. barriers), but could sometimes be positively influencing the strategy implementation process (i.e. enablers); this will be shown in the following sections (4.2.1 to 4.2.6). This finding was also similar to the literature that shows that external factors are not just barriers, but could include enablers (Pettigrew, 2012; Sminia, 2015). In strategic terms, they involve either opportunities that have to be exploited, or challenges that require avoidance or adaptation (Dyson,
That is why Babatunde and Adebisi (2012) also stated that strategic environmental scanning is essential to evaluate opportunities and threats, and to lead organisations toward profitability, and hence sustainability.

This category is, therefore, very crucial, but, as claimed previously, to date, the external factors have not been explored in a comprehensive manner (Sminia and De Rond, 2012; Sminia, 2015). Although Pettigrew did consider the external context, his focus was on the environment. It was contended that other details that could be included under this category as external factors were still lacking (Sminia, 2015). Actually, Sminia (2015) argued that, remarkably, most of the critique and comments on Pettigrew’s work stress that it is not contextual enough, for example, lacking sufficient incorporation of technological, or social influences (criticised by Starkey and Whittington respectively) (Starkey, 1987; Whittington, 1989 both cited in Sminia, 2015).

This research has tried to explore and encompass under this category all external issues (i.e. from outside the organisation) imposed on Saudi SMEs and their employees, and which affect the strategy implementation process in a more comprehensive manner. These factors included issues that have been further categorized under six main subcategories. These are political, economic, social or cultural, technological, environmental, and legal. These six categories incorporate the external environment influences which Pettigrew focused on. In addition, it involves technological and social influences that were lacking and noted by Starkey and Whittington. Furthermore, it includes three other categories, that is political, economic, and legal, which are described below.
4.2.1 Political

An interesting finding is that, initially, the majority of the participants did not understand the difference between issues that could be related to this subcategory (section 4.2.1) and the system, rules, and regulations or the legal subcategory (section 4.2.6). A possible reason behind this could be the circumstance that the KSA is an absolute monarchy, and hence royal decree forms the basis for the country’s legislation (CIA, 2015, Saudi Arabia Royal Embassy, 2015). In other words, in the KSA, there are no political parties or national elections, and it is the king who also takes the role of the prime minister. Despite these details, it was interesting to find that the majority of the participants ended by making a clear differentiation between political issues (this section 4.2.1) and systems, rules, and regulations (section 4.2.6).

The majority of respondents agreed that political factors have an overall positive influence on their strategy implementation processes; whereas they considered systems, rules, and regulations to have largely negative influences on the process. This could guide future researchers who explore a similar context (i.e. a kingdom or monarchy) to make sure to enquire about the system or the rules itself, rather than questioning who introduced them. It is very likely that this will affect participants’ comfort, and encourage them to talk more openly. This was also true on the internal organisational and individual levels, which were clearly influenced by the way rules and regulations are imposed in that specific context (more details in the following sections 4.3, and 4.4).

From the cases explored, the following major factors were identified in relation to political issues.
4.2.1.1 Strong government support to local organisations:

The participants first highlighted issues related to the special attention and strong support that the KSA government was providing to local organisations in general and to SMEs in particular. Politically, it is apparent that the government of the KSA started to take the issue of diversifying its economy more seriously; it was recently ranked the least diversified in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region (Dubai Media Incorporated, 2014).

One example illustrating the aim of diversifying the economy and providing more jobs is the government plan of establishing six economic cities by 2020 (Thorold, 2008; Mouawad, 2008; CIA, 2013 and 2015). Another example is the government’s huge investments in education (a total of 25% of the kingdom budget) to prepare its youth generation and support them to support the aim of diversifying its economy (Lindsey, 2010). One last example is the increasing government support that is devoted to SMEs processes from the start to the end. This includes the introduction of agencies with the ultimate aim of facilitating the previously cumbersome and complicated process of starting and doing private businesses in the KSA (Mauro, 1995). One example that illustrates the government support for local SMEs to start a business, especially if it was a governmental bid, by giving their products/services a priority, was illustrated by TK, the owner and founder of a recruitment and manpower SME from the service sector:

‘The biggest projects that we took were because our business is Saudi’

11 Worked example used in the primitive framework on the external-initiate category
Another example was stated by Abos (Service sector) who said: ‘We were the sole Saudi IT company developed at the time and since had almost all of the ministry e-projects’.

Another example, which shows government giving facilitations to local SMEs during the process, is MB, a factory manager from the industrial sector, who said:

 ‘The government makes it easier and faster for us to enter raw materials and machines as a support for our Saudi small business’\textsuperscript{12}.

These different kinds of support might be the reason why the majority of respondents consider this factor to be positively influencing their strategy implementation processes. However, lack of knowledge and maturity on the individual level (see section 4.4), together with the consequences of making underdeveloped and poorly thought-through decisions (more details in section 4.2.6), and the absence of robust systems, rules and regulations, have caused a gap between what the government has aimed for, and what has actually been achieved.

4.2.1.2 The country’s foreign relations:

Also, the participants underlined issues linked to the country’s foreign relations and its consequences. A specific country’s good or bad foreign relations do have an effect on the SMEs strategy implementation process. That is because good foreign relations influence the privilege given which could accelerate or facilitate business processes between the two countries. For example, TK (service sector) said:

\textsuperscript{12} Worked example used in the primitive framework on the external-initiate category
‘I have established our first international branch to provide us with IT support in Jordan instead of India as our country had stronger foreign relation with Jordan. This consequently facilitated and accelerated our processes as there are more than 40 flights a week from the KSA to Jordan, and we do not require visa to go there; whereas, there are only three flights a week to India, and with visa requirements’.

Another example that illustrates how weak foreign relations could have an effect on strategy implementation processes is the case of HaKa (tourism and entertainment sector), who stated:

‘Most of our employees are from the Philippines. We wanted to expand and hence were required to recruit more employees. Unfortunately, in the middle of the process, we were shocked that Saudis businesses were banned from posting job opportunities there. This was a result of incidents that were not dealt with properly that have [resulted in] unstable…foreign relationships between the two countries’.

As stated before, in the methodology chapter (chapter 3), among the participants were two government representatives: an Undersecretary of a Ministry and a Municipality Advisor. Both of them agreed that the KSA does have, and is still maintaining, very good international relations. However, they made the point that sometimes these relations are not in line with what local organisations need, and hence, had a negative effect on the SI process. This was clearly mentioned by TB (government representative) who said:

We might have good foreign relations, but they are not in line with [what] SMEs need’.
For example, Hay Da (service sector) claimed that his organisation and many other SMEs in KSA are suffering because of the country still not having a tourism visa: ‘to date the country has still not introduced a tourism visa, which could have positively affected the overall economy, and many SMEs including us’.

4.2.1.3 Attracting foreign investments:
Third, there were issues associated with the opening up of the Saudi market. Since King Abdullah’s succession to the throne in 2005, the country has appeared more eager to cut government spending and open the country economically (Byman, 2005). For instance, it is the King Abdullah’s effort that pushed for the KSA membership in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) (ibid). That has caused both positive and negative consequences to SMEs strategy implementation processes. For example, these efforts to encourage foreign investments associated with not having a robust system (section 4.2.6) caused the penetration of some low quality product. This issue, along with the peoples’ lack of knowledge and maturity (section 4.4), had an overall negative impact on SMEs strategy implementation process. As Aal (industrial sector) said:

‘The market is open for cheap products with minimum standards. This required from us more time and effort in order to convince clients away as most of them could not distinguish the difference’.

Another example is that, although the government have moved forward in terms of facilitating the process of starting and doing private businesses in the KSA, these facilitations made it easier for competitors to penetrate the market. Consequently, this had sometimes influenced Saudi SMEs SI process; as AT highlighted:
'The fairly easy market penetration and the continuous threats to us from new competitors forced our processes to be continually reviewed and sometimes amended'.

4.2.1.4 Current situation in the middle east (Arab Spring):

Moreover, interviewee revealed issues related to the current turbulent situation happening in the area (i.e. Arab Spring\textsuperscript{13}). This developing situation which started in late 2010, spread all over the region very quickly, and is still going on in the region, has caused numerous stresses and tensions. It had some positive effects, as many corrective actions and reforms have been introduced:

‘Recently, there were many wise political decisions that have been taken, and pressure from the government to make quick corrections and reforms for the sake of the country’ (TB (government representative)).

However, the situation also had some negative impact on SMEs SI process, and more precisely, on securing funding. As AT (tourism and entertainment sector) stated:

‘It becomes harder to secure funding for our small business’.

TB (government representative) further commented:

‘This had an effect both on political decisions and capital immigrations\textsuperscript{14}.

\textsuperscript{13} Revolutionary movements that started in the Middle East in December 2010

\textsuperscript{14} Worked example used in the primitive framework on the external-initiate category
4.2.1.5 Difficulties of importing:

Finally, there were issues related to the complications and challenges of importing. The government, as mentioned previously, supported organisations to utilize local supplies. They did this by providing facilitations and support to those using local materials, and by introducing restrictions for importing products and making it difficult. This was highlighted by AM (tourism and entertainment sector) who said:

‘There are difficulties in importing’.

Consequently, on the one hand, this had a negative impact on SMEs process that depended on imported materials:

‘This had an impact on our profit which was mainly caused by the high cost of imported ingredient’ (AT (tourism and entertainment sector)).

On the other hand, these restrictions benefited SMEs process that do not depend on imports; as MB (industrial sector) mentioned:

‘Customs make it harder for ready-made fans to be imported than those made locally. As a result, most of the time we get the advantage over them, and sometimes we get the opportunity of having a gap in the market with just us (because some problems that cause them extra delay)’.

Another issue that was highlighted is the somewhat poor conditions and un-organized way in which customs operate, which indicates again the lack of a robust system (section 4.2.6) capable of identifying needs and priorities, and facilitate the operation for the client. For example HaKa (tourism and entertainment sector) said:
‘Customs keep goods from a week to 3 months (depending on your luck) in very bad storage conditions which sometimes could affect products. All this uncertainty adds to the complexity in executing your process’.

4.2.2 Economic

Among all the cases conducted, all respondents agreed that the economy in the KSA is healthy. Consequently, they almost all considered this specific subcategory to be positively influencing the strategy implementation process. In fact, as will be further described, not a single participant mentioned any process barriers in this category.

4.2.2.1 Security and stability

First, under the economic category, security and stability available in the KSA were considered by the majority of the participants to be an influencing factor. That is why AT (tourism and entertainment sector), while discussing why he started his business in the KSA, said:

‘It is a stable country’.

Another participant, TK (service sector), reflected on the importance of security and stability by saying:

‘The stability of the country’s security has a positive effect on the economy’.

Moreover, Ob Sag (commercial sector) said:

15 Worked example used in the primitive framework on the external-process category
‘When you have a secure and stable economy it is much easier to manage your whole business and make more precise prediction and forecasts along the entire supply chain’.16

Also, AbM (tourism and entertainment sector) said:

‘Having a very stable economy make it easier for our customers to reach us’.

4.2.2.2 Healthy economy

Second, the country is considered healthy, economically, and there is relatively easy access to finance which is boosting the overall trade capacity. As mentioned by the minister undersecretary TB (government representative):

‘Economy capability is increasing and trade capacity is increasing with it’.

This consequently supported a healthy economy which is attractive for businesses, as HQ (service sector) clearly stated:

‘Establishing our business in a healthy economy helped us’.

In addition, the government took initiatives in establishing different public institutions with the ultimate aim of supporting private businesses. These initiatives were then followed by some other private institutions. However, it appears there were issues with these institutions and the banks, available in the KSA:

‘There are 21 institutions, both private and public, that are supposed to provide supporting funds for SMEs, however, none is practical. That is also the case with banks that are almost all not effective. Having said that, I have to say liquidity is highly available’ (AJ (construction sector)).

16 Worked example used in the primitive framework on the external- outcome category
This point was also supported by MK (service sector), who said:

‘Despite the availabilities of many funding institutions for SMEs (theoretically), practically it is very hard to secure one’.

Another participant, HM (commercial sector), also stated that international banks were more supportive than locals, as he said:

‘The local Saudi banks refused to support us, whereas we found more support from an international bank’.

Two other participants believed that investors preferred to invest in international, rather than local production:

‘Most investors are unsupportive for local production Vs. International especially capitalists’ (Aal (industrial sector)).

This last issue might be related to the current situation in the Middle East (section 4.2.1) which, as previously stated, has caused some capitals immigration.

4.2.2.3 High governmental investment

The third issue was the high levels of governmental spending and investment. The very good economic situation in the KSA had a positive influence in almost all cases explored. MK (service sector), for example, said:

‘The economic situation in the KSA is very much encouraging’.
As a result of this good economy, the government has invested heavily in the development of the country. This was clearly reflected by TK (service sector) who said:

‘Government spending and investments are in their maximum level’.

This financial capability, along with the government direction toward investment, has a positive impact on SMEs SI processes in different kind of businesses. For instance, from the commercial sector, HM (commercial sector) said:

‘Our work is easier in the KSA as it is a consuming state. That is, because there are financial capabilities and plans to grow’.

From the industrial sector:

‘The economic situation is booming with huge investment from the government in construction, housing, and governmental building. This affected our business positively’ (MB (industrial sector)).

Also, HQ (service sector) in the service sector, stated:

‘When the government increased the budget for research, education and development, which includes the scholarship program, our business boomed’.

Another example from the same sector is Neb (service sector) who said: ‘The high government investments is directly reflected to more projects taken from SMEs and our company in particular’.

4.2.2.4 Relatively high purchasing power
The fourth issue mentioned regularly under this category, is the relatively high purchasing power available. For example, AT (tourism and entertainment sector) said:

‘the purchasing power is very good in the country’.

Also, KG (commercial sector), stated:

‘Purchasing power is high, there is money, it is approximately one of the few countries that was not affected by the world 2008 economic crises’.

Moreover, AM (tourism and entertainment sector) mentioned:

‘The purchasing power in the country is very big. The financial situation overall is very comfortable’.

This purchasing power had a positive influence in almost all businesses, and even sometimes helped to overcome some process obstacles. In regard to his business in the tourism and entertainment sector, HaKa (tourism and entertainment sector) stated:

‘This is what actually helped us in overcoming most of our obstacles. The high purchasing power available helped us with upscaling everything’.

HaKa (tourism and entertainment sector) further stressed that:

‘In my industrial equipment business nothing worked. The only thing that kept the project live was the financial capacity and capability available’.

4.2.2.5 Abundance of raw materials/ supplies
Finally, the last issue highlighted frequently by most participants in the economic category was the abundance of raw materials, and/or suppliers. This was another interesting point that was repeatedly raised as, for example, Aal (industrial sector) said:

‘In the KSA our raw materials are available’.

Also, AJ (construction sector) stated:

‘Raw materials are available’.

Moreover, GD (tourism and entertainment sector) specified that:

‘All raw materials required in the KSA are available’.

MK (service sector) even said:

‘In KSA, we have plenty of alternative suppliers’.

This was even more beneficial for those businesses that were categorized as local factories, since, as said previously, these factories got support from the government, even for raw materials:

‘We have got easing and facilitation in buying raw materials and getting them out of customs because we have a factory. Generally, raw materials price is excellent or one can say reasonable, but labour cost is what is expensive here’ (MB (industrial sector)).

For MB (industrial sector), raw materials were not an issue, but labour was (see section 4.4). However, having said that, some SMEs experienced difficulties in finding raw materials. As AM (tourism and entertainment sector) specified:
‘There is a lack of suppliers’.

HaKa (tourism and entertainment sector) also stated:

‘We struggle a little bit to find quality suppliers for some raw materials’.

Consequently, when to import is the solution, the cost, unfortunately, increases:

‘One of the things that lower our profit margins are high COGS imported (Cost of Goods Sold)’ (AT (tourism and entertainment sector)).

However, there is a difference where businesses import products or goods in order to re-sell them. For these types of businesses, it appeared that raw materials and supplies were a little bit of an issue because they did not get the same support as those who import to manufacture locally.

Overall, however, it can be said that the raw materials and suppliers required are available in the country.

4.2.3 Social

This was a very interesting category that included social, demographic, and cultural issues. It included social influences that were, as mentioned before, picked by both Starkey and Whittington as a category that was missing in Pettigrew’s work (Starkey, 1987; Whittington, 1989 both cited in Sminia, 2015).

Overall, there was a prevalent, supportive Bedouin culture, which partly depends on kinship and friendship. Support can diminish, however, if the relationship is distant, or if support was required for the first time. This attribute, together with religion,
resulted in a somewhat conservative society, although this has changed slowly since 2005 following the improvements introduced by the late King Abdullah\textsuperscript{17}.

However, in general, the country has a harsh desert climate (i.e. extreme temperature throughout the day but falling quickly at night, and with very minimal annual rainfall) (Weather Online, 2015). This characteristic, along with the circumstance that the country does not have many alternatives for entertainment, has made shopping, restaurants and coffee shops a major business in the KSA. For example, Jeddah, a city in the western province, has more than 27 shopping malls. It is also clear from the cases analysed, that there is an issue with a lack of education and maturity which, together with the love of well-being and spending, is reflected in some customers’ purchasing unconscious practices (see section 4.4).

The majority of the youth population is interested in wellbeing, luxury, and comfort and, therefore, are keen consumers (Hidebrandt, Abbouri, & Alibraheem, 2014). However, there is also a trend in the overall youth population for complaining and blaming others, instead of taking initiatives (Hidebrandt \textit{et al.}, 2014). This could be the result of close family and societal bonds which did not value, or appreciate craft or artwork. Thankfuly, this phenomenon is decreasing, and the community education and maturity levels are, overall, increasing.

These main points will be further elaborated below, with the identification of how they positively or negatively affect Saudi SMEs SI processes, and will be supported by participants’ quotations across the different cases explored.

\textsuperscript{17} King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud was the King of Saudi Arabia from 2005 till 23 January 2015
4.2.3.1 Support (Bedouin culture)

Although there are efforts to increase the community education and maturity level, there are still many apparent tribe or Bedouin attributes. For example, the first issue identified under the social theme is the Bedouin supportive culture. Many participants raised the point that support is considered to be one of the cultural values, as TK (service sector), for example, said:

‘Support exists as a value within our community’.

Also, HQ (service sector) said:

‘Our community is inherently supportive, but a bit conservative’.

This value positively influences SMEs SI process. As, for example, HQ (service sector) illustrated when he said:

‘When I started my business, way before the government started to invest heavily in education, I faced many moral and material challenges and difficulties that I wouldn’t be able to overcome if it wasn’t for the enormous support I receive from relatives and friends’.

Another example is provided by Om Sh (service sector), who stated:

‘Thankfully support is embedded in our culture. The vast majority of our population would be more than happy to spare you time and sometimes even money give you advice, connect you with persons that can sort you out through their network among many other caring acts’.

However, it was noticed that this support decreases, especially if it is outside social relations (section 4.4), or where support is required for the first time:
‘Sometimes it could be very difficult for entrepreneurs to get the first contract or client as most of them require lists of previous clients’ (MK (service sector)).

Another example was provided by Aal (industrial sector) who said:

‘Overall, there is a supportive culture, but this support increase significantly through connections and relationships’.

4.2.3.2 Complaining culture (Blaming others and don’t take initiative)

The previous factor, Bedouin culture attributes of support, was considered, overall, to be an influencing factor, but it also had some negative consequences. As this supportive culture, or extra caring, especially within families, could sometimes be too intrusive:

‘Our community is very much coherent with most of the time good intentions of being supportive and caring about each other. However, this sometimes could cause negative consequences. Like for example, the pressure I got from almost everybody in my family when I chose to resign from a very successful job that I had and start my own business. If it was not for the passion and love that I had for this new job, I would have never been able to overcome this pressure’ (Ba Ri (tourism and entertainment sector)).

Support could sometimes develop into complaints, as AM (tourism and entertainment sector) said:

‘We have a complaining culture as a result of loving and looking a lot to each other’.
This is the second issue identified under the social category and is related to the first supportive issue.

As people do talk openly about their life and work within families and relations, this sometimes leads to comparisons and complaints. So members of the family will frequently compare their beloved with others and try to influence them to follow the path that they believe is the most successful one. That is why the majority of the community would favour an assured route, instead of taking risks:

‘Culturally in the KSA we do not like to take risks. As a result, most of our family will be against us saying are you crazy to work private?’ (MK (service sector)).

The consequence of this is the growth of a resistance to pro-actors who take initiatives and a tendency to lean toward being more re-actors who blame others. In other words, rather than focussing on solutions and taking initiatives, the focus will be on problems and blaming others. An example was provided by MB (industrial sector):

‘When I was able to achieve the high target set, and successfully increased production, the sales manager started to blame me in front of the board for higher stocks available in the warehouse, instead of taking the initiative and increasing his sales capability. In other words, instead of taking initiatives and matching sales with production, he started to say that the production was too much and that his sales team had other products as well (i.e. bringing excuses for him and his team)’.

Another consequence evolving from this close observation and comparison is bad attitudes such as jealousy:
'There are people that when you become successful, they just get jealous. Consequently, instead of becoming motivated and try[ing] to do something, they just stand and wish for your fall and sometimes work for it’ (HQ (service sector))\textsuperscript{18}.

4.2.3.3 Youth generation

The third issue raised in the cases explored related to demographics, and the circumstance that the country has a youth generation. In the literature, it was clearly highlighted that the country has a considerably high youth population (Sohail and Al-Abdali, 2005; CIA, 2013, 2015; Startup Overseas, 2014b; Hidebrandt \textit{et al}., 2014). This was further elaborated by AT (tourism and entertainment sector) who said:

\begin{quote}
‘According to the New Zealand Trade and Enterprise the population of the region has more than doubled over the last 30 years with a key characteristic of a low average age. Another report produced in 2011 by Kantar-World panel data indicated that chocolates became an essential category, having both a high penetration and purchase frequency’.
\end{quote}

The positive influence of this factor is that it assures the availability of manpower for organisations in general, including SMEs. In addition to that, this makes the market of Saudi Arabia an important one for those businesses that do focus on youth. Like for example, AbM (tourism and entertainment sector) who said:

\begin{quote}
‘One of the critical factor[s] that have ensured our SI processes easiness and success is that our business is run by youth to youth in a youth country’.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{18} Worked example used in the primitive framework on the external- outcome category.
4.2.3.4 High unconscious consuming culture

The fourth issue raised was the very high consuming culture, or what others described as less-conscious customers. Affected by both the overall healthy economy and the huge governmental spending (section 4.2.2), the community became a consuming society, as TB (government representative) said:

‘We are a consuming nation’.

Another example comes from AM (tourism and entertainment sector), who stated:

‘It is a nation that likes to pamper and hence consumes a lot’.

This element, along with the circumstance of lack of knowledge and maturity (see section 4.4), sometimes causes customer unconscious practice. This was clarified by HaKa (tourism and entertainment sector):

‘Unfortunately, society has lack of knowledge of healthy eating which causes client unconscious practice’.

Also, Aal (industrial sector) stated:

‘Clients were sometimes taken away as most of them could not distinguish quality differences’.

Another interesting finding is that the very high consuming culture, along with the love of well-being, and together with the hot weather and limited alternatives for entertainment, has made shops, restaurants and coffee shops a major business sector in the KSA. For example, Jeddah (a city in the western province) alone has more than 27 shopping malls. Aal (industrial sector) explained:
'We have a shopping culture. People spend long time in shopping centres which might be a result of the weather effect plus not having many alternatives for where to spend luxury time. That is why Jeddah has a very large number of shopping malls which all require our products'.

Another participant from the tourism and entertainment sector said:

‘There is growth in higher spending on out – of – home food and in the food and beverage industry in general, as a social and cultural trend’ (AT (tourism and entertainment sector)).

This leads us to the fifth issue identified under this category which is an orientation toward high quality of life and wellbeing.

4.2.3.5 Orientation toward high quality of life and wellbeing

This might be another result of security, stability, and the healthy economy, as AM (tourism and entertainment sector) mentioned:

‘We are a community that love[s] pleasing its desires’.

Also, Aal (industrial sector) said:

‘A strong factor that also might have affected our business positively is the orientation toward high quality of life and wellbeing. This made it rare to find a single house that does not have a bath tub. Also hotels or furnished apartments that do have bath tub are considered more luxurious, which became a winning factor in the Saudi market’.
This factor was even stronger among the youths, which consists the majority of the population, and females:

‘Our primary targets are kids and youth generation, especially females who are always keen to get stuff that stand out, funky and cheerful’ (AT (tourism and entertainment sector)).

A negative consequence for this factor was the lack of appreciation for work in small and medium businesses. As HQ (service sector) said:

‘Our community doesn’t like the idea that my kid is working in a small or medium business’.

Another effect was that cheap brands or products were often not attractive in the market, as AT (tourism and entertainment sector) stated:

‘cheap or low budget branded product[s] were mostly negatively received by clients’.

All previously identified factors had an influence on the sixth issue: the community does not appreciate craft, art, labour, technical work, or being employed by a small or medium enterprise.

4.2.3.6 Less favourable attitudes towards manual labour and craft activities

The majority of the community had a preference for working in big, reputable, and multinational organisations. The society overall, does not value labour, or what some called ‘blue coat’ works.
This was highlighted by many participants and causes a scarcity of labour which has a negative effect on many processes. For example an undersecretary minister, TB (government representative), said:

‘There are limited availabilities of practitioners in blue colour professions especially Saudis’.

Also, TK (service sector), who is considered a recruitment and manpower pioneer in the KSA, mentioned:

‘There is scarcity of Saudis technical human resources’.

From the media and entertainment sector, AbM (tourism and entertainment sector) stated:

‘Unfortunately, our society does not appreciate arts’.

In the manufacturing and construction sector, Aal (industrial sector) also said:

‘We can’t find Saudis to work as labours in our factory and we had constrains for bringing non Saudis. Also, it was very hard to find a sculptor who actually can create for us moulds from scratch’.

These examples highlight the scarcity of craft workers. Other examples illustrated that the continuous pressure from close family has also affected employee loyalty, and so an employee could be working in the organisation, but has his/her eyes somewhere else. As HQ (service sector) said:

‘This was my main problem especially with senior level and even if I offered good salary. I believe this was mainly because of social reasons and not valuing the work in an SME’.
This problem appeared to be less harsh in relation to female labour, as MB (industrial sector) stated:

‘We have employed Saudi women and these women have demonstrated relatively higher loyalty to our factory when compared with men employee’.

Nevertheless, some participants argued that this inferior look is starting to change, especially with the education rise that is currently happening in the country which is elevating the maturity level:

‘The inferior look of the community in general makes it very hard for us to find local Saudis for our required positions. However, I can say that some families are becoming more mature, especially those who are highly educated and they encourage their children to work in any professions as long as they like it. Many of them started a trend of encouraging youth to learn different crafts. They also started to motivate their children to work part time in their free time and earn from their own work, participates in volunteer tasks and contribute to Non-Governmental Organisations NGOs’ (AM (tourism and entertainment sector)).

AM (tourism and entertainment sector) then further elaborated:

‘It is more common nowadays to find almost in any family, including the wealthy one, children who had a bit of labour experience. This has open[ed] more opportunities for the youth, as more organisations are valuing this off school hand on experience’.

4.2.3.7 Religion
The seventh issue is related to religion. Obviously, with a majority of 90% of the total population that are Muslims (U.S. State Department, 2013), religion has an influence on the strategy implementation process. This was clearly elaborated by many participants who demonstrated the effect of religion in their work. For example, TK (service sector) said:

‘Being constantly connected to Allah, praying Fajr, and start[ing] early in the morning as our prophet Mohammed, Peace Be Upon Him (PBUH), recommended is the key recipe for success. The Prophet PBUH said: (O Allah, bless my nation in their early mornings (i.e., what they do early in the morning)).’

Another participant, HM (commercial sector), revealed that the secret of their success in strategy implementation was the honesty in partnership, saying:

‘Our company slogan is what Allah said in the hadith Qudsi\textsuperscript{19}: (I am a third partner unless one of them cheated on the other)).’

When asked about the most influential factor for the success of their strategy implementation, the first thing mentioned by HQ (service sector) was:

‘Allah (God) support’.

However, this factor was not all positive: As AT (tourism and entertainment sector) elaborated:

‘We are in a religious country, but the list of do’s and don’ts is very subjective and there are no clear guidelines including in religious rules and

\textsuperscript{19} Hadith Qudsi are sayings of Prophet Mohammad PBUH as revealed to him by the Almighty Allah (Qur'an Explorer Inc., 2012).
regulations. A consequence that I suffer accordingly was an officer that fines me because his understanding of the rules was different to mine’.

This again highlights the lack of a robust system and of clear rules and regulations, which has, consequently, made rule implementation very much subjective and dependent on the person who implements it. This will be further elaborated in section 4.2.6.

4.2.3.8 Conservative culture

The final issue highlighted under this category is a prevailing conservative culture. An attribute that might have already been highlighted before and one that could have been influenced either by religion and/or Bedouin roots. An example is the requirements of separating families from bachelors, as stated by HaKa (tourism and entertainment sector):

‘As we had only one entrance and because of the conservative culture and the problem of segregating bachelors from families, we were forced to hire one person just to open the door and direct each to their place (Family upstairs and bachelors downstairs). Also, there were different requests (depending on the level of conservatism) such as introducing partitions to allow for more privacy’.

Another example is the ban on women driving:

‘Women[s’] movement is restricted (can’t drive or move freely without men)’

(TB (government representative)).
Although this restriction did benefit some businesses: a software development organisation found a program that allows people to pay their bills online or through phone and mobile banking. As Aar (service sector) mentioned:

‘Our business was positively impacted by the fact that women do not usually go out (it was an excellent alternative)’.

This conservative and community coherence made criticising harder, as people will stand with each other. This was acknowledged by an entertaining media business owner, AbM (tourism and entertainment sector), who said:

‘We try to criticise with care (risk averse)’.

However, this conservatism is also changing; as HQ (service sector) who owns a business that arranges international summer camps mentioned:

‘Our community is inherently supportive, a bit conservative, but social community resistance [has] changed a lot since 2005. People started to be more mature and supportive’.

4.2.4 Technological

Technological influences were also an issue identified by both Starkey and Whittington as something that was missing in Pettigrew’s work (Starkey, 1987; Whittington, 1989 both cited in Sminia, 2015). In KSA, it seems the technology is available, or in other words, there are minimal issues regarding importing a specific required technology. As will be clarified further in the issues explored below, the
real issues lie in the lack of professional practitioners in both supporting the imported technology and/or using it

4.2.4.1 Availability and abundance of technology needed

The first issue highlighted by the majority of the cases explored is the availability and abundance of technology needed. There was an overall agreement by the respondents that the required technology for business was available. For example, MB (industrial sector) said:

‘All the technology we need for our business is available’.

Also, AM (tourism and entertainment sector) stated:

‘In terms of technology tools, what we require is available’.

In addition, HaKa (tourism and entertainment sector) mentioned that:

‘the technology required availability is OK’.

From the media sector, AbM (tourism and entertainment sector) said:

‘From an audience point of view, it was extremely positive as it allows us to reach many more people, by the abundance and availability of WiFi, internet, computers, and smart phones for our audience. You can hardly find a youth in the KSA without a smart phone. From a production point of view, it is acceptable’.

That most youths have access to smart phones and made a significant use of social media in the KSA is beneficial, as AT (tourism and entertainment sector) highlighted:
'Social media revolution impacted our business positively. It makes it easier for us to be known'.

For AhM (tourism and entertainment sector), it was mainly technology that had made his strategy implementation process a success. When describing the shift of his business from hard copy or printed to a soft application, he said:

‘Thanks to technology we were able to act and re-act quicker according to customer needs. Technology has added value in term of exposure, cost, and efficiency and it is what made our strategy a success’.

From a governmental perspective, TB (government representative) believed that:

‘Changes in technology happen frequently and our problem is that we are slow in reacting to change and we lack professional practitioners’.

The opinion of AH (government representative) was that:

‘We are using very good technology, but sometimes it is the people who misuse it’.

So an interesting point here is that technology might be at the right level, but there is a lack of professional practitioners as will be described further in the last issue identified under this category.

The shortage was mainly in support and uses, including people that either misuse it, or do not prefer it at all, as TK (service sector) mentions:

‘We still unfortunately can’t rely 100% on technology, we have to ring doors to sell as face to face interactions are still much more effective in the KSA’.
This might be related to the importance of networking and social relations (the last issue identified in section 4.4) in the country, along with the fear of losing rights (section 4.2.6), which make a physical presence and experience still safer and more favourable.

4.2.4.2 Social media impact

The next issue explored under this category is related to the social media impact. As highlighted above by participants in many sectors, social media had a positive influence on the strategy implementation process. It influenced brand recognition and advertising, as AT said:

’Social media revolution impacted our business positively. It makes it easier for us to be known’.

It also makes it easier to be reached as AbM (tourism and entertainment sector) specified:

‘From an audience point of view, it was extremely positive as it allows us to reach many more people’.

In one case, in fact, it was the most crucial factor that influenced SI success:

‘It is social media developments who allowed us to be more efficient, reduce cost, and get more exposed and succeed at the end’ (AhM (tourism and entertainment sector)).

4.2.4.3 Lack of professional practitioner
The final issue under this category is related to the lack of professional practitioners. As emphasized by the undersecretary minister, the technology is available, but there is a lack of professional practitioners in terms of support, and sometimes even in using the technology. This point might be related to the previous issue (under section 4.2.3) that the community do not like and appreciate craft works, art, or labour. The issue was further highlighted by AM (tourism and entertainment sector) who said:

‘In terms of reliability and support we are still very weak’.

Also, AT (Tourism and Entertainment) mentioned:

‘There was a lack of expertise in the technical side’.

Another indicator for this issue is that one of the cases conducted was with a small business owner who specialized only in providing technological and technical support. Although the owner had very limited previous technical background, he described his business as very much required in the KSA, and as very successful, commenting:

‘One of the reasons behind our success is the lack of professionals technical supports in the country’ (Alb Alq (service sector)).

4.2.5 Environmental

This is the external category Pettigrew’s work mainly stresses as the important one to be considered. In this empirical work, it is clearly demonstrated that the KSA is still a fertile market, as the country is still developing new systems rules and regulations that are frequently and suddenly introduced (as will be shown in section
4.2.6). This consequently produces new obstacles and challenges which could sometimes be exploited as new opportunities in the market. Also, the climate is a bit harsh, and the focus on being reactive and short term solutions, made the case worse. Furthermore, it is clearly emphasized that, as the country is considered youthful and wealthy, there are still needs for alternative options for entertainment. These issues will be explored further below.

4.2.5.1 Fertile market (Blue Ocean)

The first issue under this category is related to the argument that the market is still considered fertile. The majority of the participants agreed that the context of the KSA is still fertile, or to use Kim and Mauborgne’s term, is considered a blue ocean (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005). This was clearly highlighted by AJ (construction sector) who said:

‘There are many opportunities available it is one of the most fertile places on earth for SMEs and entrepreneurs’.

Most participants identified that there was still a need for their business, either because the market was empty from this product/service, or because demand exceeded supply. An example of a case reflecting product or service uniqueness is MA (service sector), who said:

‘We were the only provider in the KSA of e-payment gateway’.

Also, MB (industrial sector) identified that there was a gap in the market, he stated:
‘In my opinion the main cause of our case success is the gap available in the market. There was no product in the market with the market leader quality which was at the same time cheaper in price’.

Other participants added a differentiating element to their product, which made their product service unique. Like AJ (construction sector) who said:

‘I was able to make huge profit mainly because we had unique job. We didn’t just do construction the classical way, but we were more interested in the details. Like for example, interior design and the finishing which is also where you can add a profit margin for the arts, which could not be added to the classic construction process’

This respondent further added that:

‘construction price in the market is fixed and known everywhere, but there is a gap in the market for arts, with lack of professionals in it and hence it is where margin prices could be significantly increased’.

This participant again highlighted the issue of the lack of community support and appreciation for craft work, art, and labour (identified before in section 4.2.3).

Other participants exploited the market needs and the rules and regulations introduced by the government, like MK (service sector) who said:

‘There was a need toward this kind of business with load of requests both from private and public entities. In fact, the government was pushing toward introducing new rules that would force in the future businesses to introduce these kinds of services’.
Another interesting example is AbM (tourism and entertainment sector) who used the policy that banned cinema in the country to find their business and introduced a Saudi YouTube channel with more than 22 programs that got over 240 million viewers. This person stated:

‘We were the leader in this business. We actually created a new industry in the KSA (online cinema)’.

Other participants demonstrated that demand was still greater than supply. For example, as Aal (industrial sector) said:

‘There is a very high demand for our products. There is a high demand for bath tubs as a result of the construction revolution that is happening. That is including the huge investment of the government in the construction sector. Also, there is high demand of Mannequins as a result of the very big number of shops and malls available in the KSA’.

Also, AT (Tourism and Entertainment sector) stated:

‘According to the New Zealand Trade and Enterprise the Food and Beverage (FandB) market in the region is nowhere near saturation. The population of the region has more than doubled over the last 30 years, with a key characteristic of low average age. Another report produced in 2011 by Kantar-Worldpanel data indicated that chocolates became an essential category, having both a high penetration and purchase frequency’.

4.2.5.2 The weather
The second issue that could be categorized under environment is related to the country’s weather. As it was mentioned before, the KSA has a desert climate with extreme heat during days, an abrupt drop in temperature at night, and overall, very low annual rainfall (Weather Online, 2015). This harsh climate has disadvantages and advantages for the SMEs SI process. For instance, some participants argued that the climate in the KSA affected productivity, such as MB (industrial sector) who said:

“The climate does have an effect on our productivity. Sometimes these are natural hazards like, for example, extreme dust that affects the clarity and pureness quality of our products”.

Another participant, HM (commercial sector) also stated:

“The very hot weather in the country affects productivity. However, what limited the harms of this factor is that our product (steel) doesn’t have an expiry date”.

HM (commercial sector) further stated:

‘most businesses have to consider the environment and the hot climate of the KSA especially those who sell products that could be affected by hot weather’.

For other participants, the climate was seen both as a restriction (e.g. because the place you serve has to be air conditioned), and sometimes beneficial (e.g. influencing the purchase of cold products):

‘we cannot make our business outdoor because of the weather, but at the same time it made water our bestselling item’ (AT (tourism and entertainment)).
This point was also highlighted by HaKa (tourism and entertainment sector), who said:

‘the weather did cause some pros and cons. For example, we had some products that sell well because of the hot weather like ice tea. On the other hand, the hot weather forced us to use air conditioning heavily causing continuous window humidity and needs for repeat cleaning’.

AM (tourism and entertainment sector) also stressed the same points:

‘The weather has a positive impact and another negative one. The positive impact is that it makes cold juices our best selling products. The negative side of it is that you can’t have an outdoor dining place for example’.

Overall, it seems that climate has to be taken into consideration as an external factor which does have influencing effects on SMEs SI processes.

4.2.5.3 Poor infrastructure available

The third issue identified under the environment category is related to the poor infrastructure available to help deal with the environment. Many participants highlighted the issue of poor infrastructure to help tackle some of the environmental consequences:

‘The environment does have an effect on our productivity. Sometimes these are natural hazards like dust effect on the clarity and pureness quality of our products. However, sometimes these are caused by the poor infrastructure we have
in Jeddah, like poor drainage of rain water which could hinder worker’s arrival, especially women’ (MB (industrial sector)).

Rain is scarce in the KSA but the lack of proper drainage, for example, has caused major problems which had severe consequences. For example, in 2009, heavy rain in Jeddah caused the death of around 77 people and losses reached SR1 billion (equivalent to around $267 Million US) (Anqawi, 2009; Alawi and Al-Harthi, 2009; Al-Zahrani, 2009; BBC News, 2009). However, this problem led to the existence of some businesses, such as AbM (tourism and entertainment sector) that said:

‘We are one of the leading companies to tackle environmental impact and raising awareness about it’.

Another important point that was clearly raised in this category is that, overall, solutions are reactive, and short term in focus; this point is related to sections 4.2.3, 4.2.6, and 4.4. This was clearly highlighted by a Municipality Advisor, AH (government representative) that said:

‘We know the problem we have but we did not yet try to solve it in a proper long term plan’.

He specifically mentioned the problem of the road Asphalt as he said:

‘We know the surface nature of Jeddah, that is a great part of it is built over the sea, and instead of sorting the problem from its root, by making a solid layer under it, we have established a department, launched an application, and call centres to receive hole complaints and teams to react and just cover the hole that is truly just firefighting or solving the problem only in a short term’.
4.2.5.4 Lack of entertainment alternatives

One last issue in this category was the lack of entertainment alternatives in a youth abundant context (i.e. the KSA). This is what, for example, made the previously mentioned online cinema, by AbM (tourism and entertainment sector), a disruptive innovation (i.e. create a new market) and made it a huge success.

Another example, is Ba Rid (Tourism and Entertainment sector) who started a comedy club, as he clearly stated:

‘I believe that our youth population along with stability and lack of entertainment alternatives are the main reasons for our huge success’.

This is what also made food and beverages in general, and restaurants and coffee shop more specifically, an entertaining alternative. This was highlighted by AT (Tourism and Entertainment sector)

‘Lack of entertainment alternatives had a positive impact and made food and beverages a social habit which made our business fall in what we call entertainment food’.

This issue was also highlighted by AM (tourism and entertainment sector), a restaurant owner who said:

‘Lack of entertainment attracted and forced locals to follow us’.

4.2.6 Systems, rules, and regulations (Legal)

This is the sixth, and last, subcategory under the external category. Under this category includes all external systems, rules, and regulations related issues that affect the strategy implementation process of SMEs. None of the participants expressed satisfaction within this sub-category, and a vast majority (86%) clearly stated that it
was, in fact, the external sub-category that most negatively affected their implementation process.

Many issues were identified regarding the country systems, rules, and regulations. They were considered premature, reactive, short term, ambiguous, and liable to sudden change. Also, these rules were mostly taken in a centralized manner, without coordination or involvement of stakeholders. Moreover, the absence of a transparent system created bureaucracy, long processes, and subjective execution. Furthermore, there were not enough rules to protect consumers and investors. Finally, there were inequalities and unfairness in information dissemination. These issues will be further presented below.

4.2.6.1 Incomprehensible rules and regulations

The first issue under this category relates to the weak structure of the regulatory frameworks. This caused incomprehensible rules and regulations which lack comprehensiveness. For example, systems and rules did not cover all kinds of businesses. As a result, some SMEs were forced to start their implementation and just hope not to be interrupted. This was illustrated by AbM (tourism and entertainment sector) who said:

‘As there were no rules and regulations related to our business, we followed the following policy: act now and apologize later, if interrupted’.

In the opinion of TB (government representative), an undersecretary of a Minister, this is one of the crucial issues that consumes and sometimes destroys SMEs. He said:
‘The lack of clear and comprehensible rules and regulations is what exhausts SMEs. Like armies that get exhausted because they were given incomplete or unclear directions’.

4.2.6.2 Underdeveloped, and not well thought

The second issue identified under this category is related to the careless construction of these regulations. In other words, not enough thought has been given to developing them, and therefore, they were frequently considered to be underdeveloped, and poorly thought-out. Consequently, this forces frequent changes and corrections to happen, which interrupt the process. This was illustrated by HaKa (tourism and entertainment sector):

‘They do not put enough thoughts in[to] rules so during implementation many issues and sometimes even harms are discovered which cause numerous reactive corrections that do affect our processes’.

This issue could sometimes have even more severe consequences, requiring a paradigm shift from businesses. MA (service sector) described the consequence of KAFALAH²² rule:

‘This rule forced us to outsource part of our process outside the country’.

TK (service sector) described that his company was successful in mitigating the effect of KAFALAH rule and other constraints of labour rules by outsourcing the technical part of his business, which requires a large bulk of workers, to Jordan. He said:

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²¹ Worked example used in the primitive framework on the external-process category
²² KAFALA is a sponsorship system that requires all foreign labour in KSA to have a local sponsor (Human Rights Watch, 2008). Recently severe consequences were introduced for both employers and employees who caught working under another sponsor which affected the market negatively.
'the way we adapted with labour laws in general and KAFALAH consequences in particular is by outsourcing the part of our business that requires the majority of technical labours outside the country (i.e. to Jordan)'.

Moreover, the consequences could sometimes be fatal, as HaKa (tourism and entertainment sector) for example said: ‘Unpredicted changes happen that could sometimes kill your strategic process. For example, they suddenly made one crucial product of mine prohibited in the market’.

These frequent changes could also have led almost all SMEs to favour overall reactive processes, rather than proactive ones, as AH (government representative) said: ‘because we are overloaded with works related to continuous required reactions, we do not have time to be pro-active or innovate’.
4.2.6.3 Subjectivity in execution

The third issue identified under this category is a consequence of the first two issues; that is the execution of these rules and regulations are very much subjective to the person implementing them. In other words, this means that, most of the time, they are executed in accordance with the prevailing understanding, at the time and location of the implementation process. A participant who illustrated this issue was, AT, who said:

‘We are in a religious country, but unfortunately the list of do’s and don’ts is very subjective as there are no clear guidelines. Giving an example of a consequence that I suffer accordingly was an officer that fines me because his understanding of the rules was different to mine’.

This might be a consequence of the lack of a single SME authority in Saudi Arabia (Capitas Group International, 2016) as was clearly stated by Abd Za (service sector): ‘Unfortunately, in KSA there is still a lack for a single SME authority were you can clarify all your queries’.  

4.2.6.4 Bureaucratic and long public processes

The fourth issue identified under the legal category is the bureaucratic and long public processes. These long and tired governmental processes also had an effect on the process, as MK (service sector) elaborated:

‘An issue that we have to consider during implementation is the long process of governmental actions and transactions because of the bureaucratic system’.

Also, AM (tourism and entertainment sector) stated:

‘All governmental procedures are tiring except the chamber of commerce’.

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23 Worked example used in the primitive framework on the external-process category
This forced some organisation to actually employ full time individual/s with just the role of dealing with these cumbersome processes as identified by Ey Sad (Construction sector) who said: ‘to relax my mind, I had to employ a full time employee with the main role of just dealing with public different, long and bureaucratic processes’.

This added advantages for those other businesses that do not require as many governmental transactions. For example, MB (industrial sector) that said:

‘Customs slow motion actually gave us an advantage over our competitors who were importing ready fans from outside the KSA’.

4.2.6.5 Uncoordinated rules

A fifth issue identified was that these rules and regulations were uncoordinated between different administrations. This incoordination between different parties sometimes led to conflicts which affected SI processes. This was illustrated by an example given by AT (tourism and entertainment):

‘the team that issue my license is different to the inspection team and seems not to have close collaboration together. Consequently, this led to many conflicts in the information I received, has caused delays, and hence affected my SI processes. Furthermore, there is no single entity where you can finalise or clear up your issues’.

This was even acknowledged by the Undersecretary of the Minister. TB (government representative), who stated that:

‘Poor coordination between different administrations is one of the things that have led to having a conflicting system that tired businesses’.
4.2.6.6 Stakeholders not involved during formation

This clear lack of a transparent system and of coordination also affected stakeholders that were not involved in the formation of the rules and regulations; this was the sixth issue identified. In a nutshell, stakeholders, or those who will be directly affected by the system rule or regulation, were not involved or consulted while these rules and regulations were developed. This was clearly illustrated by KG (commercial sector) who said:

‘This is the biggest barrier to our strategy implementation processes success. In my opinion, rules and regulations should have been established in close collaboration with those who suffer from its consequences and hence involve all stakeholders. In other words, all those considered stakeholders should have collaborated or at least been involved or consulted while developing rules, regulations, or solutions for problems’.

4.2.6.7 Not enough protective guidelines and directions

Another issue that was raised many times is that these rules and regulations do not involve enough protective guidelines and directions. In other words, there are not enough rules and regulations to protect investors and consumers. This was illustrated by HaKa (tourism and entertainment sector):

‘There are not enough rules and regulations that provide the right protection for consumers. In addition to that, it is complicated and time consuming to start a complaint’.

This was particularly applicable for SMEs as they were more vulnerable in the market in comparison with the large and multinationals as Um Ab (service sector)
clearly stated: ‘We are not protected enough, for instance we stand no chance to raise case/s or issue/s against large corporation/s, even if we have the right to do so. They have much more money, networks, and experiences’.

4.2.6.8 Inequality of information dissemination

The final issue identified under this category was related to inequality and unfairness in information dissemination. This unfairness in the dissemination of information caused inequality:

‘Businesses who got the information had advantages over us in implementing their processes’ (Aal (industrial sector)).

All the previously mentioned issues identified in the system, rules, and regulations category lead to the following problems which were also highlighted by participants.

a. Corruption:

1) Bribery was mentioned by both AJ, who said: ‘Unfortunately the field we work in is dirty’ and HQ (service sector) who said: ‘You have to play around to be able to work’.

2) Favouritism or ‘WASTA’ and the essentiality of networking and social relations to succeed (see section 4.4) were mentioned by AM, who said: ‘we were able to do things faster through our relations’.

b. Lack of cooperation and conflicts in interests, as TB (government representative) said: ‘Poor coordination between different administrations led to conflicting system’.

c. Failure for some SMEs: as stated by TB, a Ministry Undersecretary, when asked about the lack of clear system, he said ‘This is what exhausts SMEs’.

To sum up, it is clear that external factors have a strong influencing effect on the strategy implementation process of SMEs in the KSA.
From a political standpoint, it is apparent that the government is trying hard to diversify from oil dependence, and to further support the overall large - and still growing - youth population, and to tackle the high unemployment rates in the country. The Saudi government is clearly supportive for locals to start, grow and sustain small and medium businesses. However, the lack of maturity and educated decisions, along with the consequences in the absence of a robust system, have caused a gap between what the government aimed, and what has actually been achieved. The country also has good international relations, but it appears that sometimes it was not in line with SMEs needs. Moreover, since the late King Abdullah’s succession to the throne in 2005, the Saudi market has been described as open, this has caused both positive and negative consequences. Regarding the movements happening in the MENA region, the government overall has wisely dealt with it, although some negative consequences could not be mitigated.

Economically, the country is considered healthy, secure, and stable. There is a huge government spending associated with the availability of finance in the country and the high purchasing power of the population, which have made the market attractive. Socially, there is clearly, an overall supportive Bedouin culture, which sometimes decreases if it is outside relations, or if it was a support required for the first time. This attribute, along with religion, has caused a sort of conservative society, but this has been changing since 2005, following the improvements introduced by the late King Abdullah. In addition, the love of well-being, consuming, the hot weather, and not having many alternative options for entertainment has made shopping, restaurants and coffee shops a major business in the KSA. It is also clear that there is an issue about the lack of education and maturity, along with a love of well-being and spending, which is reflected in some customers’ purchasing unconscious
practices/or weak awareness. There is also clearly, an overall youth population that could sometimes be more focused on complaining and blaming others, instead of taking initiatives. This could be the result of the family and society close bonds that did not value or appreciate craft or artwork. Thankfully, this phenomenon is decreasing, and the community education and overall maturity level are increasing.

In terms of technology, it seems it is available in the KSA, or in other words, there are minimal issues regarding importing a specific required technology. The real issue is with the lack of professional practitioners, both in supporting the importing of technology and/or using it.

Regarding the environmental impact, it is clearly demonstrated that the KSA is still a fertile market, as the country is still developing, and new system’s rules and regulations are frequently and suddenly introduced. This consequently produces new obstacles and challenges which can sometimes be exploited as new opportunities in the market. Also, the climate is a bit harsh, and the focus on being reactive and on short term solutions made the case worse. Furthermore, it is clearly emphasized that, as the country is considered youthful and wealthy, that there are still needs for alternative form of entertainment.

Finally, many issues were identified regarding the country systems, rules, and regulations. They were considered premature, reactive, short term, ambiguous, and often suddenly changed. Also, these rules were mostly taken in a centralized manner, without coordination or involvement of stakeholders. Moreover, the absence of a transparent system created bureaucracy, long processes, and subjective execution. Furthermore, there were not enough rules to protect consumers and investors.
Finally, there were inequalities and unfairness in information dissemination that advantages some that were aware against many that were not alerted.

4.3 Internal organisational factors

This is the category that most previous research has focused on. As mentioned before, the majority of the available research in the literature were mainly concerned with the internal organisational influencing factors (see for example Schmelzer and Olsen, 1994; Aaker, 1995; Thompson and Strickland, 1995; Miller, 1997). It is also the category that managers generally focus on (Dameron and Torset, 2009) (see chapter 2 for more details).

This category contains all organisational issues that are internal to the explored SMEs. Hence, in strategic terms, these involve either the SMEs strengths that should be utilized, or weaknesses that must be improved. The issues identified in this category are related to processes and organisation, controlling system, ensuring basic employee needs, being innovative, agile, and able to reinvent the business according to needs. These issues will be discussed further below.

4.3.1 Process and organisation

The first issue identified under this category relates to processes and organisation. In many cases explored, the importance of having a robust system to arrange the strategy implementation process within the organisation was highlighted. KG (commercial sector), for example, said:
‘one important success factors for our strategy implementation processes was that we do not depend on persons but on a robust management system’.

This consequently systemised work minimized subjectivity and reduced dependence, replacing ‘a one man show’ which has been mentioned in many cases as an issue hindering the strategy implementation process.

For example, this was highlighted by Ta Ab (commercial sector) who said:

‘Unfortunately, unlike large organisations, most SMEs do not have a robust system for SI process which increase the dependence on a one man show’. This point was also highlighted by TB (government representative), the Undersecretary of a Ministry who said:

‘In both governmental organisations and local organisations and especially in SMEs, there is centralization which kills. This makes lots of commercial business and/or transactions depending on what is called a one man show’.

This was also highlighted by TK (service sector) who said:

‘The only major issue that I still have in my organisation regarding the strategy implementation process is that it is still very dependent on me being in the front or what I call a one man show’.

Another SME claimed that not having this kind of centralized process, influenced by a single representative, is actually one of their Critical Success Factor (CSF) stated:

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24 Worked example used in the primitive framework on the internal- process category
'One CSF for our small business is that we do not depend on a single person. The executives just draw the boundaries and hence our employees are influenced as they have the freedom to innovate’ (AbM (tourism and entertainment sector)).

Another issue identified for organising and arranging the strategy implementation process, is that it has to be agreed, coordinated, and transparent to everybody in the business to minimize conflicts of interest. This was illustrated by MB (industrial sector) who said:

‘Our main problem in the strategy implementation process was that there was no transparency and coordination between departments. For example, we were able to increase production as requested, but sales failed to meet expectations in selling, due to conflict of interest, which created huge stocks. In my opinion the whole organisation should work in harmony toward the goal in order to succeed’.

4.3.2 Controlling system

The second issue identified under this category is related to the importance of having a controlling system. To have control over your system and processes was another important issue that was identified in many cases. In fact, the one man show mentioned previously has been attributed mainly to a lack of control; as TK (service sector) clearly mentioned:

‘Despite having good process and arrangement within our organisation, I have to be involved. This is mainly because we lack a powerful controlling system

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25 Worked example used in the primitive framework on the internal-process category
26 Worked example used in the primitive framework on the internal-outcome category
that could ensure the best is getting out from the employees during the implementation process. In a nutshell, if you do not have a system to control people you will require a one man show’.

Some SMEs argued that having strong control influences SI processes as AH (government representative) said:

‘In the beginning, we divided our city just into three areas, now it is divided to nine with nine different representatives. This consequently reduces representative responsibility, provided more control and hence our SI processes became more focused and better controlled established stronger competencies’.

Also, MB (industrial sector) argued that control increased quality for his business:

‘we consider quality a very crucial factor that is why our product does not get dispatched before they get checked (i.e. a sort of control). For this purpose, we have employed a quality officer that checks that each product has achieved the minimum required standards. It is through this greater control, that we were able to give a 6 year warranty on our product, whereas the maximum given by our competitors in the market was 1 year’.

Greater control reputation also influences and stimulates clients to work with you, as MK (service sector) said:

‘In order to increase our client base, we are trying to enhance control by systemising everything, building policies and procedures according to the best practise standards. This has also helped us and made it easier for us to acquire the ISO 22000 certificate related to food safety system’.
Other participants claimed that it is control which could help businesses in identifying and retaining its talent. This was exemplified by AbM (tourism and entertainment sector) who stated:

‘We lacked a control system and hence we couldn’t identify and retain our most important assets i.e. talents’.

Finally, some respondents mentioned that without control your whole initiative could be negatively affected. For example, TK (service sector) mentioned that without control he could not have achieved his strategy of outsourcing the entire technical part of his business:

‘If you want to outsource you have to establish a sort of control. In my case I have tried to master project management and implement its foundations which helped me a lot in keeping tight control of my outsource businesses especially the overseas one’.

4.3.3 Ensuring basic employee needs (making him happy to work)

The third issue is related to ensuring basic employee needs. In other words, whether or not the business is providing its employees with the basic needs, and hence, making them happy to work with. This is another important internal organisational factor which has strong influences on strategy implementation processes in SMEs. For example, this issue had direct influences on employee commitments, pro-activeness and competencies, as HaKa (tourism and entertainment sector) stated:

\[27\] Worked example used in the primitive framework on the internal- initiate category
‘We took extra care for treating our employees. Providing them with comfortable housing, entertainment, and we even have ensured their comfort by employing a person just for cleaning their apartment. This paid back to our business as our employees felt that we care about them and consequently they simply cared about us and our business by taking care of their part in the SI process’.

He further elaborated:

‘This extra care we gave was beyond what our competitors gave and hence our employees were keen to support our organisation and its SI process to increase success and to sustain’.

What made this issue more important for SMEs in the KSA are the numerous external matters, threats and uncomfortable rules and regulations available in the external context (as mentioned in sections 4.2.3, 4.2.5, and 4.2.6). This was highlighted by AT (tourism and entertainment sector), who argued that:

‘the market is not very comfortable for staff’.

There was also Aar (service sector), who stated:

‘the external environment and systems are not very attractive for highly skill[ed] people’.

As a result, businesses had to compensate for these issues, and make sure their employees are proud and happy to work for them. Many participants mentioned that doing this was crucial for ensuring a successful implementation process. For example, AbM (tourism and entertainment sector) said:

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28 Worked example used in the primitive framework on the internal-outcome category
‘I do not have to worry about the implementation process as our employees are happy doing it, we might be one of the funniest places to work for’.

Also, HQ (service sector) stated:

‘When people are happy to work in your business, you do not have to worry much about implementation. In our company, we provided a very comfortable environment that quickly became our selling point to our new member. As we provide a very friendly working environment where ideas are welcomed, most decisions are taken as a team, we look after the team, and we maintain youth age from 18-32’.

4.3.4 Innovation, agile, and able to reinvent business according to needs

The last issue identified under this category is related to being innovative, agile, and able to reinvent themselves according to needs. Many respondents highlighted the importance of the SME to have a sort of flexibility and ability to change, adapt, reinvent, or innovate quickly, according to needs. A clear example was TK (service sector) who stated:

‘The ability of reinventing your business according to needs is crucial. Around seventy five percent of SMEs in the KSA end up doing something different than what was initially aimed. I got this inspiration from my former CEO in Unilever that told me: Life is always changing, companies that do not reinvent their selves cannot sustain. The bottom line was that we were good in reinventing our business according to demands and through innovative idea that is why we succeeded. One
example was our reaction to NITAQAT\textsuperscript{29} rules that mainly constrains the number of non-Saudi employees. We have basically employed the positions that are excelled by Saudis and open a new branch in another country to support our team with what they lack’.

The importance of being innovative, agile, and able to reinvent the business, according to needs was also highlighted by MK (service sector) who said:

‘One of our key strengths was that we were able to customize our services depending on the customer needs. This gave us the ability to serve different market categories’.

Moreover, AJ (construction sector) said:

‘when I started my business, I did not have in the beginning definitive plans it is the market that kept driving me’\textsuperscript{30}.

All these examples clearly illustrate the importance that SMEs strategy implementation processes should be client oriented. As TK (service sector) highlighted:

‘Responding to customer demand and commitment to their satisfaction are what guided our strategy implementation process and is also what made it successful’.

Some cases mentioned things that could enhance this quick and flexible response towards clients’ needs. One example is the effective use of business available resources such as technology:

\textsuperscript{29} Which means ‘Ranges’ in Arabic, is a program introduced in 2011 with the main aim of increasing job opportunities for Saudi citizens in the private sector (SHC, 2012).

\textsuperscript{30} Worked example used in the primitive framework on the internal- initiate category
‘technology facilitated our ability to act according to our customer needs’

(AM (tourism and entertainment)).

Another example is that, by setting general rules and then encouraging your team to take the responsibility and innovate during their part of the process. This argument has been justified by stating that an organisations’ operational team is the closest to the client and hence are the ones who most understand their needs. This was highlighted by AbM (tourism and entertainment sector):

‘We just draw the boundaries and then our teams have the freedom of innovating as they are closer to the client and better understand their needs. This consequently increased our employee, authority, responsibilities, and ownership for their part of the strategy implementation process’.

However, it was mentioned that there are also factors that could reduce the speed and flexibility of an SME SI process and which could force it to be re-active, instead of being pro-active. For example, being overloaded with works, as AH (government representative) said:

‘During our implementation process, we couldn’t respond properly to the market needs that kept changing, because we are overloaded with works and hence we were firefighting, we did not have time to innovate or think about the issue and sort it from its root’.

To sum up, the internal organisational issues identified from the cases explored included first the importance of having a robust system to replace the one man show and to coordinate this system with the entire business and avoid conflicts. Another important point is the importance of establishing some sort of control. Participants argued that it is through control that businesses could eliminate the centralised one man show. Having better control also means better competencies and qualities.
Businesses with a good control reputation or those that obtained certificates that proves it (for example ISO certificates), have a better chance to attract more clients. It is also through control that SMEs could identify and retain its good employees. Furthermore, participants argued that business that cannot control their processes will have difficulties in achieving the whole strategic initiative, and an example was given in outsourcing. After that, as a response to the external threats that did not satisfy workers, it was suggested that SMEs should ensure the basic needs of their employees are met, and make them proud and happy to work in the business. It was argued that this increases employee commitment, pro-activeness, competencies, and eagerness to make the strategy implementation process a success and hence to sustain and flourish. Finally, the last internal organisational issue mentioned was the importance of SMEs to be quick, flexible, and to have the ability in reinventing themselves, according to needs. Some factors that could support this objective and other that could hinder it have also been identified.
4.4 Internal individual factors

This category, which was mainly influenced by the contemporary s-as-p works, contains all individual issues, or in s-as-p terms, issues related to the practitioners that could influence the SI process (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). It is also refers to what Yang, Guohui, and Eppler (2009) describe as soft factors, or people oriented factors. This includes both strengths (that should be utilized) and weaknesses (that must be developed). For instance, previous studies identified communication activities including the content and style issues, as well as the closely related implementation tactics of the individuals, the consensus about the process, and commitment to it, as examples of these individual factors (Yang et al., 2009).

The first issue identified in this research relates to a lack of competencies including lack of leadership, mentors or supporters, and pro-actors. The remaining issues identified involved lack of knowledge and maturity, lack of quality and experience, bad habits, the importance of having a visible role model available at the front, the imposition of centralised decisions, and the importance of networking and social relations. These issues will be further described below.

4.4.1 Lack of competencies

The first issue identified under this category was related to lack of competence within individuals. Many cases highlighted this issue, claiming scarceness of individuals with the required competencies which, in turn, does affect the SI process. For example, AM (tourism and entertainment sector) said:
There is a lack of resources with the required quality and capabilities that has affected our capability in strategy implementation. These competencies included leadership, mentors or supporters, and pro-actors, as identified below.

4.4.1.1 Lack of leadership

The first competencies identified as insufficient related to leadership. This was clearly an issue identified by many participants. For example, TK (service sector) said:

‘We have lack of true leadership capabilities. That is why business owners must consistently supervise their businesses in order to succeed in SI’.

A possible solution that was suggested by the same participant was to invest in individuals to increase their capabilities as he further elaborated by saying:

‘Alternatively, which unfortunately we did not do, we should have invested in leadership development. For example, in my opinion, outsourcing does not work without very good project management. So if we invested in our people to learn how to be professional project managers, we could have secure better SI outcomes’.

Another respondent who also agreed that investments in competencies and capabilities are fruitful said:

‘When we invested in our capabilities and developed our own homemade recipe instead of the ready mix we used to buy, we were able to triple our income for that product’ (AT (Tourism and Entertainment sector)).

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31 Worked example used in the primitive framework for the individual- initiate category
4.4.1.2 Lack of qualified mentors or supporters

Another competency shortage identified by some participants that had an effect on SI process was the lack of qualified mentors or supporters. For example, AJ (construction sector) stated:

‘Unfortunately, there were no qualified mentors or supporters to guide us at all and hence our SI process was harder’.

Another example was given by MK (service sector):

‘There is a lack of a proper support and mentoring for SMEs during SI. Recently the chamber of commerce has tried to contribute to this, but it was not related to what most SMEs required, which is the support for the implementation process, where we most fail’.

Moreover, AT (Tourism and Entertainment sector) elaborated by saying:

‘There was no mentor to help us avoid mistakes during the implementation and hence we were learning from our pocket (i.e. our own mistake) as a result of lack of talents’.

4.4.1.3 Reactors instead of pro-actors

A third competency that was lacking was the presence of pro-actors, as opposed to reactors. Being proactive was mentioned by many participants as a good individual attribute to support SMEs SI processes. However, many respondents argued that, unfortunately, it is still minimal, as TK (service sector) stated:

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32 Worked example used in the primitive framework for the individual-outcome category
33 Worked example used in the primitive framework for the individual-process category
‘We have a lack of pro-actors and hence our implementation processes are mostly reactive’.

He further elaborated by saying:

‘Reactors could have been forced or caused by the one man show. For example, in my company because of centralization when my employee, who are mostly reactors, has tried to pro-act I have neutralized them’.

Another example was given by AT (Tourism and Entertainment sector):

‘There was no place to clear up your issues, no place where you can share, plan, or get feedback before you invest. We still did not reach the level of pre-acting or being able to develop supporting systems, the majority of us are still reactors’.

4.4.2 Lack of Knowledge and maturity

A second important issue that has been identified under the individual category is the lack of knowledge and maturity. This issue had a negative influencing effect on the SMEs SI process. The issue might also be one of the reasons behind the lack of competency which was the first issue identified under this category (i.e. internal individual factors). This was highlighted in general in the entire society, and more specifically, including employees within SMEs, representative in public organisations, and clients. An example of a case that highlighted the issue in general is KG (commercial sector) who said:

‘The vast majority of individuals are not well educated’.
This was further emphasised by Mo Ha (tourism and entertainment sector) who stated:

‘My personal believe is that most issues in the entire SI process are related to lack of knowledge and education’\(^{34}\).

This was also highlighted by TB (government representative), an undersecretary of a Ministry, who stated:

‘We are an uneducated nation; knowledge is not spread to the required extent’.

Other participants highlighted the issue in SMEs, such as AbM (tourism and entertainment sector), who stated:

‘human resources is one of our biggest challenges in SMEs as our society is underdeveloped’.

Other respondents showed how SME business owners lack basic knowledge and maturity by the way they think. For example:

‘Most SMEs business owners do not see their labours comfort or wellbeing as a priority. They do not see the long term value of it, as they are too focused on short term thinking. This might be why most of them consider their employees’ rights as an unaffordable luxury’ (MK (service sector)).

Another group of participants highlighted the issue in public organisations with decision making responsibilities. MK (service sector) said:

\(^{34}\) Worked example used in the primitive framework for the individual-process category
‘Even decision makers are not well educated. An example was that they could not even simply categorize my business’\textsuperscript{35}.

He further elaborated:

‘some rules and regulations acted as constraints for our SI process, as they were not given educated and mature thoughts’.

Also MB (industrial sector) said that a clear issue within public organisation is:

‘Making uneducated rules and regulations which are most of the time unrealistic’.

He then gave an example by saying:

‘when the corrective campaign started in April, the work in the KSA have almost stopped. That is why the government was forced to give an extra three months for people to correct their situations’.

Finally, some participants claimed that the issue a of lack of Knowledge and maturity even included individual clients. Aal (industrial sector), for example, mentioned:

‘The market is open for cheap products with minimum standards which sometimes take clients away as most of them could not distinguish the difference’.

He further elaborated by saying:

‘Our communities are not mature enough to recognize fraud in products. This unfortunately makes them believe that our products are expensive (i.e. not valuing our quality) and hence required more effort and time from us’.

\textsuperscript{35} Worked example used in the primitive framework for the individual-initiate category
Also MB (industrial sector) said:

‘our main clients for this product were contractors, that value price first, then quality and aim for short term benefit. Hence, they just look for the cheapest commercial product to make the quicker, higher, profit out of it, without enough thinking of its consequences’.

Moreover, HaKa (tourism and entertainment sector) stated:

‘Unfortunately, the majority of our clients have lack of knowledge in healthy eating and hence did not give the right value to some of our products’.

AH (government representative) from a Municipality, identified the main issue behind the problem in the city cleanliness by saying:

‘We need to educate people and elevate their maturity level. For instance, they still require lots of awareness in social responsibilities’.

Furthermore, TK (service sector) said, in relation to making transactions online:

‘We are still unfortunately behind in that matter. We cannot rely a hundred percent on technology, we have to ring doors to sell. Face to face interactions are still considered much more effective’.

Having said that, many participants argued that this issue, of a lack of Knowledge and maturity, started to improve since 2005 and as a result of the huge investment that the government made in education (see section 4.2.1 above). For example HQ (service sector) said:

‘As a result of all investments made in education since 2005, our community became nowadays much more mature’
4.4.3 Lack of quality and experience

The third issue identified under the individual category is the lack of quality and experience. Many participants highlighted this issue and its effect on the SMEs SI process. For example, TK (service sector) considered it a crucial factor, as he said:

‘You can’t survive if you don’t have quality, which for us, basically, is minimizing the deviation from specification’.

Another example of a respondent which emphasized the importance of quality was given by GD (tourism and entertainment sector):

‘One key of our competencies was that the quality of food served was very good as we had a very good chef’.

Some participants relate this issue with the previous one (i.e. lack of knowledge and maturity). For example, AJ (construction sector) said:

‘Most challenges we faced were because we were not qualified as individuals. We did not have previous experience or knowledge’.

4.4.4 Bad habits

Bad habits by some individuals, is the fourth issue, and was also considered to be a major issue affecting SMEs SI processed. For example, some participants highlighted the bad consequences of being selfish and looking just for your personal

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36 Worked example used in the primitive framework for the individual-outcome category
interest in the entire SI process aim. This was highlighted, for example, by MB (industrial sector) that said:

‘Sales manager, personal interest affected the quantity sold from our production and caused huge stocks in the warehouse’.

Ignorance is another example of bad attitude that affects the SI processes. This was reflected in some public organisations, as TK (service sector) stated:

‘There are some people and some governmental representatives that have an ignorant attitude. For example, if you complain about a thing during the process they will reply that is us if you doesn’t like it go out’.

Another bad habit mentioned was that some individuals were irresponsible as KG (commercial sector) said:

‘There is a lack of a sense of responsibility among employees’.

This was considered an important issue:

‘Buy in of people is one of the most essential factors to secure strategy implementation success’ (MS (service sector)).

That is why many participants emphasized the importance of employee empowerment by raising their ownership, commitment, buy-in and letting them consider the business as their own. An example is AbM (tourism and entertainment sector) who said:

‘One of our key critical success factor was that our people were empowered and hence had passion for what they do’.
4.4.5 The importance of having a visible and/hands-on role model

The fifth individual issue identified by many participants in the explored cases was the importance of having a visible role model always in the front in the SME. Most of the time this was the business owner or leader. For example HQ (service sector) said:

‘because it is a small business the team get affected a lot by the leadership moodiness, happiness, etc., which in turn affects the SI process’.

Also, TK (service sector) stated:

‘I can’t influence my team unless I am ahead of them’.

Furthermore, AJ (construction sector) whispered a key ingredient for his strategy implementation process success:

‘I am involved with my team on-site’.

Overall, it was argued by many respondents, that the individual visible role model’s passion, focus, commitment, support, influence, visibility, determination, control and follow up are all essential to succeed in the strategy implementation process. For example passion was highlighted by HQ:

‘What kept us from closing many times was my passion toward my work. When you have passion in what you do, you will easily be able to sell your idea to your partner and employee that you hire throughout the SI process’.

Focus, commitment, determination and follow up importance were mentioned by HaKa (tourism and entertainment sector), who stated:
‘I can say that the main cause of our success was my partner determination, follow up, focus and commitment throughout the SI process’.

Also AJ (construction sector) said:

‘Focus is crucial for success’.

Moreover, KG (commercial sector) mentioned:

‘One of our success factor was that we follow up on a daily basis with effort’.

Furthermore, MS (service sector) said:

‘Top management buy in, and support is crucial for success’.

One final example is Niz Hu (commercial sector) who attributed his success to his personal passion and belief for the business when he stated:

‘We went through many difficulties, if I did not have the passion and believe in this particular business, I would not be able to sustain’.

4.4.6 Centralized decisions imposed and without sufficient thought

The sixth issue identified under the individual category might be one of the possible negative consequences of the previous issue, and that is the importance of being always in the front. Many participants argued that this could lead to decisions being centrally imposed and could sometimes be given without sufficient thought; hence, this could have a negative influence on the SI processes. For example

‘centralization could have been forced in my organisation as a consequence from the one man show which sometimes could cause decisions to be imposed. These decisions could have been better if they incorporated employee thoughts, especially
those in the front line. Overall, this had negative consequences on the way we formulated and implemented our strategy’ (TK (service sector)).

4.4.7 Networking and social relations

Finally, one last category is one that has been mentioned a lot as being very essential for individuals to have and that has a strong effect on SI processes: networking and social relations. Many participants argued that, through networking and social relations, the strategy implementation process could be accelerated. For example, AM (tourism and entertainment sector) said:

‘we were able to do things faster through our relations’.

In another case, MK (service sector) illustrated this point by stating:

‘It was really helpful for our organisation that our chairman of the board was a deputy minister. This consequently facilitated and accelerated our SI processes’.

Also, AT (Tourism and Entertainment sector) argued that:

‘Relations and relationships are crucial factors for success in SI’.

In another case, AJ (construction sector) considered it essential to secure bids:

‘Because I am a social person and have good networks and social relations, I got many jobs secured’.

Furthermore, AM (tourism and entertainment sector) mentioned that:
‘networking and social relations are very crucial and could really affect your business. For example, as I had close relationships with constructors we were able to make a distinguished work of construction, and decorations to our branches. In addition to that, it is very important to build a strong relationship with customers in order to make sure he or she will return again. We do that by making sure we pass by tables and ask if the food was up to the expectation. Also, by making sure we convey our message that we would really love to see you again before they leave’.

To sum up, internal individual issues explored in the cases included an overall lack of competencies including leadership, mentors or supporters, and pro-actors. A second very important individual issue that was highlighted in many cases is the lack of knowledge and maturity. This was highlighted both in general in the entire society, and more specifically including employee within SMEs, representative in public organisations, and clients. Also, there was an issue of individuals lacking qualifications and experiences. Further, some bad habits such as selfishness, personal interest, ignorance, and being irresponsible, were identified. Moreover, some cases highlighted the importance of having a visible role model always in the front. However, this could influence bad consequence of imposing centralized decisions that lack cooperation. Finally, one major influencing factor for individuals mentioned was the importance of having personal networks and social relations.

The following figure represent the research primitive framework along with some worked examples from the different cases explored.
This chapter has described issues and factors influencing the strategy implementation processes in Saudi SMEs, drawing from the different cases explored. These issues were organized and presented under three main categories, that is external, internal organisational and internal individual and over the whole process of strategy implementation from initiation to outcome. The next chapter will summarize and discuss the main findings of this research.
Chapter 5: Research Findings and Discussions

5.1 Introduction

After introducing the reader to the research, summarizing what has already been conducted in the field, presenting the research methodology adopted, and providing a detailed description and analysis for the data collected, this chapter will summarize and discuss the research findings. In other words, the findings of the empirical work conducted in the KSA are presented. At the beginning, the final model of the research, after validation in the Saudi context, is demonstrated. The main contribution of the model is that it is holistic. That means, as mentioned before, it covers the whole strategy implementation process from initiation to outcome, and includes factors that affect the SI process on three distinguished levels. After that, the main drivers and barriers of SI processes in Saudi SMES are listed under these three different levels. That is, on an internal individual, internal organisational, and external level. Then a specific section that further discusses reflections and considerations of the research findings is provided. Seven main reflections and considerations are discussed and form the main issues identified from the study. The first one compares the multi-case understanding of strategy with previous research. Then the famous strategy formulation-implementation dichotomy is discussed. After that, the culture and sociocultural issues, and the relations between politics and legal, rules and regulations, are highlighted. Then, issues with being more short-term in focus and reactive, rather than proactive, are emphasized. Lastly, the issues of networking and social relations, and the lack of a unified system, integration, and cooperation are stressed. Finally, at the end, a summary of the whole chapter is presented.
5.2 Final model

In this section the final version of the model is demonstrated. The revised conceptual framework that encompasses previous limitations has been used to explore the real empirical situation in the context of Saudi SMEs, and results presented in figure 11.
The primitive conceptual framework (see figure 8 in chapter 2, section 2.6) was helpful during the data collection process and analysis, as well as the writing up. It mainly helped in staying focused during the interviews, and prevented the research from being overwhelmed with data. It also helped in organizing the data collected, analysing it, and in shaping the final findings of this research. The final model is presented in figure 11 and is mainly composed of two main axes.

The first axis represents the basic strategic planning process as recognized by different researchers in the literature (see for example Okumus, 2003; Brenes et al., 2008; Grünig and Kühn, 2015). Basically the axis contains three main phases. The first phase is concerned with initiating the strategy or revising it. The second phase is related to the strategy implementation process itself. Then the third phase is the outcome or the result. The second axis contains the three distinguished levels. That is the external level, internal organisation, and internal individual level. These two axes have simplified the categorization of the SI process influencing factors into nine categories. It is also important to note that this process has proved not to be linear, but iterative in nature, which is why the model was presented in a circular way. In the following sections the main drivers and barriers that influence the strategy implementation process and which were explored in the field work, will be summarized.

5.3 Drivers influencing the process of SI initiatives

This section presents the major drivers that positively influenced the process of strategy implementation initiatives; these were generated from the analysis of the
data collected during the empirical studies in Saudi SMEs. These drivers were organized under three main categories. These categories are individual (micro), organisational (meso), and external level (macro). The subsequent subsections discuss these main categories along with the associated drivers influencing the process under each category.

5.3.1 Internal individual level

This category, which was mainly influenced by the contemporary s-as-p works, contains all individual issues, or in s-as-p terms, issues related to the practitioners which could positively influence the SI process. As mentioned in detail in chapter 4, the first driver for the strategy implementation process identified was the importance of being always in the front and providing a role model to the rest of the team (see section 4.4 for more details). It was apparent that, in almost all cases, employees get highly influenced from the performance of the people around them, especially the team leader. In many cases when the leader or owner of the business was ahead of his team, dynamic, self-motivated, proactive and/or funny, this was directly reflected in the whole team. This could have been especially correct with the type of businesses investigated, which is SMEs, where the number of employees is relatively less than large organisation, and where employee performance and effect is usually more visible to the rest of the team.

The second very important individual driver identified is networking and social relations (see section 4.4 for more details). From almost all cases explored, it was clear that personal networks and social relations have a crucial influence on the
entire process of strategy implementation from initiation to implementation and achieving the outcomes.

5.3.2 Internal organisational level

This category contains all organisational issues that are internal within the explored SMEs. Hence, in strategic terms, involve the SMEs strengths that should be utilized. As mentioned in detail in chapter 4, having a robust system to arrange the processes within the organisation has been highlighted as an important driver in the SI process. Another important driver was the availability of a monitoring and control system to provide feedback on the process and to take necessary actions. Moreover, to make the feedback provided effective, being innovative, agile, and able to reinvent themselves according to needs were all considered important drivers. Finally, a crucial driver highlighted by most organisations was the importance of making the workplace a comfortable one to work for, ensuring basic employee needs are met and making them happy to be part of the organisation. This had a direct effect on positive individual capabilities, skills, ownership, contribution, and pro-activity toward the business (see section 4.3 for more details).

5.3.3 External level

This category contains all external issues (i.e. from outside the organisation) that affect the strategy implementation process in Saudi SMEs. Issues in this category are imposed on SMEs and their employees. The field work clearly demonstrated that external factors do have strong influencing effects, both positively (enablers), and
negatively (barriers), on the strategy implementation process of SMEs in the KSA. In strategic terms, they involve either opportunities to be exploited, or challenges that require avoidance or adaptation (these will be mentioned in section 5.4.3 later on). The main drivers identified under this category were as follows.

First, the political situation was, overall, considered by the majority of respondents, to be positively affecting the SI process. Although only 45% of the respondents believed that political issues were mainly considered drivers, they were actually the majority. That is because only 36% considered it as negatively affecting the process and 18% did not mention it at all. This reflects the point that has continuously been highlighted, which is the good intention of the government and its politics to support SMEs. However, the shortening in execution or implementation is what made the percentage still relatively low. In other words, although strong supports were provided by the government to facilitate the process of SI for SMEs in the KSA through opening the market, foreign relations, and rules and regulations, these supports, most of the time, did not achieve the outcomes envisioned.

On the other hand, a vast majority of 82% of the respondents agreed that the economic situation of the country did contribute positively to the SI process. The security and stability, as well as the finance availability, encouraged spending by both government and locals, helping to create a relatively high purchasing power and an abundance of raw materials and supplies.

Moreover, 50% of the respondents agreed that technological factors also had a positive impact on the process. This percentage represents also the majority consensus among the respondents. That is because only 14% considered it as negatively affecting the process, 18% said it had a neutral effect (i.e. neither positive
nor negative), and 18% did not mention it at all, or said it was irrelevant. The majority of participants agreed that the technology needed is crucial to the process, and that it is available, including social media. However, the only issue under this category raised repeatedly was the lack of professional practitioners who could maximise the utilisation and support of the available technology. This issue is related to the individual category and will be mentioned in section 5.4.1 later on.

Finally, a majority of 41% of the respondents said that the environment had an overall positive impact on the process; this was mainly because it was considered a fertile market, with not many alternatives. Only 23% said it had a negative impact, 18% said it had equally negative and positive impacts, and the remaining did not comment on that issue. The low percentage of 41% might have been as a result of the poor infrastructure and the negative effect it has had on the SI process (as will be mentioned in section 5.4.3).

5.4 Barriers influencing the process of SI initiatives

This section summarizes the major barriers explored during the fieldwork that negatively influenced the process of strategy implementation initiatives in Saudi SMEs. These barriers will also be categorized under the three distinguished levels (i.e. external, internal organisation, and internal individual).
5.4.1 Internal individual level

The main barriers identified from the cases explored under this category were as follows. First, there were clear issues around the lack of competencies including leadership, mentors, supporters, and pro-actors. Also, there was a great deal of evidence to prove that there is an overall lack of knowledge and maturity in the country generally. These two barriers might have been the cause for further barriers, such as the lack of quality, experience, and bad habits. Finally, the last identified barrier was the imposition of centralized decisions which had not been well thought through, which might have been caused by the importance of being always in the front (i.e. an enabler identified previously, please see section 5.3.1 for more details).

5.4.2 Internal organisational level

Under this category the main barriers identified, or in strategic terms the weaknesses that must be improved, is not having one or more of the enablers identified previously (see section 5.3.2). That is, for example, not having a robust system, process and arrangements, or the absence of a monitoring and control system. Another example, could be difficulties in being agile or reinventing the company, according to the needs. Finally, not being successful in providing the basic requirements for employees and making sure that they are happy and motivated to work.
5.4.3 External level

There were also external factors that act like barriers towards the strategy implementation process of SMEs in the KSA. In strategic terms, these barriers involve challenges that require avoidance or adaptation. The main barriers identified under this category were as follows.

First, the social factors, as 59% of the participants said that these have a negative impact on the process, compared with only 9% who believed it has a positive impact. This small percentage who believed that it has positive impacts attributed it to the supportive Bedouin culture, conservative nature, and religion still available. Whereas the majority who view the category as a barrier, attributed it to the complaining culture, that is, complaining instead of taking initiatives and responsibilities. Also, the majority believed that it is a barrier because of the orientation toward high quality of life and well-being and the less conscious consuming culture available. However, having a considerably high youth population, together with the high level of government investment in education, might offer promise to address this in the near future.

The second category that was considered a barrier is the legal category (i.e. systems, rules, and regulations), as a majority of 86% of the participants believed and agreed. There were many issues under this category, as these rules and regulations were not comprehensive, were uncoordinated, underdeveloped, and not well thought-out. Subjectivity was, therefore, a clear issue, as well as bureaucracy and long public processes. Moreover, there was an inequality in information dissemination. Also, almost all participants agreed that the lack of rules and regulations clarifying the rights and obligations was one of their major obstacles. Furthermore, many
participants mentioned that there were not enough protective rules for investors and consumers.

5.5 Reflections and considerations on research findings

Although a good portion of drivers and barriers of SI processes explored in this study have somewhat been mentioned in the existing literature, there were some unique findings, which could have emerged distinctively from the Islamic, Arabic, and Saudi contexts. For instance, in the internal individual level, the significance of networking and social relations, the importance of being always in the front, i.e. having a visible role model, and the lack of maturity and education stood out. In the internal organisational level, systemising the work, and replacing the one man show, as well as the importance of being innovative, and being able to reinvent quickly according to needs, were apparent. Finally, in the external level, the fertile market, lack of choices and alternatives, the huge spending from both the government and the youth population who love well-being, not favouring labour work, and the supportive Bedouin, conservative, and religious culture, were all visible. This section provides concluding remarks and reflections on these main issues identified from the fieldwork.

5.5.1 Strategy definitions

By comparing what was found in the literature reviewed (i.e. chapter 2) and the field work (i.e. chapter 4) the following was found. Mintzberg’s 1978 idea that many
strategy definitions are available, and that most of the time they all share the theme of determining future decisions by a purposeful and mindful, set of guidelines, or in other words, a plan, is still applicable today. This research agrees with Carter et al’s. (2008) findings and confirms that Mintzberg’s argument remains valid even after 30+ years. The research also agrees with almost all arguments made by Carter et al. (2008). That is, despite strategy definitions coming from different disciplines, they all share four common characteristics. Firstly, that strategy is about the future, a plan or goals you want to achieve. It is a fact that without a goal you cannot score. Secondly, that it is about how to get to these goals, using resources allocation. Thirdly, that it is competition that makes strategy essential. Finally, that it is related to top management’s business (Carter et al., 2008). These ideas were also consistent with what was found during the research field work conducted in Saudi Arabia. For example, a majority of 76% of interviewees identified strategy as a sort of future decision made using a set of guidelines or plan. More specifically, the following results were found:

1) 65% of the respondents defined strategy as being a long term goal, and/or plan. That clearly shows an agreement generally with the first characteristic identified by Carter et al. (2008).

2) 59% of the respondents mentioned that strategy is also a way to identify how to arrive at the desired future goal or plan. That also shows that the majority of organisations in the KSA support the idea that a strategy has to respond to the how questions. Having said that, although organisations recognized the importance of knowing how to strategize, none of them demonstrated strong capabilities for doing so. For instance, none identified resources or explained its importance in their description of the strategy.
3) 12% of the respondents identified strategy as a way to compete. This could be because of many issues. For example, this might be due to the continuing lack of fierce competition within the Saudi market which was clearly identified by many interviewees. Another alternative could be because of the nature of their organisations. Given the fact that most interviewees were collected from SMEs, these organisations prefer to differentiate, rather than compete. This was also clearly highlighted by some interviewees who said that they do not stand a chance competing with big businesses as everything is in their favour.

4) 100% of the respondents agreed that strategy is related to top management. Although this was not something they explicitly mentioned during their description of strategy, many of their responses implicitly indicated this.

5.5.2 Strategy formulation and implementation

The literature reviewed have discussed different dichotomies of the strategic management field (see chapter 2 for more details). An interesting aspect was the famous debate of strategy formulation/implementation relations. Although the traditional school used to differentiate between the two terms and consider them as two separate phases, the more contemporary school disagrees with that. It was clear that more contemporary process scholars such as Mintzberg, and later Pettigrew, adopted the view of the continuous interplay between the two phases (Sykianakis, 2012). Having said that, the literature reviewed indicated that the dominant view in the field is one that still very much differentiates between strategy formulation and implementation (Van der Maas, 2008). This was expected as the majority of the literature is still influenced heavily by the classic content school. An interesting
finding was that most cases analysed in this research agree with this idea as well: 85% of the respondents claimed that, in their case, strategy formulation and implementation were two separate phases.

5.5.3 Culture or socio-cultural

Major issues identified within this theme include: low level of maturity and education, young population, supportive culture, conservative and religious (e.g. lower work load during Ramadan, spiritual belief, gender issue, among others).

The main findings from the cases explored, supported the argument in the literature that social and cultural aspects do have an influence on the strategy implementation processes (Adler et al., 1992; Pelham and Wilson, 1995; Noble, 1999; Huy, 2011). However, the interesting differences were in the details of these socio-cultural aspects. For example, there was a clear issue with people (i.e. within the individual level) maturity and education level. This might be because of the circumstance that Saudi Arabia is still considered a developing country (Abanumy, Al-Badi, & Mayhew, 2005; Chironga et al., 2012). In fact, the government is aware of that issue, which is why $373 billion was spent between 2010 and 2014 on social development and infrastructure projects to ensure the advancement of Saudi Arabia's economic development (CIA, 2015). Another example is the government increasing investments in education for instance, currently 25% of the kingdom budget is allocated for education (Lindsey, 2010). Another attribute to the relatively low maturity and education level is the nature of the country which is mostly uninhabited, sandy desert (CIA, 2015). According to the National Geographic Atlas of the World, 95% of the Saudi land is desert (National Geographic Society, 2015).
In the south of the Kingdom, the Rub Al-Khari (which means in English the Empty Quarter), is actually considered the largest sand desert in the world (Saudi Arabia Royal Embassy, 2015). This issue of low maturity and education levels had an effect on almost all other problems identified in the study across the three different levels (i.e. individual, organisational, and external). For example, on the individual level, it had an impact on the lack of competencies, quality and experience (for more details see section 4.4). In addition, it made the need for the presence of a role model, always in the front, to follow, crucial (more details in section 4.4). On an organisational level, it had an impact on the lack of a robust process and arrangement system (see section 4.3). Also, it affected the preference of business owners to depend on systems, rather than people; these were systems in which, most of the time, there was a lack of confidence. Finally, on the external level, the issue that had clearly a direct effect and was the biggest problem was systems, rules, and regulations (section 4.2.6), which were underdeveloped, not well thought-out, subjective, not comprehensive and uncoordinated.

Another issue or effect that arose as a result of the context was the widespread of Bedouin culture in which support and ardour were examples of consequences which were frequently mentioned by participants. This Bedouin culture also had an effect on making the Sharia holy and sacred. This, consequently, caused a more conservative view on the way religion was followed. That is why many participants said that religion had an effect on the SI process in terms of belief, partnerships preferences, and even rules and regulations. Like for example, reducing the load works for all public and private organisations during the entire holy month of Ramadan to leave time for worshiping Allah. Another example is the prevalent restraint in gender mixing together.
5.5.4 Relations between politics and legal, rules, and regulations

Another outstanding finding that was different to the literature, is the relation politics had with legal rules and regulations. Most literature that observes the effect of external factors on the process of strategy implementation distinguishes between political factors and legal rules and regulations. An example is Morris and Hough (1987) which distinguished between Politics and Legal problems (Morris and Hough, 1987). The main influence behind this belief is based on the PESTEL analysis, which was initially introduced by the Harvard professor Francis Aguilar in his 1967 book ‘Scanning the Business Environment’ (Aguilar, 1967; Richardson, 2006). However, it has been argued that the legal category was only introduced in 1980s (Yüksel, 2012), and that some researchers consider it a duplicate for the political category (Richardson, 2006).

The field work showed that almost all participants, initially, did not understand the difference between issues that could be related to the political and legal category (see section 4.2.1). Given the point that the KSA is an absolute monarchy, royal decree in KSA forms the basis for the country legislation (Saudi Arabia Royal Embassy, 2015). That is, in the KSA, there are no political parties or national elections, and it is the king who also takes the role of the prime minister. As a result, legal rules, and regulations are mostly consequences of political stances. That is, actually, in line with the Machiavellian strategic perspective which states that policy follows power (Carter et al., 2008).

Having said that, the field work indicated a surprising distinction between the two categories (i.e. the political and legal). As the majority of participants considered the
political category as having overall positive influences, on the SI process. Whereas, the legal category was considered having an overall negative influence on the SI process. Hence, it was clear that there was a gap between these two categories. The main findings indicate that, although the majority of the initial political aims, intention, and even orders, had positive and supportive purposes, their execution and consequences were not up to the expectation. As a result, the affiliate legal rules and regulations had an overall negative influence on the SI process. This point was reflected on all levels (i.e. at the external, internal organisational and internal individual levels). That is, in all these levels, the person with authority is theoretically the one that introduces rules and regulations, and most of the time, does so with good intention. It is then in the execution where things start to go wrong on all three levels. So, it might be concluded that, although KSA might theoretically follow the Machiavellian perspective that policy follows power, practically there is clearly a gap during execution.

Another important guide for future research exploring a similar context, i.e. a kingdom or a monarchy, is to make sure to enquire about the system or the rules themselves, separately from the person who introduced it/them. It is very much likely that this will affect participants’ comfort and encourage them to talk more openly because there is a high chance that the person introducing that rule would be the same person who has the highest authority (see section 4.2.1).

5.5.5 Short-term vs. long term focus

As mentioned before, there is still no universally accepted definition for strategy and strategy implementation (Wernham, 1985; Noble, 1999; Yang et al., 2009).
However, most of the time, definitions share the theme of determining future decisions by a purposeful and mindful set of guidelines or in other words, a plan (Mintzberg, 1978). More recently, Carter et al. (2008) also argued that the first characteristic shared in almost all strategy definition is that it is about the future. This idea is actually in line with the classic school of thought described in detail in chapter 2 section 2.3.2. This argument from the literature is also in line with the findings of this study as the majority of the participants defined strategy as a future endeavour (76% of the participants) and/or describing it precisely as a long term future plan (65% of the participants).

Having said that, the field work revealed that, although theoretically or verbally most participants reflected their understanding of strategy as a long term future form of planning, in reality or practically, this was completely the opposite. This might be in line with the requirements of today’s more dynamic and complex world which requires agility and frequent changes; this is also in line with the more contemporary school of thought (i.e. the emergent school, for more details see section 2.3.2). As mentioned in Chapter 1, previously long and stable periods of competitive advantages have been replaced with shorter and more frequently interrupted ones (D’Aveni, 1994; Volberda, 1996; Gadiesh and Gilbert, 2001). Consequently, there has been an increase in pressure, interests, concerns, and investments toward more frequent strategy changes (Collins and Porras, 1996; Baden-Fuller and Volberda, 1997; Thomas, 2002). Hence, organisations in general were forced to shorten their previously long-term strategic plan and vision.

This might be the case for all organisations in general. However, the truth is that SMEs are more specifically forced to have an even shorter term vision as they face more uncertainties and competition. This is what was actually apparent from the
fieldwork. Moreover, other issues, like lack of maturity and education, and lack of clear rules and regulations, forced the time span to be even shorter. For instance, the lack of maturity and education and its consequences of lacking competencies, quality, experience, robust process, and arrangement systems, as well as underdeveloped, not well thought-out, subjective, not comprehensive, and uncoordinated systems, rules, regulations, and uneducated decisions (see section 5.5.3), all cause a shift in the focus of the vision to be more short term, rather than long term. This is also correct regarding the lack of clear rules and regulations as Ba Ri for example said: ‘Rules and regulations are not comprehensive, for example, they do not cover my business, they are not clear, and not easy to find and understand. That is why I just do what I have to do and I only know that it is wrong or not allowed when chased, by people coming to me’. Another example is HQ (service sector) who stated: ‘our business is not actually categorized or listed in the country system’. All these issues might have forced the focus of the organisation to be more short term and reactive instead of being long term and proactive.

5.5.6 Networking and social relations

Another important issue, that was raised frequently, and that could be considered a consequence of the absence of a robust, comprehensive and transparent system, rules and regulations, is networking and social relations (see section 4.4 for more details). The existing literature might have shown that the absence of such a system or its weakness could cause corruption, and bribery among others unhealthy signs (Wang, 2014; Le et al., 2014); however, the interesting part in this study arising from the lack of such system, was the vitality of networking and social relations and their
effect on the entire SI process. As it was a fertile market (see section 4.2.5), existing in a very healthy economic situation (section 4.2.2), there was a clear need for businesses to exist. This element, along with the lack of clear, transparent, and comprehensive systems, has caused the importance of developing networks and social relations in order to make benefits, or in other words, exchange benefits. As a result, networks and social relations became essential for the entire strategy implementation process. It was important to initiate the process or secure its start. It was also significant for making the process faster, solving difficulties, issues, and challenges and for getting more opportunities. Finally, it was vital to make sure that the process was ended successfully, and that the outcome or benefits are fully acquired (for more details see the last issue in section 4.4). This is also in line with the recent argument that status and social networks, along with prior relationships, are considered the forgotten influencing factors or drivers for firm processes (Vermeulen, 2013).

5.5.7 Lack of a unified system, integration and cooperation

Another important issue that almost all participants raised was the lack of a unified system which is integrated and cooperative and involves different stakeholders. The lack of a unified system, integrated and cooperated, has caused numerous contradictions and conflicts which was reflected equally across the three different levels, i.e. on the external, organisational, and individual levels. In the external level, almost none of the respondents reflected satisfaction with the system, and the majority agreed that it is, in fact, the external issue that most negatively affected the overall SI process (see section 4.2.6). It was apparent that the system was not
comprehensive enough, and lacked coordination with, and the involvement of, concerned stakeholders. For example, on an external level, the lack of integration has caused many contradictions between different public rules and regulations (see section 4.2.6). This is what exhausted businesses (as an undersecretary of the Minister described (see section 4.2.6)). The system was underdeveloped, not well thought-out, lacked transparent rules, roles, and obligations. Also, the system had inequality in information dissemination, and lacked protective rules for different users (for more details consult section 4.2.6). This consequently has caused subjectivity and cumbersome bureaucratic and long public processes (more details in section 4.2.6).

Also, on an external level, a matter that could be categorized under this issue is the lack of involvement or cooperation with important stakeholders. For instance, many participants have emphasized that the Public Private Business Partnership (PPBP) and cooperation is still weak in the KSA. For example, Om Sh (service sector) said:

‘Unfortunately, Public, Private Business Partnership (PPBP) is still weak in KSA and need to be enhanced to benefit private organisations processes in general and SMEs more precisely.’

Consequently, public organisations need to be closer and more transparent to support SMEs SI processes.

This un-unified system which lacks integration and cooperation in the country was also reflected in organisations generally, and in SMEs specifically. As noted by an undersecretary of a Ministry who said:
‘In both governmental organisations and local organisations, and especially in SMEs, there is an absence of a unified system. What is available is centralization which kills. This is also what makes lots of commercial business and/or transactions depending on a one man show’.

In other words, there is a lack of a unified and integrated system that an organisation could depend on, instead of depending on a specific person. Another example is the lack of integration, which was highlighted by many participants and which has caused conflicts of interests, and has sometimes, turned successful cases into failed ones (see section 4.3 for more information).

Finally, this issue also had its reflections on the individual level. It has increased the dependence on always having a visible role model in the front to make up for the absence of the strong system. It has also raised the issue of having centralized decisions imposed and not well thought through (for more details check section 4.4). Moreover, the absence of such a system enhanced the importance and the very high dependency available in the country for networking and social relations (section 5.5.6). Furthermore, it had an effect on the individual’s tendency to act passively as firefighters and reactors, rather than being pro-actors and active (for more details consult section 4.4).

Many participants reflected that the lack of a unified system, integration and cooperation, was in fact a major problem, causing many negative consequences, and having undesirable effects on the whole process of strategy implementation. It had an effect on starting or initiating the process, as many respondents said that when we wanted to start a process, we did not know where to begin (see examples in section 4.2.6). Likewise, it had an effect during the process in terms of arrangement and
transparency, which affected quality control and information dissemination (see for example section 4.2.6, and 4.3). Finally, it also had an effect on the outcome of the process as just mentioned, for example, by participants who highlighted that this issue specifically had sometimes turned successful case into failures (see section 4.3).

5.6 Summary

This chapter summarized the main findings of this research. First, based on the findings of the empirical works, the final model was presented. Second, major factors that influence, either positively (i.e. drivers), or negatively (i.e. barriers), the strategy implementation processes, were discussed in relation to the model’s three distinguishable levels (i.e. internal individual, internal organisational, and external level). Third, the main reflections and considerations of the research were presented. In that section, seven major issues were identified. The first subsection presented issues related to strategy definitions. The second discussed the strategy formulation and implementation dichotomy. The third debated culture and sociocultural matters. The fourth looked at issues arising from the relations between politics and legal, rules and regulations. The fifth section explored issues related to being, more short-term in focus, rather than long term. The sixth sector discussed issues that arose because of networking and social relations. Finally, the seventh subsection discussed all the issues arising as a result of the lack of a unified system, integration, and cooperation. The next chapter, chapter six, presents the conclusion of this research.
Chapter 6: Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

After introducing the reader to the research, reviewing relevant literature, presenting the research methodology adopted, providing a detailed description and analysis of the data collected, and summarizing and discussing the research findings, this chapter will report the conclusions. This will be done by first reviewing the whole research process taken. Then the research, theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions are listed. Finally, the research limitations are discussed, and recommendations for future research are provided.

6.2 Research process review

In today’s dynamic world, being capable of developing a strategic plan to maintain or increase an organisation’s competency is important. However, this could not be achieved if an organisation is unable to understand the entire SI process and what could affect it positively or negatively. Despite the increasing amount of research stressing the cruciality of the topic, the area of research is still considered complicated, underdeveloped, with complications and influences coming from a wide variety of disciplines.

This research aimed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the SI process, to develop a more holistic framework and to use the framework to explore the process of strategy implementation in an under-researched context (i.e. Saudi
SMEs). In order to achieve this aim, the research focused on answering the following questions:

- What are the factors (including drivers and barriers) that influence strategy implementation processes?
- How do decision makers in Saudi SMEs perceive the factors that influence the process of strategy implementation?
- To what extent can a holistic framework help in understanding the strategy implementation process in Saudi SMEs?

In chapter one, the introduction, the research background and significance were identified. Then the research motivations and gaps were acknowledged. The fragmented nature of research in the area was identified, with an emphasis being placed on the importance of a holistic understanding. The majority of the existing research studies were conducted in large organisations and in a western context. A clear need to explore different types of organisations and in a new, unexplored context was then highlighted. Following that, an overview of the research context (i.e. the KSA) was presented. This included a background to the KSA, touching on a number of characteristics (e.g. history, political, economic, social, technological, environmental, rules and regulations), and outlining some of the recent initiatives introduced that focus on and support SMEs. Following that, a specific section highlighted the importance of focusing on SMEs. Then the research aims, objectives, and questions were listed.

Chapter two, literature review, consisted of a detailed literature review. It started with an overview of the historical development, debates, and major works in the field. After that, different approaches towards understanding SI were presented. This
included definitions of terms and the identification of the two major approaches adopted by different studies in the literature to understand and evaluate the strategy implementation process. These were the traditional content and the more contemporary process view. Then a critical review of different conceptual frameworks was presented. Different frameworks were revisited to propose a primitive framework that could assist in exploring the factors that could affect the SI process. A lack of a holistic framework was then identified. As a result, the researcher developed a primitive framework that was supportive in collecting the data and analysing it. This framework was synthesized from previous literature reviewed, with specific focus on the work of Pettigrew, a prominent author from the more contemporary process school. The framework was more holistic, covering the whole process of SI, including initiation, process, and outcome, and exploring factors that affect this process on three distinguished levels. These were individual, organisational, and external levels (see section 2.6). This was conducted to enhance the awareness of the topic and develop a holistic primitive framework that could be used to explore the influencing factors for strategy implementation processes of SMEs in the context of the KSA.

Chapter three, research methodology, comprised of four main parts. The first part presents a brief overview of the philosophical paradigms within the field of strategy implementation. Then several research approaches, methods, and different types of data collection were summarized. The second part provided a brief description of the methodology selected for this study, along with justifications for this choice. It provided justifications for the selection of an interpretative philosophical paradigm, above positivist and critical philosophical paradigms. It then justified the selection of a qualitative approach, instead of a quantitative one. It also clarified the reasons for
picking case studies instead of other alternative qualitative methods. At the end, the motives behind the data collected, that is semi structure interviews, documents and field notes, were discussed. The third part provided a more detailed description of the different type of data collected. Finally, the last part described the sequence and the details of how the data were analysed.

Chapter four, data collection and analysis, provided a detailed description and analysis for the data collected. Influenced by the literature reviewed and the issues that evolved during the pilot study, this research used the previously identified conceptual lens to explore and organize the influencing factors of strategy implementation process in Saudi SMEs. The findings were organized into three main categories. These categories are external, internal organisational and internal individual issues.

Chapter five, research findings and discussions, provided a discussion of the main findings from the research. First, the final modified framework was presented, having been validated in the Saudi context. It also showed the main factors that influence the strategy implementation process in Saudi SMEs, covering the whole SI process (i.e. initiation, process, and outcome) under three distinguished categories. These categories are external, internal organisational, and internal individual. After that, the main drivers and barriers that do have influences on SI processes were identified and described under the three categories (i.e. external, internal organisational and internal individual). Finally, further reflections and considerations on the research findings were discussed.

The following sections will now highlight the main contributions of this research.
6.3 Research contributions

This research suggests the following theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions as follows.

6.3.1 Theoretical contributions

In this section, the important theoretical contributions that this research added to the strategy implementation literature are presented.

The first theoretical contribution supplements the current strategy implementation literature by presenting a more comprehensive record of the factors, including drivers and barriers, that influence the process of strategy implementation at different stages (i.e. from initiation to achieving the outcomes), at three distinguished levels (i.e. external, organisational, and individual levels), and within new contexts (i.e. non-Western developing countries). While current literature might have presented some discussions for drivers and barriers of the SI process, it is still lacking a comprehensive list that covers the whole process (i.e. from initiation to achieving outcomes) and addresses the three different levels (i.e. external, organisational, and individual). That is why Mazzola and Kellermanns (2010) recently clearly suggested that future SI research should indicate explicitly at which level their discussion of SI is located.

The second contribution is the larger classification suggested to include all the SI process drivers and barriers or what King and Horrocks (2010) call ‘overarching themes’. Very few studies (Heide et al., 2002; Van der Maas, 2008) provided
specific categorization under which the influencing factors for the SI processes could be organized. These classifications make it easier to distinguish the wide-ranging areas that influence any SI process in general, for organisations of different sizes, and in different contexts.

The third contribution is that this new classification is also more comprehensive, and therefore, can cover any type of factor. It does this by dividing the influencing factors of SI processes into three main categories (i.e. external, organisational, and individual). It was argued that current categories in the literature are still not comprehensive. For example, a recent case study discards a large amount of factors that do influence the SI process, justifying the decision on the basis of not being able to categorize them (Heide et al., 2002).

The fourth contribution is specifically shedding light on the individual dynamics of strategy implementation, as well as the organisational, and external environment perspectives. In so doing, the research adds to the SI process literature, the individual level (as an epistemological tool) in order to consider the dynamic nature of SMEs and the impact that non-controllable events place on their daily routines (on ontological ground). This has rarely been considered before, although it has received more support recently, especially for small and medium organisations where the individual level plays a more important role (Hart, 1992).

The fifth contribution lies in providing additional support to the new understanding of the forces that influence SI processes, which was initiated by Pettigrew. The majority of previous studies found in the literature explored the factors that obstruct the SI process, or in other words, the barriers for the SI process (Alexander, 1985; Al-Ghamdi, 1998). This was in line with Pettigrew’s arguments that previous studies
view the factors that influence the SI process just as barriers. For instance, he argued that previous studies view context only as a constraining force (i.e. barriers), whereas he proved that context could also be conceptualized as an enabling force (Pettigrew, 1987). This research framework has explored both the enablers, as well as the barriers, that influence the SI process under all different categories.

The sixth contribution of the research is that it explored SMEs, which differs from mainstream research in the field, and is considered as a type of organisation that is still relatively unexplored. That is why Mazzola and Kellermanns (2010) recommended looking into the different types of organisation, such as SMEs, as this provides an interesting avenue for future research to explore similarities and differences. This particular focus has contributed to the work of process scholars by identifying the different strategic orientations required for SMEs (i.e. flexibility, speed and including individual influences).

The seventh contribution is that it advised a new conceptual framework (figure 8) that could be utilized to explore and comprehend the key influencing factors (both barriers and drivers) that could affect the entire SI process, from initiation to outcome.

The final contribution of this research is that it provides a holistic model which holds the key influencing factors (both barriers and drivers) that influence the SI process of SMEs in a relatively under researched context (i.e. KSA). Consequently, the model assists in increasing understanding of what actually affects these processes, and decreases the current misunderstanding available. The key features of that model are that first, it has not just listed the different drivers and barriers for the SI process, but also demonstrated the important interdependence between those influencing
factors. The research consequently proved that those factors (i.e. barriers and drivers) that do influence the SI process are basically interrelated. The second feature is that it recognized new influencing factors (both barriers and drivers) that previous studies failed to identify. For example, the socio-cultural factors, such as having a less mature and less educated community, less favourable attitudes towards manual labour and craft activities, being conservative and religious, and the Bedouin culture of support and ardour. Another important example is the different understanding of the relationship politics had with legal rules and regulations. Moreover, the focus of different organisations on the short-term and being reactive, rather than focusing on the long term and being proactive. Furthermore, the lack of a unified and integrated system which has caused a dependence on subjectivity and cumbersome bureaucratic and lengthy public processes. Finally, which might also be a consequence of the absence of a robust, comprehensive and transparent system, rules and regulations, is networking and social relations and other unhealthy practices such as corruption and bribery.

6.3.2 Methodological contributions

At the methodological level, evidence from multiple cases, in different Saudi industries, has been brought to reflect this developing context, rather than the dominant Western views (Okumus, 2003; Van der Maas, 2008). This section identifies the methodological contributions of this research.

This research provides methodological recommendations that could help researchers in developing countries or in MENA region in general, and GCC region and KSA
more particularly i.e. in contexts with similar conditions, such as monarchical countries. For instance, the recommendations of separating the questions related to politics and the rules and regulations (see chapter 4 and 5 for more details). In other words, to make sure that issues about the system, process or the rules itself, are separated from the person who introduce them, as it is very likely that this will affect participants’ comfort and encourage them to talk more openly because there is a high probability that the person introducing that rule would be the same person who has the highest authority.

Moreover, this research presents highly rigorous case study research. In his detailed literature review, Okumus (1999) pointed to the very limited explanations given about previous research methods and methodology. More recently, Mazzola and Kellermanns (2010) also argued, after reviewing the literature in the most widely used databases for the last 25 years, that the majority of the research did not explain in detail the research methods and methodology adopted. This relatively poor discussion of methods and methodology adopted in previous research, provided an incentive for this research to be more detailed and rigorous. In other words, the whole process and procedures adopted for the research, including the data collection and analysis, were all explained in detail.

Lastly, this research is different to previous works in the strategic management field, in terms of the undertaken methods and methodology adopted and the research context explored. To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, this work is one of the preliminary efforts in the field to utilize a multi-case study approach, besides thematic analysis, to explore factors (both barriers and drivers), that could influence SMEs SI processes, in different industries in the KSA.
6.3.3 Practical contributions

This research also makes some practical contributions for policy makers, SMEs owners, decision makers and even researchers in the same area.

Practical contributions for policy makers, SMEs owners and decision makers:

For instance, the final framework provides a holistic model that contains a comprehensive main categorization that could be used to classify any SI process influencing factor. For instance, it covers all the possible contexts that a SI process could be surrounded and influenced by (that is external, organisational, and individual). The model is also not a static or rigid model, as the general classification provides some sorts of flexibility that allow users to utilise it, and complement it, according to their own interpretations, context and process level among others. Finally, it provides practitioners with a detailed list of different potential influencing factors (both barriers and drivers) that could affect the process thereby raising the practitioners awareness of these factors.

As a result, the final model (see figure 11, section 5.2) can be used by SME owners and policy makers as a map that illustrates, and hence makes them aware, of the main influencing factors of the SI processes. It will provide them with a better understanding for the entire process from initiation to outcomes. It will be supportive for both SME owners and policy makers in understanding what facilitates the development and initiation of strategies and what delays them. It will also be useful for those responsible or who do care specifically about implementation to be aware
of what challenges to expect and to be aware of the reasons behind SMEs SI process outcomes.

*Practical contributions for researchers in the area:*

Moreover, it will benefit future researchers as well, as it will support the current scattered literature that lacks a proper base to build upon. As it was argued in the literature that researchers focusing on the area will easily identify the lack of a cohesive body that can be built on (Noble, 1999; Carter *et al.*, 2008) (refer back to chapter 1 and 2 for more details). Hence, this research could be considered as a step forward toward a better understanding of SI processes and toward a stronger body of literature that could be relied on.

Additionally, the research contributes to the literature as the majority of work in the area is conceptually built and not empirically tested. This kept the strategy implementation process in a black box, limiting their empirical use by researchers, limiting the knowledge of strategy implementation processes and nature, and contributing toward the high failure rate that presently exists in many organisations (as mentioned previously in chapter 1 and 2). This research empirically validated the developed conceptual framework within the context of a developing under researched context (i.e. the KSA). In other words, this thesis has contributed toward the limited empirical studies (such as James, 1994; Pettigrew, 1992; Pettigrew *et al.*, 1992) available in the field, which also lends support to the idea that the emergent school would be more appropriate than the planning school, as the process implementation is a more interactive and incremental activity.

Furthermore, although multi-cases were explored and analysed in this study, they were all within a specific context (i.e. the KSA) which might cause limitations in
terms of generalizing the research results. Nevertheless, the findings of this study will definitely be useful for organisations in other countries that operate in similar contexts, such as GCC countries, for example, or those who operate in comparable conditions, e.g. monarchy-led developing countries.

Finally, the researcher at the end of every case asked the interviewee whether or not they would like to be presented with an executive summary of the findings of this research. All the participants showed a great interest to have a copy of the findings, attributing their interest to their belief that it will be able to provide them with a stronger understanding for the SI process and what factors influence it in a more comprehensive manner.

Having discussed the contributions of this research, the work also faced some limitations and difficulties. Those are discussed in the following section.

6.4 Research limitations

The major challenges, difficulties, and limitations faced by the researcher are discussed in this section.

The first limitation that faced the researcher is a consequence of the strategy implementation research area being a complex research field with numerous contributions coming from a wide variety of disciplines (Noble, 1999; Carter et al., 2008). This made the research more challenging as the researcher was required to make an extra effort to cover any additional related areas.

Other limitations were related to data collection and analysis. For instance, as mentioned before, there were many issues related to accessibility. For instance, the
first two organisations that agreed to take part in the study changed their mind after the researcher arrived in KSA. The researcher was then forced to deal with this last minute issue through relations and relationships (see section 3.7.1 for more details).

A counter limitation to that particular issue might have been the point that the researcher was male, which gave an extra advantage to the research methodology at the level of data collection by facilitating access and increasing the amount of details conveyed. This is knowing that the research context (i.e. the KSA) is considered relatively conservative, religious, and somehow more gender sensitive.

In addition, as most of the interviews were specifically either with the SME owner or the general manager, getting the right contact details of such participants was, in itself, challenging. Further, convincing these participants of the benefit of taking part in the study required additional effort, although this did reduce gradually. Moreover, arranging a specific time to sit with those participants and complete the whole work in one interview was also a challenge. As, those categories of participants are usually the most overworked in this type of organisations. That is why actually, in many cases, the researchers had to terminate the interview and arrange a new date and time. In one case, the researchers required more than six meetings to finalize just one interview. Most of the time the researcher was required to work through his network of relatives and social relations to overcome these issues and facilitate those meetings. Furthermore, challenges were faced specifically in arranging the two interviews with senior members in the government who have established some small businesses themselves (i.e. the deputy minister and the senior strategy advisor, and representative of a Saudi municipality); this was due to security reasons, busy schedules, and privacy concerns. It is only through the connections with relatives and friends that these barriers were overcome (see section 3.7.2 for more details).
Moreover, some interviewees preferred to have the interview and speak in the Arabic language. This required extra time, which was already limited and extra effort from the researcher. As it was necessary to translate the open ended questions of the interview from English to Arabic, note the responses and re-translate it to English. Sometimes, certain Arabic expressions were used by the interviewee, which took a good amount of research to ensure it was correctly translated into English. The researcher spent a good amount of time to engage with the data collected by making sure he re-listened to the thirty two cases that were recorded, translate them, describe the codes and interpret them himself.

One more challenge that faced the researcher was in dealing with the large amount of data collected, as it was a qualitative research, and many interviews were over three hours long (see chapter three for more details). This consequently caused the analysis process to be lengthy. In the beginning, over 200 codes were initially identified, which required revisions and refinements throughout the analysis process, until the researcher was able to produce at the end 68 codes (see Appendix 5). Then, interpretive coding was applied, followed by deriving key overarching themes and categorisation into a much higher level and more general themes (see chapter 3 for more details).

In addition, it was hard to include all semi-structured interview findings in this work because of the space and time limitations. That is why the researcher has tried to include the most important and relevant information that could complete the research aims, objectives, and provide satisfactory responses to the research questions. Other findings will hopefully follow in the researcher’s upcoming works.
Furthermore, all the participants in this study were men. Hence, the representation and input toward the internal individual level were mainly from men. It would be interesting to investigate in further studies whether involving women would add further attributes to the influencing factors. Consequently, exploring whether the individual factors category should be further divided into men and women.

Finally, all the cases were conducted in the context of the KSA which might make generalization of the findings more questionable. However, there is a good probability that these findings will be relevant, in similar context, such as the GCC region where most countries have more similarities than differences. The findings might also be applicable in other Arabic countries in the Middle East, particularly those who do have a monarchy type of government such as Morocco, and Jordan among others. Also, the studies provide a very good overview of the influencing factors, both barriers and drivers, to SI processes that could support SMEs (i.e. same type of organisation) in particular and maybe some larger organisation in many different countries. As was mentioned before, an increasing amount of large organisations are creating partnerships nowadays with SMEs in order to gain competitive advantage in speed and flexibility and sometimes local knowledge (see section 1.2.4 for more details). That is in addition to the benefit that this study can provide to policy makers and practitioners’ concerns with SI processes.

6.5 Future research opportunities

The recognition of these previous limitations opens up numerous opportunities for future research. First, although the current research assisted in providing a more
holistic and comprehensive understanding of the influencing factors (both barriers and drivers) for SI processes in SMEs, it did not consider if these factors change or not over time. Also, if they do change it would be useful to investigate how they fluctuate and what affects this variation.

Second, it would be beneficial for future research to adopt the proposed conceptual model and re-test it empirically, but on a much wider basis, for example by using questionnaires, and hence being able to reach a much larger sample size to confirm the findings.

Third, as the conceptual framework was built solely from multiple cases investigated in the KSA, it would be interesting to explore different contexts. For instance, it would be really motivating, to check all other GCC countries, which are anticipated to have very high similarities, and look for the differences and resemblances. Also, it would be interesting to check other Middle Eastern countries, or even in the wider MENA region, with both similar type of government (i.e. Monarchy like Morroco and Jordan) and different ones, and compare and contrast the findings. Moreover, a good suggestion to move forward would be to check the developing countries and investigate how they differ from other already developed economies or Western countries in a wider sense.

Fourth, this study focused on SMEs, it would be stimulating to check how other types of organisations, such as much larger organisations, differ. Also, almost all cases explored were with private organisations and it would be interesting to investigate how public or NGOs vary. All this suggested research will be beneficial in developing a much stronger theory.
One more beneficial future work could be to study in more details what effect does current uprising movements in the MENA region, or what is called the Arab spring, have on the process of strategy implementation and how it affects it in the KSA and other GCC and Middle Easter countries.

Finally, this study revealed an increasing use of social media, especially in the large and still growing youth community in the KSA. In addition, it was also found that the effect and impact social media is having in the country is significantly growing. Hence, a remarkable expansion of this study would be to further investigate this area in much more detail.

6.6 Summary

This chapter concluded this research. It started by revisiting the whole research process by describing briefly each chapter’s content, followed process, and key results. After that, the main theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions of the thesis were illustrated. Then the significant research limitations were highlighted. Finally, future research opportunities and interesting routes were offered.
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Appendix 1 Outline for the pilot study

Objectives:

1) How do my research questions fit to the context of Saudi Arabia and the company chosen?

2) Explore at different level (Top MGT, Middle, and Low) the following:
   a. How do they define Strategy Implementation?
   b. What do they understand by it?
   c. Who do they believe does it in the organisation?
   d. How do they define success, and failure?
   e. What are the obstacles in their views that impede strategy implementation?
   f. What are the Key Success Factors (KSF) that could influence success in strategy implementation?

3) Have a look at any published work on strategy implementation in the Middle East and/or in Islamic countries.

Plan in mind:

1) Conduct semi structured interview with employee on different level in the organisation exploring the main questions (from a to f).
2) Try to find and read some local research in the area
3) Identify how my research would fit to the context chosen
## Appendix 2 Semi structure interview guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Started:</th>
<th>Ended:</th>
<th>Location:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Demographics

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of organisation:</td>
<td>(Public – Private ... etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of organisation:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of experience generally:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of experience in this specific position in that department:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-mail:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission for recording:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**General information**

- Brief explanation of the nature of work?
- (How do you run your business)

**Understanding interviewee views on different terms**

- Strategy (initiative/ decision)
- Dichotomies:
  - Strategy Formulation Vs Implementation
  - Strategy Implementation/ execution
  - Success Vs Failure

**Where?/ Why? (Context)**

- Describe the context of the case
  1. External factors (PESTEL)
  2. Internal factors
  1.2.1 Organisational level (system, structure, culture, leadership, process, arrangement ...)
  1.2.2 Individual level
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What? (Content)</th>
<th>Background information about the strategic initiative case (Objectives, targets, resources, and timespan)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What not? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roles taken during the whole process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>To what extent were goals/targets achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you consider it a success or failure? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In your opinion how did success/failure happen? (giving example)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influencing factors</td>
<td>Identify factors that drive successful implementation in your case?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify factors that hinder successful implementation in your case?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3 Participant Information Sheet

University of Manchester
Faculty of Humanities
Manchester Business School
Ethical Approval
Participant Information Sheet

You have just been invited to take part in a PhD research study about strategic management, exploring factors that could influence strategy implementation performance. Before you decide it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

What is the title of the research?
Exploring Factors that Influence Business Strategy Implementation: The case of KSA

Who will conduct the research?
Moataz Abiliou, Manchester Business School, the University of Manchester

What is the aim of the research?
The aim of this research is to explore the influencing factors (drivers and/or barriers) for SMEs' business strategy implementation performance in the context of KSA from three different levels (i.e., Top management, Middle Management, and Non-Management). The research will mainly explore factors that may influence the level of success in business strategy implementation. Also, the research will try to come up with new insights and understandings for strategy implementation from the yet limited documented context of KSA. In addition, it will provide employees with implementation responsibilities with some practical guides for action by providing a comprehensive set of factors, which could be used to guide their implementation actions.

Why have I been chosen?
You have been nominated for that specific research for a variety of reasons. The main reasons are that you have experienced strategic management and/or implementation in KSA and hence we believe that you will be able to provide authentic and valuable information for the research. Also, the size of your organisation is appropriate for the research.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?
The discussion will be mainly about a recent practical experience during a strategic initiative decision and your personal thoughts on it.

What happens to the data collected?
The data will be stored securely with password access by the researcher only. It will then be anonymised (if requested), analysed, and then insights and conclusions will be drawn about strategic management practices.

How is confidentiality maintained?

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The data will be kept in the researcher personal and secured computer, that is not to be used by public. The interview notes and tapes will be destroyed at the end of the research.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. Having said that, you will still be free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without detriment yourself.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?

N.A

What is the duration of the research?

The duration of the field research will be around three months. Each interview will approximately last for 60 to 90 minutes.

Where will the research be conducted?

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

Yes

What benefit might this research be to me or other subjects of the research?

An executive summary of the main findings and results will be sent to you upon completion of the project for your own benefit.

Contact for further information

Moataz Alhilou

e-mail: moataz.alhilou@postgrad.mbs.ac.uk

Mobile UK: +44 (0) 7865966451

Mobile KSA: +966 (0) 504316353

What if something goes wrong?

If a participant wants to make a formal complaint about the conduct of the research they should contact the Head of the Research Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL.
Appendix 4 Participant Consent Form

University of Manchester
Faculty of Humanities
Manchester Business School
Ethical Approval
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate in this study, please complete and sign the consent form below.

I confirm that I have read the attached participant information sheet and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions, and had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to any treatment/service.

I agree to take part in the above research project.

Name of participant  
Signature  
Date

Name of person taking consent  
Signature  
Date
## Appendix 5 Final 3 coding levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Factors</th>
<th>Internal Factors</th>
<th>Organizational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government support for Saudi businesses</td>
<td>Controlling system</td>
<td>Systemizing work, replacing Iman show or centralization (bureaucracy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good international relations</td>
<td>Not according to customer needs</td>
<td>Not according to customer needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi MKT is open</td>
<td>Ensuring basic employee needs (making him happy to work)</td>
<td>Ensuring basic employee needs (making him happy to work)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current situation in the ME (Arab Spring)</td>
<td>Innovation, agile, and able to reinvent themselves according to needs</td>
<td>Innovation, agile, and able to reinvent themselves according to needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties of importing</td>
<td>Manpower’s competencies (Lack of leadership, Technical resources...)</td>
<td>Manpower’s competencies (Lack of leadership, Technical resources...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance (liquidity insurance)</td>
<td>Pro-actions (planners) instead of being reactors</td>
<td>Pro-actions (planners) instead of being reactors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security and stability</td>
<td>Start early in the morning</td>
<td>Start early in the morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huge governmental spending (consuming state)</td>
<td>Focus and commitment</td>
<td>Focus and commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income MKT</td>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>Innovative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investors prefer to invest in international Vs. local production</td>
<td>Agile and not according to demands</td>
<td>Agile and not according to demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchasing power</td>
<td>Selfish and personal interest</td>
<td>Selfish and personal interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No taxes</td>
<td>Quality and experience</td>
<td>Quality and experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abundance of raw materials/ suppliers</td>
<td>Relations &amp; relationship</td>
<td>Relations &amp; relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currency 3 working days differences</td>
<td>Empowerment, ownership, and employee commitment and buy-in (considering the business his own)</td>
<td>Empowerment, ownership, and employee commitment and buy-in (considering the business his own)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs exist</td>
<td>Tight managerial control &amp; support (passion, influence, commitment, visibility, determination and follow up)</td>
<td>Tight managerial control &amp; support (passion, influence, commitment, visibility, determination and follow up)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support (Bedouin culture)</td>
<td>Very high consuming culture</td>
<td>Very high consuming culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty (lots of lying)</td>
<td>Complaining culture blaming others &amp; don’t take initiative</td>
<td>Complaining culture blaming others &amp; don’t take initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty (work here and have his eyes somewhere else)</td>
<td>Orientation toward prosperity and high social status (love well-being)</td>
<td>Orientation toward prosperity and high social status (love well-being)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community do not like and/or appreciate craft work (Art, low level work, labour, tech in SMEs...)</td>
<td>Conservative culture</td>
<td>Conservative culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>More educated mature community</td>
<td>More educated mature community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad attitude (jealousy, ignorance etc...)</td>
<td>Favourism or ‘VASTA’ (can be go through rules, control &amp; automation)</td>
<td>Favourism or ‘VASTA’ (can be go through rules, control &amp; automation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability &amp; abundance of Tech needed</td>
<td>Lack of research pool</td>
<td>Lack of research pool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unavailability of statistic information and some of them are unpublished (secret)</td>
<td>Inequality, unfairness of information dissemination</td>
<td>Inequality, unfairness of information dissemination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability &amp; reliaibility of support required</td>
<td>Availability of expert, and/or certifying bodies (ISO, etc...)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fertile market</td>
<td>Lack of manpower, talent and not attractive for high skills and professionals</td>
<td>Lack of manpower, talent and not attractive for high skills and professionals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor infrastructure against environment</td>
<td>Mentors or supporters</td>
<td>Mentors or supporters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weather</td>
<td>Lack of entertainment alternatives</td>
<td>Lack of entertainment alternatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rules &amp; regulations</td>
<td>Poor coordination which led to conflicting systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment regulations and labour laws</td>
<td>Chamber of commerce</td>
<td>Chamber of commerce</td>
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<tr>
<td>Municipal</td>
<td>Projects once started can’t be withdrawn</td>
<td>Projects once started can’t be withdrawn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ease of exercising activities</td>
<td>Lack of system, clear rules and sudden changes</td>
<td>Lack of system, clear rules and sudden changes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not enough rules that protect investors and consumers</td>
<td>Customs slow</td>
<td>Customs slow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corruption bribery</td>
<td>Authority to the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice</td>
<td>Authority to the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Governmental action (transactions, modifications...)</td>
<td>Process and arrangement</td>
<td>Process and arrangement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>