



Title : Towards understanding stakeholder relationship during strategic planning: the case of an airline company

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**Towards Understanding Stakeholder Relationship during Strategic Planning:
The Case of an Airline Company**

**A thesis submitted to the University of Bedfordshire in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**By
Mohamed Al Katheeri**

October 2016

Author's Declaration

I, Mohamed Al Khateeri, declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research.


Towards Understanding Stakeholder Relationship during Strategic Planning: The Case of an Airline Company

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October 2016

Towards Understanding Stakeholder Relationship during Strategic Planning: The Case of an Airline Company

Mohamed Al Khateeri

Abstract

This research investigates the relationship among the stakeholders during the strategic planning process in an airline company. The concept of involving stakeholders in strategic planning is based on the assumption that engaging stakeholders in a meaningful way will increase the benefits for both the organization and the stakeholders. The growth trend of the company investigated has resulted in complexity due to the growth of its internal and external stakeholders and the influence that their relationships can have on strategic planning. Whereas studies have identified a number of factors that can influence stakeholder relations, it has also been suggested that relationships could further be influenced by host of other stakeholder-related attributes. It is in this context that the study answers the following research questions: (1) how do stakeholders understand their responsibilities in strategic planning?; (2) how do they perceive the importance of communication and coordination to their relationship during the planning process?; and (3) how do the stakeholders' expectations shape the challenges faced by the company and their relationship during strategic planning?

The study employs the qualitative method of research using the interview technique to collect data to gain insights into how the participants perceive and make sense of their relationships during strategic planning in their company. The conceptual dimension of the study is premised on the two streams of meaning of relationships and the dynamics of

stakeholder relations during strategic planning projected in the literature. The methodological dimension is premised on the importance of lived experience as a significant source of knowledge. In this respect, the study draws on phenomenology using narrative analysis and inductive content analysis in the treatment of data. Accordingly, the study found that stakeholders bring to the table a plethora of responsibilities which have significant upward and downward influences during strategic planning. There is a consensus among stakeholders on the general importance of the relational benefits of coordination and communication. Real time coordination and communication with external stakeholders is differentially perceived within the range of poor to excellent. Likewise, there is differential perception of the relational importance of communication in terms of organizational context. Whether the coordination among stakeholders is perceived as excellent or poor, the bottom line is that stakeholder relations in the company remains a challenge. Stakeholders have multiple expectations of the company strategic plan and the strategic planning process which further raises multi-faceted challenges to the company.

Based on the findings the study came up with a model that highlights the streams of thought pursued in the study. The findings affirm the view that relationships result from what transpires, happens, or occurs during strategic planning. Likewise, the inherent connectivity that results from the social nature of individuals involved in the planning process is affirmed. The former is on account of the responsibilities of the stakeholders and the latter on account of the inherent value that stakeholders place on strategic planning. The quality and extent of stakeholder relations however is moderated by extent and quality of coordination and communication before and during the planning process.

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Table of Contents

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION	I
ABSTRACT	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	IV
PUBLICATION TO DATE	V
TABLE OF CONTENTS	VI
LIST OF TABLES	IX
LIST OF FIGURES.....	X
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	XI
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. BACKGROUND	1
1.2. THE STUDY CONTEXT.....	9
1.3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES.....	16
1.3.1. <i>Research Questions</i>	16
1.3.2. <i>Research Objectives</i>	16
1.4. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS.....	17
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	21
2.1. THEORIES OF THE FIRM.....	21
2.2. STAKEHOLDERS AND THEIR CLASSIFICATION	33
2.2.1. <i>Binaries</i>	38
2.2.2. <i>Three-part criteria taxonomies</i>	40
2.2.3. <i>Frameworks, grids, matrices, and models</i>	43
2.2.4. <i>Groups relations</i>	58
2.2.5. <i>Organization-specific</i>	59
2.2.6 <i>Stakeholder relations</i>	61
2.3. STAKEHOLDER THEORY	69
2.4. FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE	78
2.5. STRATEGIC PLANNING	91
2.6. RELATIONSHIPS AMONG STAKEHOLDERS	107
2.7. CRITIQUE	119
2.8. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	123
2.9. RESEARCH GAP	126
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	130
3.1. RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY	132
3.2. RATIONALE FOR CHOICE OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD.....	137
3.3. RESEARCH DESIGN.....	140
3.4. STRATEGY: CASE STUDY USING CLINICAL INQUIRY APPROACH.....	141
3.5. SAMPLING.....	144

3.6. DATA COLLECTION	145
3.7. ANALYSIS OF DATA	147
3.7.1. <i>Inductive content analysis</i>	147
3.7.2. <i>Narrative analysis</i>	149
3.7.3. <i>Phenomenological reduction</i>	149
3.7.4. <i>Sense-making</i>	151
3.8. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY	153
3.9. RESEARCH ETHICS	154
3.10. SUMMARY	154
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS OF THE STUDY	156
4.1. RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAKEHOLDERS IN STRATEGIC PLANNING	157
4.2. PERCEIVED SIGNIFICANCE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING	177
4.3. SUBJECTS TAKEN UP DURING STRATEGIC PLANNING	189
4.4. COORDINATION AMONG STAKEHOLDERS	198
4.5. THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN STRATEGIC PLANNING	212
4.6. PERCEIVED CHANGES NEEDED IN THE PLAN.....	223
5.1. RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAKEHOLDERS IN STRATEGIC PLANNING	234
5.1.1. <i>Facilitating adaptability</i>	235
5.1.2. <i>Championing alternatives</i>	237
5.1.3. <i>Translating strategy</i>	238
5.1.4. <i>Bargaining and negotiations</i>	241
5.1.5. <i>Attaining cost-effectiveness</i>	242
5.2. PERCEIVED SIGNIFICANCE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING	248
5.2.1. <i>Momentum</i>	248
5.2.2. <i>Organizational performance</i>	249
5.2.3. <i>Innovation</i>	251
5.2.4. <i>Profitability</i>	252
5.3. SUBJECTS TAKEN UP DURING STRATEGIC PLANNING	253
5.4. COORDINATION AMONG STAKEHOLDERS	257
5.5. THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN STRATEGIC PLANNING	262
5.6. PERCEIVED CHANGES NEEDED IN THE STRATEGIC PLAN.....	275
5.7. STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS MODEL.....	283
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION	287
6.1. CONCLUSION	287
6.2. LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS	294
6.3. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS.....	301
EPILOGUE	302
REFERENCES	305
APPENDIX A: COMMUNICATIONS	A
APPENDIX B: SAMPLE CONSENT FORM	E
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE	F

APPENDIX D: SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT G

List of Tables

TABLE 1. DEFINITIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS (MITCHELL, ET AL., 1987:858)	34
TABLE 2. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY STAKEHOLDERS (SAINT & TRIPATHI, 2010:6)	39
TABLE 3. TYPOLOGY OF STAKEHOLDERS (DAMAS, ET AL., 2013:250)	43
TABLE 4. STYLES OF MANAGING STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS (FRIEDMAN & MILES, 2006:162-163) ..	48
TABLE 5. DESCRIPTION OF EACH OF THE METHOD IN REED, ET AL.'S TYPOLOGY (REED, ET AL., 2009:1937).....	52
TABLE 6. STAGES AND FEATURES OF THE SRMM MODEL (BOURNE, 2008:9).....	56
TABLE 7. SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDERS (SISODIA, SHETH, & WOLFE, 2014:11).....	59
TABLE 8. LADDER OF LOYALTY (POLONSKY, ET AL., 2002:112).....	62
TABLE 9. BROADENED LADDER OF LOYALTY (POLONSKY, ET AL., 2002:119)	63
TABLE 10. STAKEHOLDERS' SOURCE OF INFLUENCE (MARKWELL, 2010)	66
TABLE 11. SUMMARY OF CRITIQUE (PHILLIPS, ET AL., 2003:482)	74
TABLE 12. ELEMENTS OF STRATEGIC PLANNING (GATES, 2010:5)	97
TABLE 13. RESEARCH PARADIGMS (GUBA & LINCOLN, 1994:109)	133
TABLE 14. SUMMARY OF RESEARCH PARADIGMS (COMBINING: LINCOLN & GUBA, 1994; CRESWELL, 2009; PRESIDENT & FELLOWS HARVARD UNIVERSITY, 2014)	135
TABLE 15. RESEARCHER'S ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL STANCE	139
TABLE 16. FRAMEWORK FOR CHOICE OF METHOD (MEREDITH, ET AL., 1989:305)	141
TABLE 17. COMPARISON BETWEEN PURPOSIVE AND PROBABILITY SAMPLING (TEDDLIE & TASHAKKORI, 2009)	145
TABLE 18. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAKEHOLDERS IN STRATEGIC PLANNING.....	158
TABLE 19. PERCEIVED VALUE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING	177

List of Figures

FIGURE 1. SUMMARY OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY	19
FIGURE 2. STAKEHOLDER TYPOLOGY (MITCHELL, ET AL., 1997:874).....	41
FIGURE 3. STAKEHOLDERS ACCORDING TO LEVELS OF INTEREST (AUSTEN, ET AL., 2008:9)	44
FIGURE 4. TOOL FOR STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS (KENNON, HOWDEN, & HARTLEY, 2005:12).....	45
FIGURE 5. POWER-INTEREST GRID (ACKERMAN & EDEN, 2011:183)	46
FIGURE 6. COMPREHENSIVE MODEL FOR STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION (REED, ET AL., 2009:1936)	51
FIGURE 7. THE SRMM MODEL (BOURNE, 2006:36).....	54
FIGURE 8. FIRMS OF ENDEARMENT (SISODIA, SHETH, & WOLFE, 2014:12)	60
FIGURE 9. CONTINUUM OF STAKEHOLDER THEORY (SAINT & TRIPATHI, 2010:7)	70
FIGURE 10. ELEMENTS OF STRATEGIC PLANNING (GATES, 2010:4).....	96
FIGURE 11. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	124
FIGURE 12. DESIGN OF THE STUDY	140
FIGURE 13. PERCEIVED COORDINATION AMONG STAKEHOLDERS.....	260
FIGURE 14: IROS PLANNING (ACRP, 2016:13)	275
FIGURE 15. RELATIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS DURING STRATEGIC PLANNING	284
FIGURE 16. VISUALIZING THE GOLDEN THREAD.....	304

List of Abbreviations

ACCA	Association of Chartered Certified accountants
ACRP	Airport Cooperation Research Program
CBT	Calculus Based Trust
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
EMA	European Medicines Agency
FoE	Firm of Endearment
IBERDOLA	A Spanish public multinational electric utility company
IBT	Identification Based Trust
IROS	Irregular Operations
KBT	Knowledge Based Trust
KPMG	An international network of audit and advisory firms currently operating in 155 countries around the world
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
PDCA	Plan, Do, Check, and Act
SHT	Stakeholder Theory
SRMM	Stakeholder Relationship Management Model
UAE	United Arab Emirates
WAM	Wakalat Anba'a al-Emarat - The Emirates News Agency
WWF	Watson Wyatt Worldwide

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background of the study which serves as the basis for framing the aim and objectives of the study and the research questions investigated. The chapter also describes the study context and the structure of the thesis.

1.1. Background

The increasing amount of literature focusing on relationships in organizations is an affirmation of Giles, Smythe, and Spencer's (2012) claim that relationships are indeed at the heart of organizational processes. Eskerod, Heumann, and Savage (2016) also noted that the emphasis on collaborations and the nature of relationships in temporary or permanent networks are increasingly becoming a trend in the literature. In strategic management studies, this trend is evident in the momentum of interest given to the importance of stakeholder relationships (Blair, Payne, Rotariou, Whitehead, & Whyte, 1999). To date, many organizations are recognizing that stakeholders are resources to be utilized (Luoma-aho, 2015). Moreover, there is now greater acknowledgement of stakeholders as legitimate actors in organisational problem solving and decision making (Eskerod et al., 2016). In effect, one of the strategic management processes where there is a growing recognition of the key role played by stakeholders is strategic planning. Crosby (1991) notes that the influence of stakeholders on strategy formulation and the consequent strategic outcomes underscore the importance of understanding the dynamics of stakeholder relationships especially during the strategic planning process.

Polonsky, Schupisser, and Beldona (2002) cite that relationships are evolutionary and happen within the context of dynamic environments involving multiple parties. The authors observed, however, that the concepts and constructs reflected in the literature on relationships appear to have a static focus and do not consider the influence of relational variables. They suggest that factors such as trust, commitment, reciprocity, social bonding, and communication are essential in managing relationships in organizations. Accordingly, these factors are all interdependent and serve to describe the nature of a relationship at a specific point in time. These can serve as levers/motivators to change the nature of relationships between parties involved. Polonsky, et al. (2002) cite stakeholder authors such as Morgan and Hunt (1994), Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997), and Savage, Nix, Whitehead, and Blair (1991), among others, who suggest that relationships could further be influenced by host of other stakeholder-related attributes. The significance of stakeholder attributes as these interrelate with the firm is affirmed in studies such as that of stakeholder valuing (Carlson & Downs, 2014); stakeholder engagement (Luoma-aho, 2015); modelling with stakeholders (Voinov, et al., 2016); and the so-called new stakeholder management relations (Gill, 2014). It is for this reason that the study chose to focus on factors that can potentially influence stakeholder relations during the planning process, such as the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, the importance of communication and coordination, and the changes that the stakeholders expect in the strategic plan.

The foregoing served as an initial premise in building the aim of the research which also highlights the significant key terms used throughout the study: stakeholders, stakeholder relations, and strategic planning. Before going any further, clarification is in order. First, in

relation to the term 'stakeholder' as it is used in the study, it has been noted in the literature that 'stakeholder' has a plethora of meanings which continue to grow and vary depending on the authors who write about these topics and the contexts in which they operate. As such, a **one-size** definition of stakeholder that **fits all** organizational circumstances is therefore untenable; as metaphorically stated, 'same pig, different conclusions' (Duijvesteijn, Benard, Reimert, & Camerlink, 2014). For and in consideration of these premises, the term stakeholder in this research is used in context to denote those who the organization formally depends on in reviewing organizational strategy, contributing inputs to strategy formulation, participating in the formulation of strategy, and translating and cascading strategy to different units of the organization. Using the typologies of Saint and Tripathi (2010) and the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) (2008), they are specifically internal, primary, formal, legitimate, recognized, and known stakeholders.

Secondly, in terms of stakeholder relationship in the study context, Al Khateeri and Ocler (2013) citing Goetsch and Amblers (2007) point to the relationship between airlines and airports as transactional in nature. In consonance with this, the study draws on two views of relationship described in the literature. The first view cited by Giles, et al. (2012) was conceptualized by Metcalfe and Game (2006) and Doane (2002). Accordingly, relationship is viewed as that which transpires, happens, or occurs among people. The second view denotes connectivity among individuals (Giles et al., 2012). The first view of relationship presumes the existence of interpersonal spaces, gaps, or openings that serve as platforms for something to transpire, happen, or occur among people. Giles, et al. (2012) explains that these spaces, gaps, or openings allow relationships to emerge as a result of inter-

personal exchanges in the form of inter-actions and trans-actions. In the course of these interactions and transactions, differences can be accentuated or dialogue can be attained. According to Giles, et al. (2012), this is reminiscent of how Buber (2002) philosophised relationships as either objectifying or humanizing. Buber (2002) explains that relationships among persons can either be a subject-subject relationship or a subject-object relationship. The former relationship is humanizing and he called it 'I-Thou' while the latter looks at the other as an object, hence he called it 'I-It.'

In the view of relationship as connectivity, Giles, et al. (2012) explains that relationships move from the functionality of spaces between people as espoused by the first view to an inherent connectedness that is essential to human interactions. This view puts premium on the genuine concern for relationships that tends to nurture the wholeness of the interrelating individuals. Giles, et al. (2012) cites Palmer's (1997) explanation that when these relationships are re-framed within the context of community, the inter-connectedness of the numerous daily-shared relationships becomes more accentuated. The forgoing shows that there are factors that can drive or draw relationships among people. Based on this, the researcher contends that an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the planning process, their personal contributions during the process, as well as the challenges that they perceive in their collaboration with other stakeholders can serve as factors that can drive or draw stakeholder relationships during the planning process.

The study adopts the normative stakeholder theory in consonance with the concept of stakeholder relations used in the study. Accordingly, a twofold fundamental basis of the

normative stakeholder include: '(a) Stakeholders are persons or groups with legitimate interests in procedural and/or substantive aspects of corporate activity and (b) the interests of all stakeholders are of intrinsic value. That is, each group of stakeholders merits consideration for its own sake and not merely because of its ability to further the interests of some other group, such as the shareowners.' (Donaldson & Preston, 1995:67)

Lastly, the term 'strategic planning' as used in the study denotes the participation, contributions, and actions of the stakeholders in the review and formulation of strategy and in translating and cascading corporate strategy. This distinction is made in recognition of the fact that the strategic plan in the company is crafted by top management but allows stakeholders to play an important role in the planning process.

Companies employ strategic planning to externally respond to the complexity, volatility, and uncertainty brought about by multi-directional and multi-faceted changes in the environment. Internally, companies integrate the changing needs of stakeholders in their planning processes to fine tune decisions and align strategies to the opportunities in the external market. As such, Morrison and Wilson (1996) consider stakeholders and strategic planning as two very important aspects of every company. Organizations that incorporate the concerns of their stakeholders in strategic planning can be more pro-active in adapting to the external environment. Furthermore, Eskerod, et al. (2016) cite that stakeholder participation is essential and vital in addressing system-wide problems hence they should be included in analysing and solving problems that affect the organisation. Anent this is acquiring a good understanding of technological developments, competitor behaviours, and the current competitive capabilities of the company. As a management function, strategic planning ensures goal attainment in a dynamic and competitive environment

through the allocation of resources to programmed activities calculated to achieve a set of goals in a dynamic, competitive environment (Morrison & Wilson, 1996). The focus on strategic planning is hence significant to the study context considering that the company investigates have been launching massive expansion projects to respond to future traffic forecasts for Abu Dhabi, Doha, and Dubai airports to collectively accommodate 340 million passengers by 2020 (Murel & O'Connell, 2011:36). This entails the accuracy, effectiveness and efficiency of planning involving various stakeholder groups.

The role of stakeholders in this function cannot be overlooked. As such, it is necessary to discover their expectations, strive to achieve these, and assess the extent to which meeting these expectations translate to stakeholder satisfaction. However, being simply aware of the attributes and needs of stakeholders is not enough. What drives success is the quality of relations that a company has with its stakeholders and in turn, how stakeholders relate to each other (Inglis & Minahan, 2001). For instance, Clarkston (1991), Kotter and Heskett (1992), and de Geus (1997), among others, link stakeholder relations with business success. Collins and Porras (1994), Waddock and Graves (1997), Berman, et al. (1999), and Roman, et al. (1999) also provide evidence linking stakeholder relations with financial performance based on correlation measures using corporate social responsibility databases. However, Berman et al. (1999) using the Kinder, Lydenberg, Domini, and Company (KLD) database found that stakeholder posture had no effect on financial performance at all. Regardless of the outcomes, growing interest in measuring the business value of stakeholder relationships is evident in the literature and appears to be premised on the assumption that stakeholder relationships create competitive advantage. For instance, Svendsen, et al. (2002) cite that establishing strong relationships

reduces stakeholder risks, encourages innovation, stimulates the development of new markets, and enhances brand value. Holmes and Smart (2009) cited Austin (2000) who demonstrated that greater value was created through exchanges of competence and transfer of resources as partners worked closely together. The increase of knowledge flows and fresh perspectives as a result of cooperation set the stage for innovation. In innovation management studies, the pooling of different knowledge and skill bases in the interaction among stakeholders is of critical importance in fostering innovation that can translate to greater competitiveness.

To locate the stakeholders in the strategic planning process, this study adopts the holistic view advanced by Crenson and Ginsberg (2002). This view posits the concept of the “whole” organization where relationships are presumed to be the consequences of the interdependence among parts. Eskerod, et al. (2016) cited that stakeholders are elements of a system and their inclusion and participation in organizational processes such as problem solving and decision making is essential to system-wide efforts. Problem solving and decision making are essential tools used in strategic planning. In this respect, strategic planning becomes the responsibility of all stakeholders, hence sustaining the quality of their relationships should take centre stage in the strategic planning process. Based on this view of the whole being the sum of its parts, the behaviour of stakeholders and their relations would have a significant impact on the whole organization.

A universal template for planning in the airport industry was developed by the Airport Cooperative Research Program and published in *ACRP Report 20* (2009). This is intended to serve as a practical guide for practitioners in the air transport industry. A cursory

examination of the report reveals that the guideline incorporates what are already known about the process but are specifically contextualized to the airport setting. It is interesting to note however that in the portion of the report on creating a process plan and roadmap which comes as the first step in the strategic planning sequence, a great deal is devoted to the identification of stakeholders, their expectations, and their roles and responsibilities in the planning process (ACRP, 2009).

The foregoing concepts allow theorizing about stakeholder relationships from the perspective of potential measurable causal relations. This study however deviates from this path and instead defines its perspective by a shift in epistemology and methodology. Accordingly, the stand of this study is that there is value in considering the lived experiences of stakeholders in understanding the importance of stakeholder relationships in strategic planning. In consonance with the transactional nature of airlines and airports, knowledge on the perceptions of stakeholders would serve as very significant tool to shape the responsiveness of the organization to the claims and expectations of various stakeholder groups. This shifts the organizational discourse on stakeholders from managerial monologues to multilateral stakeholder dialogues (Calton & Kurland, 1996). This means shifting the centre of the organizational discourse to the level of stakeholders and giving significance to their multiple voices. It aims to empower the voice of stakeholders and surfaces hidden meanings which have previously been submerged in silence (Calton & Kurland, 1996). This is also consistent with Freeman's (2014:13) argument that by "retelling the story of business in stakeholder terms, we enable it to create more value, be engaged in solving some of our societal problems, and thus be seen as a deeply human institution." This epistemological outlook has the following

methodological implications: first, the study is exploratory in nature as it allows a multiplicity of understanding to emerge that will disclose essential meanings of the phenomenon investigated and second, the study has a phenomenological character by virtue of the exploration of the lived experiences of participants and the meanings that they attach or attribute to these experiences. Third, the study draws attention to how stakeholders make sense of their experiences in organizational processes which they are engaged in. Fourth, the role of the researcher is to tell the story using the voice of the stakeholders.

On the whole, the study considers stakeholders relations from the conceptual frame of Metcalfe and Game (2006), Bennett (1997), Gibbs (2006), Palmer (1997), and Doane (2002) as cited by Giles, et al. (2012). It is an attempt to explore ways of being within a growing organizational network, knowing within interdependent relationships, and doing in a cooperative manner. These are reflective of the respective ontological, epistemological, and praxis viewpoints described by Calton and Kurland (1996). Methodologically, the study draws on phenomenology that 'focuses on people's perceptions of the world in which they live in and what it means to them; a focus on people's lived experience' (Kafle, 2011:182). Based on the foregoing premises, this study attempts to contribute knowledge on stakeholder relationships founded on the lived experiences of managers during the strategic planning process in their company.

1.2. The Study Context

This section describes the study context where the investigation took place. The airline industry in focus is a popular global brand. Its history, company profile, and financial

performance are posted in the airline website, brochures, yearly reports and other advocacy materials that are readily accessible to the public. Hence, the information presented in this section is abstracted and synthesized from company write-ups that are made public. Accordingly, the airline was set up by Royal (Amiri) Decree in July 2003 according to the vision of the country's ruler. It had a very modest start operating on two leased A320 "TAM" and made its maiden commercial flight in November 2003.

In 2004, it acquired 29 Airbus and Boeing aircraft with a total value of US \$8 billion. It serviced 14 destinations and established two profitable business sectors involving holidays and cargo shipment. During that year, it was nominated as the fastest growing airline in the history of commercial aviation.

In 2005, the company served 25 destinations with a fleet of 14 aircrafts. By then, it had established an independent cargo company and entered into strategic partnerships with Lufthansa and five international hubs: London Heathrow, London, Gatwick, Munich, and Bangkok. It was in this year that it established its Loyalty Program for guests.

In 2006, it increased its fleet to 29 aircraft with diversity of creative seat designs for all classes. It got the approval of the government to build and establish its own headquarters and offices in and out of the country. By 2007, the airline was operating a fleet of 24 aircraft and planned to reach 33 aircraft to be staffed by 600 pilots and 3,600 cabin crew members. During this year it was nominated the World's Leading New Airline.

Growth during 2008, the airline's fifth year of operations, saw passenger numbers total 6,021,931, a 34 per cent increase from 2007, while average seat factor increased from 68

per cent to 75 per cent. It established its own academy and in July 2008, it placed one of the largest aircraft orders in commercial aviation history at the Farnborough International Airshow with firm orders for 55 Airbus and 45 Boeing aircraft, and options and purchase rights for 105 more. The delivery of the new aircraft commenced in 2011 and will continue on to 2020.

In 2009, it opened Terminal 3, served 52 destinations by the end of 2009, and planned to reach 57 aircraft. During this year, it had 19 code share agreements and won a number of prestigious awards, including the Skytrax award for having the best business class in the world and the world's best business class catering. It was the first airline in the world to win five World Travel Awards in a single ceremony.

The airline celebrated its record performance in 2014 with a record amount of passengers and cargo marking its strongest operational performance to date. It introduced ten additional destinations to its global route network in 2014. Building on this organic growth, the airline also expanded its code share and equity partnerships which delivered over 3.5 million passengers, a staggering increase of 40 per cent over the 2.5 million passengers in 2013. In addition to launching new code share agreements with Aerolineas Argentinas, Air Europa, jetBlue, Philippine Airlines, GOL, SAS and Hong Kong Airlines, the airline also announced a €560 million investment in New Alitalia to acquire a 49 per cent shareholding in the carrier. The airline's fleet increased to 110 aircraft at the end of 2014 with the delivery of its first Airbus A380 and Boeing 787 in December, with both state-of-the-art aircraft offering new standards in cabin interiors, together with fuel efficiency and environmental improvements.

Based on the company's *Fast Facts & Figures* as of April 2016, the airline has a current fleet of 122 aircraft with expected deliveries of 183 additional aircraft between 2016 and 2025. The company is currently serving 117 existing destinations in 68 countries. It currently employs 26,953 employees from 144 nationalities. Within the period between 2015 and April 2016, the company has garnered 16 additional awards and recognitions given by the Association of Corporate Treasurers-Middle East, Freddie Awards, *AirFinance Journal*, Aircrafts Interior Expo 2016, Inflight Awards, *International Financing Review*, World Travel Awards 2015, Ultratravel Middle East Awards 2015, Business Travel Awards, Innovation Enterprise, Globe Travel Awards, Air Transport World Awards 2016, *Global Transport Finance Magazine*, 2015 MENA HR Excellence Awards, 2015 World Air Cargo Awards, and 2015 World Travel Awards Middle East.

As a leading driver of economic growth, the company's core operation and capital expenditure contributed USD 6.4 billion to Abu Dhabi and supported a total of 67,000 jobs. It contributed USD 9.59 billion to the economy and supported 120,000 jobs in its role in improving airlinks between Abu Dhabi and the rest of the global economy. The company contributed USD 945 million and supported 12,106 jobs to tourism. From its equity partners, the company had a core contribution of USD 141 million and supported 1,000 jobs in the Emirate. These figures were only as of the year 2014 as reported in the company's *Fast Facts & Figures* as of April 2016.

In recognition of the high growth of the airport, Abu Dhabi civil aviation enhanced the design capacity of the airport by implementing two action plans: the addition of a new

super-sized terminal building along runway 2 and the completion of the Midfield building between the two runways. With these developments, Abu Dhabi will become a major Middle East hub with the capacity of handling 50 million passengers per year by 2020 (Murel & O'Connell, 2011).

Typical to the Gulf carriers is the hub and spoke system which offers three advantages: the wave configuration, minimum connecting times, and low airport charges. Murel and O'Connell (2011:38) explain the wave configuration, to wit:

The hub and spoke mechanism allows a number of cities (spokes) to be linked to a central hub, with each spoke that is added magnifying the linkage benefits and through service. By combining spoke-to-hub traffic with transfer traffic at a central hub, airlines are able to offer a wider variety of destinations to consumers, with high frequencies, as consolidated traffic at the hub allows the carrier to operate synchronized banks or waves of flights.

Regarding the second advantage, the major Gulf carriers synchronize their daily bank operations to consolidate traffic and optimize the number of connections with the minimum connecting times. For instance, passengers originating in the Middle East have only to wait for an average of 40 minutes before boarding a connecting flight to Europe (Murel & O'Connell). The last advantage concerns the absence of taxes, environmental, terminal navigational and parking charges at Gulf airports. As a result, airport charges in the Gulf are some of the lowest in the world (Murel & O'Connell, 2011).

From the foregoing, the phenomenal growth of the company is evident which makes the effectiveness of strategic planning a vital concern. This growth trend has also resulted in complexity not only due to the growth of its internal and external stakeholders but also to the influence that their relationships can have on the company's strategic planning. More

specifically, the two stakeholders groups referred to in the study are the airline and the airport. As previously stated, the airline was established by virtue of a royal decree in 2003. On March 4, 2006, the airport was created to spearhead the development of the aviation infrastructure. Upon its creation, the airport is the base and hub of the airline. Both entities are wholly owned by the government. This constitutes a tripartite relationship between the airport, airline and the government. A paramount concern in planning the future of the company is the relationship of the airline and the airport. According to Al Khateeri and Ocler (2013:66):

The economic challenges facing airlines and airports in an era of global financial instability are diverse and complex and have given Etihad Airways, Abu Dhabi Airport and the Abu Dhabi government the opportunity to re-evaluate their core business and strategies. These entities are now forced to follow new strategic paths in order to face the new competitive arena. Etihad Airways is focusing on gaining increasing attention and is using a strategy of interaction, which the airline wants to create in order to reduce uncertainty, sharing risks and costs.

According to Goetsch and Amblers (2007) as cited by Al Khateeri and Ocler (2013), the relationship between airlines and airports is transactional in nature and such relations can be used to obtain additional strategic benefits for the parties concerned. In the context of the company investigated in this study, such relations have not been documented so far. Understanding stakeholder relationships is an essential antecedent in effectively engaging stakeholders. Stakeholder engagement, on the other hand, is an essential aspect of the CSR and sustainability of companies. Andersson and Jabkowski (2013) in their study on tracking the development of CSR and sustainability reporting in the airline industry, noted that out of twenty airlines investigated, seven did not mention anything on stakeholder involvement or engagement in their reports. It was noted that one among these seven is a UAE-based airline company. It was also noted that stakeholder involvement and engagement only became evident in the reports of the various airlines investigated

between 2005 to 2012. Chang, Chen, Hsu, & Hu (2015) further reported that airlines in western countries exhibit a more remarkable CSR performance in terms of engaging stakeholders as compared to airlines in the Asia-Pacific region. Andersson and Jabkowski (2013) noted the lack of research on sustainability reporting in the airline industry while Chang, et al. (2015) noted that CSR performance needs improvement specifically in the Asia-Pacific region. The KPMG (2016) report further pointed out that airlines in Africa, and the Middle East have the least number of indicators for sustainability reporting. Anent this is the observation that published benchmarks on stakeholders and stakeholder boundaries in airports are largely ambiguous (Schaar & Sherry, 2010). It remains that an existing challenge confronting airports today involves the mechanism of applying the strategy of stakeholder engagement to address the increasing demand for airport development (Amaeshi & Crane, 2005).

The airline company investigated in this study considers sustainability as the core of its business and considers engaging with the staff as a vital strategy in sustaining motivation, awareness building, communication, education, and gaining ideas. Based on its 2016 sustainability report covering the period of 2011, the scope of staff engagement largely involves environmental issues. These efforts, however earned for the company the 'Best Sustainability Communication Programme' and 'Sustainability Manager of the Year' awards for 2015 given by the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Group (WAM, 2015). It is against this background that the relationship among stakeholders during the strategic planning process is explored in the study.

1.3. Aim and Objectives

This study aims is to examine the dynamics of the perceived relationship among the stakeholders during the strategic planning process. Based on the aim of the study, the following research questions are answered in order to attain the objectives set:

1.3.1. Research Questions

The study answers the following research questions:

1. How do stakeholders understand their responsibilities in strategic planning based on their lived experiences?
2. How do stakeholders perceive the importance of communication and coordination to their relations during the strategic planning process?
3. How do the stakeholders' expectations shape the challenges faced by the company and their relations during strategic planning?

1.3.2. Research Objectives

Based on the research questions, the study attains the following research objectives:

1. To draw out insights into how stakeholders of an airline industry understand their responsibilities as lived experiences in their company's strategic planning process.
2. To analyse the meaning of stakeholder relationship from the frame of coordination and communication during strategic planning.

3. To explore the challenges to stakeholder relations faced by a company emanating from the stakeholders' expectations during strategic planning.

1.4. Structure of the Thesis

The following describes the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 1 is the Introduction which sets the background for the identification of the research objectives, research questions, and the structure of the study. This chapter situates the focus of the study to differentiate it from other studies in the field.

Chapter 2 is the Literature Review which reviews the relevant literature on strategic planning, stakeholders and stakeholder theory, and the relationship of stakeholders in strategic planning. This chapter is a critical review of the conceptual aspects and empirical evidences hence representing the "given knowledge in the field" that helps shape the investigation using a qualitative mode of inquiry.

Chapter 3 is the Methodology which discusses the research philosophy, approach, strategy, method, and the protocols for data collection. This chapter also describes how the data was analysed and explains the protocols used in the treatment of data collected from the interviews.

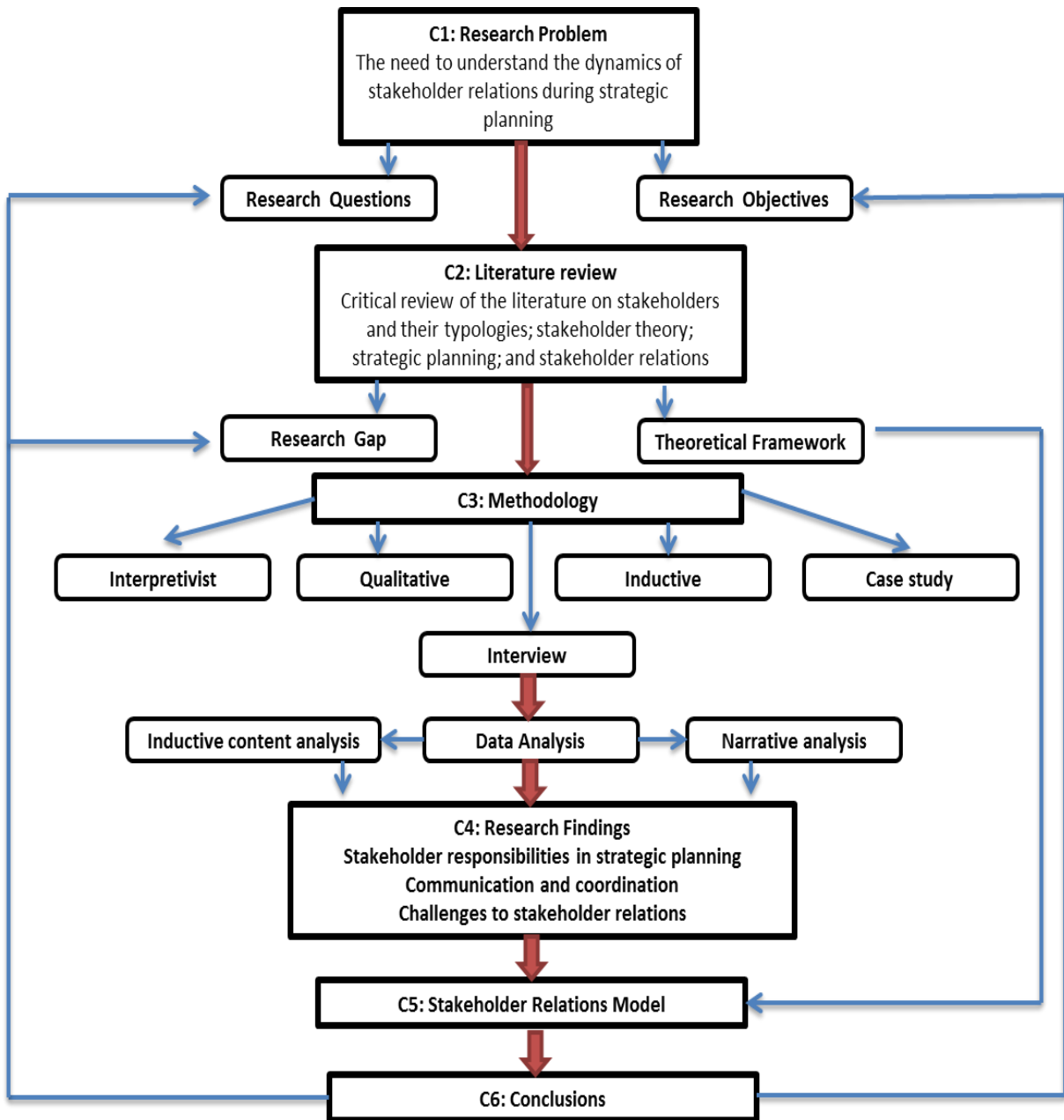
Chapter 4 presents the Findings of the study. This chapter presents the salient information that leads to the formulation of answers to the research questions.

Chapter 5 is the Discussion which explains the implication of the findings in the light of the theories and literature review.

Chapter 6 is the Conclusion which addresses the research problem and recommends practical measures for the implementation of the results of the study. This chapter provides the answers to the research questions and how significant lessons learned can contribute to theory and practice and stimulate future research.

A summary of the structure of the study is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Summary of the Structure of the Study



Chapter 1 describes the need to understand the dynamics of stakeholder relations based on stakeholder-related attributes such as their perceived roles and responsibilities during strategic planning, perception of the importance of communication and coordination, and expectations and views on the changes needed in their company strategic plan. These factors are reflected as the main themes of both the research questions and research objectives. The chapter also situates the research problem within the study context. Chapter 2 presents a critical review of literature that supports the major themes in the study such as the nature of stakeholders and their typologies, stakeholder theory, strategic planning, and stakeholder relations. The literature review serves as the basis for the theoretical framework and the identification of the research gap. The next chapter on the methodology describes the philosophy, method, and strategy used in the study including the selection of the study sample, collection of data, and the means of data analysis. Chapter 4 presents the research findings in terms of the perceptions of the stakeholders on their roles and responsibilities during strategic planning, importance of communication and coordination to their relationship, and expectations that shape the challenges faced by their company. This is followed by the discussion of the findings in Chapter 5 which culminates in the development of the stakeholder relations model. The last chapter concludes the study by providing the answers to the research questions. It also identifies the lessons learned, recommendations, and direction of future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In situating stakeholders within the strategic planning process, this study adopts the holistic view of organizations where relationships are seen as the consequences of the interdependence of parts. Based on this view, stakeholders are elements of the system who are legitimate actors in organizational analysis, problem solving, and decision making (Eskerod et al., 2016). In this respect, strategic planning becomes the responsibility of all stakeholders, hence sustaining the quality of their relationships should take center stage in the strategic planning process. These assumptions determined the range of the literature reviewed starting from the firm where it all happens to the relationships of stakeholders that are emerge from within. Accordingly, this chapter covers a summary and critique of (1) theories of the firm; (2) stakeholders and their typologies; (3) stakeholder theory; (4) strategic planning; and (5) stakeholder relations, including stakeholder responsibilities and stakeholder coordination and communication. The literature review is also organized to further elaborate the key concepts described in the preceding chapter such as stakeholders, strategic planning, and stakeholder relations.

2.1. Theories of the Firm

Strategic planning does not happen in a vacuum, it involves actors in space, in different places and in different firms. Firms are not static hence an understanding of the dynamics of firms is a logical starting point that provides the context in understanding the relationship of stakeholders during strategic planning. The dynamics of firms are shaped primarily by people who influence processes, resources, and technology, hence highlighting the significant role of stakeholders hence Freeman (1984:24) notes that

integration of stakeholder concerns require a radical rethinking of the model of the firm. In the same vein, the identity of firms is paramount in shaping its relationship with stakeholders. Carlon and Downs (2014:139) cite that stakeholder firm identities vary in substance 'because not all stakeholders are created equal and some stakeholders are more relevant to firms than others.' The authors further invoked Brickson's (2005) organizational identity orientation which suggests that profit-motivated firms with independent relations have individualistic orientations and do not value their stakeholders that much. On the other extreme are firms that derive their identities from their stakeholders, hence are collectivist in orientation and place a high value on all stakeholders. In a midway position are dyadically independent firms that have relational orientations but place higher value only on some stakeholders groups. From another perspective, Fellin and Zenger (2015) expressed the need for a theory of the firm to guide efforts of stakeholders in value creation. Furthermore, with today's emphasis on corporate responsibility, Heikkurinen and Makinen (in press) emphasized the significance of different perspectives as well as multiple analysis to comprehensively portray and prescribe actions relative to the responsibility phenomenon.

To reiterate, the firm represents the context where strategic management occurs, hence an understanding of the theories of the firm is important in understanding the context of the topic investigated. The quantity and variety of theoretical perspectives that inform real-time management practices and processes such as strategic planning, strategic plan implementation, and strategic plan evaluation are reflected not only in narratives on strategic management but are debated in academic discourses on the matter as well. Central to understanding the dynamic processes of strategic management that influence

or are influenced by its stakeholders is an understanding of the nature of organizations. It is within these organizations that stakeholder relationships are formed which in turn influence strategic planning.

The theory-laden descriptions of institutions and practice (Shapiro, 2007) have spawned dominant perspectives on the nature and role of organizations through time. One of the ways of understanding organizations is through conceptualizations on the theoretical accounts of the firm (Braendle, 2007). The continuing debate on corporate purpose in the past decade saw the creation of a new theory of the firm that shifted attention away from theorising about the neoclassical model (Smith, 1937) to theories with strong focus on stakeholder relationships (Key, 1999). In the neoclassical theory,

the firm as a set of feasible production plans. A manager presides over this production set, buying and selling inputs and outputs in a spot market and choosing the plan that maximizes owners' welfare. Welfare is usually represented by profit, or, if profit is uncertain so that profit maximization is not well defined, by expected net present value of future profit or by market value (Hart, 2008:1758).

We see here that managers are representatives of the owner of the firm and all their actions are inclined towards creating value for the owner through profit maximization. The perspective of value is largely economic in nature and the distribution and sharing of value is very exclusive. A stakeholder-based perspective of value is performance-based. According to Harrison and Wicks (2013:97),

rather than focusing primarily on economic measures of performance, a stakeholder-based performance measure challenges managers to examine more broadly the value their firms are creating from the perspective of the stakeholders who are involved in creating it. Thus, it gives managers the information they need to engage stakeholders where they are and enhance managerial ability to use such insights to create more value. At its core, this

perspective is about creating a higher level of well-being for the stakeholders involved in a system of value creation led by the firm.

This split the theoretical field of understanding the purpose of corporations into two domains: shareholder-driven theory and the stakeholder-driven theory. These theories are explained in detail in the following sections of the chapter.

The management of the firm or the corporation has permeated management discourse for the past 150 years now, during which a parallel in the spreading of organizations took place (Waldkirch, 2008). The spreading of organizations does not strictly connote something spatial or geographical but rather something functional, organic, and self-reproducing.

To metaphorically illustrate the phenomenon of the spread of the firm, this study adopts the concept of 'autopoiesis' developed by Luhmann (2000). Autopoiesis was used earlier by Cordoba, Midgley, and Torres (2000) to highlight the rethinking of stakeholder involvement in information systems planning. Zsolnai (2006) also used the concept of autopoiesis as a basis for a normative re-interpretation of the stakeholder concept. Likewise, Introna and Pouloudi (1999) used the concept of social autopoiesis in their systemic discussion of potentially different notions of privacy that can create conflicts between the interest and values of different stakeholders. Likewise, Vasquez and Benavente (2016) postulate that autopoiesis can lead to a better understanding of the autonomy and constitutive mechanisms of firms based on the premise that meaning arises out of the link between autopoiesis and the interpretive capacity of living beings. The social theory of autopoiesis has also been used for the analysis of knowledge management in

knowledge-intensive firms specifically in organizational closure and reproduction of organizational identity (Steiner, 2016).

Autopoiesis, meaning self-reproduction, was originally a biological concept published in *The Biological Roots of Human Understanding* (Maturana and Varela, 1987) developed by two Chilean cognitive biologists in the early sixties and seventies. Just like most biologists, Maturana and Varela (1987) were looking for a definition of life and what makes the distinction between living and non-living. Their search led them to an answer: A living system reproduces itself. Henceforth, they referred to this attribute as autopoiesis. As a system, autopoiesis is the recursive reproduction of the elements of the system through its own elements (Seidl, 2004:2).

In Luhmann's argument, autopoiesis can also be applied to a large number of non-biological systems. Henceforth, he appropriated the original biological concept, modified it and applied it to the social domain. In this context, autopoiesis became a transdisciplinary concept open to specifications to other disciplines. In addition to the biological concept, Luhmann included social systems and psychic systems within the autopoietic circle. Psychic systems refer to self-reproducing systems driven by consciousness or thoughts. Social systems, on the other hand are driven by organizations, societies, and interaction (Seidl, 2004:5). It is in this context that Luhmann's concept finds significance in organizational studies. Furthermore, this theory can also account for the growth phenomenon surrounding successful companies, such as the company case in focus.

The firm and its spread do not only provide the context for organizational events to occur. The different arguments on the purpose of firms also spawned the shareholder-stakeholder debate. Smith (2003) cites that in today's ever-spreading and omnipresent organizations (Etzioni, 1964), the debates among organizational scholars on the reason of why the firm exists has also sparked the shareholder vs. stakeholder debate. This has led to theorizing that subsequently distinguished the shareholder theory and the stakeholder theory. Interactions constitute one of the social elements of a firm that are largely driven by people. Altering the interactive elements relative to the roles of agents whether shareholder or stakeholder will likely affect the organic state of the firm to spread or self-reproduce. According to Smith (2003), the stakeholder or shareholder theories redefine the organization in the context of corporate social responsibility since their normative character defines what ought to be the role of the firm or organization. Both the shareholder and stakeholder theories consider relationships as important. However, the importance of relationship is more seen in terms of economic considerations in the shareholder theory while the importance of relationships is more seen in terms of attaining competitive edge in the stakeholder approach.

To put the debate in perspective, Saint and Tripathi (2010) explain that the debate on the purpose of modern organizations has generated two arguments. On one hand, there are numerous scholars and practitioners who argue that the sole purpose of the firm or organization is to maximize shareholders' wealth. This school of thought is ascribed to Milton Friedman. On the other hand, a growing number of scholars and practitioners argue that the purpose of organizations is 'to act responsibly towards the environment and towards all people affected by the corporation' (Saint & Tripathi, 2010:1). This school of

thought is ascribed to R. Edward Freeman. While the former stance espouses the stakeholder theory, the latter espouses the shareholder theory, hence the shareholder–stakeholder debate is also identified in literature as the Friedman–Freeman debate.

Central to both theories is the concept of ownership and value. Saint and Tripathi (2010) explain that Friedman (1970) argues in favour of maximizing return for shareholders. Accordingly, he considers the firm owned and operated for the benefit of shareholders. Property rights of owners who decide on the use of their assets are given priority. The decisions of people who invest in a corporation by pooling their resources and putting these under centralised control become the basis of the firm’s constitution (Coleman, 1990). The shareholder theory defines the singular goal of the firm in relation to achieving the best societal outcome and this is to maximize shareholder benefit (Jensen, 2000). This means that management should run the business to maximize the cash flow to shareholders by optimizing profits, reducing risks, and minimizing costs. The sole purpose of business is business and deviating from this dictum is not an option because this would be construed as misallocation, misappropriation, misrepresentation, or malversation of societal resources (Sternberg, 1997).

The foregoing explanations have implications for three important variables: structure, people, and social responsibility. An essential requirement that promotes the self-interest of shareholders is a strong governance structure (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). Such a structure is headed by a corporate executive who is an employee of the owners of the business and who conducts the business to make as much money as possible both legally and ethically (Friedman, 1970). As to the question of social responsibility, Friedman claims

that his social responsibility doctrine does not deviate from other collective doctrines in terms of philosophy. In his book *Capitalism and Freedom: Fortieth Anniversary Edition* originally written in 1962, Friedman still echoes this doctrine that “there is one and only one social responsibility of business to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud (Friedman, 2009:133).” This is largely in favour of shareholders.

To summarize, the shareholder view of the purpose of the firm puts primacy on free markets, economic efficiency, and profit maximization which reflects the neoclassical economic theory (Endres, 1997). This view is defined by three parameters. First, shareholders own the corporation and make decisions on how managers use company’s resources to further social goals that are directly related to profit-making; second, the companies’ role is solely to produce wealth, and pursue socially responsible objectives; and third, other organizations requested by socially responsible actions to deal with such kinds of functions not equipped to perform such role (Brando & Rodriguez, 2007).

An alternative view of the firm that challenged the neoclassical tradition was propounded by R. Edward Freeman in 1984. In his book, *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach* (Freeman 1984), he laid down the groundwork for the development of the stakeholder theory. The theory attempts to explain the firm environment relationship and its subsequent behaviour within such an environment. As an alternative to the shareholder theory, the stakeholder theory argued that the firm exists to serve a broader interest

beyond economic value creation for shareholders alone (Saint & Tripathi, 2010). A more detailed discussion of the stakeholder theory follows in section 2.3.

On the whole, the foregoing discussions show that theories of the firm and its purpose are influenced by the outlook towards key people that make up or influence the organization and whether they are considered shareholders or stakeholders. Spee and Jarzabowski (2011) explain that the re-shaping of a firm's identity involves a process of iteration enabled by its stakeholders that are created and solidified in a recursive manner. Hence, the changing nature of business and global competition is now making the concept of stakeholders a plausible alternative because of the changing nature of relationships with the organization.

Stakeholders are also significant to the firm because organizations or corporations are relational entities (Capra, 1995) and transactional entities as well (Carlson & Downs, 2014). Clarkson (1995) visualizes an organization as a complex web of relationships between primary stakeholders and among interest groups who are mutually interlinked by different rights, expectations, and responsibilities that are discharged for mutual benefit. The relationship can foster mutual interchange, such as stakeholder satisfaction and loyalty in exchange for the quality that they seek (Evans & Laskin, 1994). Since stakeholders make significant decisions that increase organizational efficiency, relationships with stakeholders would significantly reduce cost and increase revenues (Ford, 1980). Another aspect of the relationship with stakeholders is fostering a united voice about issues of importance to the organization (Schipper & Mircheff, 2012), but at times conflicts are unavoidable. Regardless of the effectiveness of leadership and governance, at the end of the day, it is

people rather than the organizations that make the relationship work (Clegg et al., 2011). On the whole, the more significant aspects of these relationships are the values created that benefit both the organization and its stakeholders.

Relationships are abstract and this makes it difficult to measure successful outcomes resulting from these relationships. Lately, empirical evidence that companies really do profit from meaningful relations with stakeholders has been reported among so called 'firms of endearment' or FoEs (Sisodia, Sheth, & Wolfe, 2014). Firms of Endearment are also the title of the book by Sisodia, Sheth, and Wolfe (2014:7), where they defined a FoE as a 'company that endears itself to stakeholders by bringing the interest of all stakeholder groups into strategic alignment.' According to the authors, FoEs have the capacity to satisfy both the functional and psychological needs of their stakeholders, which in turn engender affection for and loyalty to the company.

To determine whether stakeholder relationships matter, Sisodia, Sheth, and Wolfe (2014) selected companies that have consistently scored well with stakeholders and compared these with eleven 'good to great companies' identified in the best seller *Good to Great* (Collins & Collins, 2006). The result of the five-year study showed that:

- Over a ten-year horizon, the 13 FoEs outperformed the Good to Great companies 1,026 per cent to 331 per cent (a 3-to-1 ratio).
- Over five years, the 17 FoEs outperformed the Good to Great companies 128 per cent to 77 per cent (a 1.7-to-1 ratio).
- Over three years, the 18 FoEs performed on par with the Good to Great companies: 73 per cent to 75 per cent. (Collins & Collins, 2006:15).

The results indicate that companies with passion and purpose profited much more compared to good-to-excellent companies. The five-year study indicated that FoEs share distinct core values, policies, and operating attributes that differentiate them from good and excellent companies (Sisodia, Sheth, & Wolfe, 2014:8-9). These include:

- They subscribe to a purpose for being that is different from and goes beyond making money.
- They actively align the interests of all stakeholder groups, not just balance them.
- Their executive salaries are relatively modest.
- They operate at the executive level with an open door policy.
- Their employee compensation and benefits are significantly greater than the standard for the company's category.
- They devote considerably more time than their competitors to employee training.
- Their employee turnover is far lower than the industry average.
- They empower employees to make sure customers leave every transaction experience fully satisfied.
- They make a conscious effort to hire people who are passionate about the company and its products.
- They consciously humanize the company experience for customers and employees, as well as creating a nurturing work environment.
- They project a genuine passion for customers, and emotionally connect with them at a deep level.

- Their marketing costs are far lower than those of their industry peers, while customer satisfaction and retention are far higher.
- They view their suppliers as true partners and collaborate with them to move both their companies forward.
- They honor the spirit of laws rather than merely following the letter of the law.
- They consider their corporate culture to be their greatest asset and primary source of competitive advantage.
- Their cultures are resistant to short-term, incidental pressures, but also prove able to quickly adapt when needed (Sisodia, Sheth, & Wolfe, 2014:8-9).

The nature of the firm is a relevant starting point because of its influence on the emergence of the stakeholder theory. The nature of the firm has changed over time and so has its reconceptualization. This invariably affects the agents that influence and are influenced by the firm, including their various stakes. Likewise, the concepts of ownership, value, and social responsibility are changing, hence it is now more plausible to speak of stakeholders rather than shareholders when describing the firm and explaining its organic processes. The theory of the firm is significant to the stakeholder narrative because firms are being created and recreated as stakeholder corporations in time (Carlon & Downs, 2014), hence the inclusive relationship and dependency between the two entities. Other than this, the purpose of why the firm exists highlights the significance of stakeholders. The traditional viewpoint of the firm's purpose espoused by capitalist economies focuses on the maximization of wealth for shareholders. The stakeholder view of the purpose of the firm however expands the traditional view and recognizes the firm's relationship with multiple stakeholders and its impact on the wider society (Bailey, 2015; Heikkurinen & Makinen, in press). It is for this reason that this review started first with an overview of

the theory of the firm and adopted the holistic theory of the firm advanced by Crenson and Ginsberg (2002).

2.2. Stakeholders and their Classification

Establishing relationships with stakeholders that unlock profitability starts with a deep understanding of who the major stakeholders are. In the context of the study, the participants are properly internal stakeholders of an airline company who interact with their respective external stakeholders. An understanding of the meaning of stakeholders is therefore essential and a necessary requisite to answering the research questions posed. This portion of the review presents a more detailed description of the stakeholder concept which serves as a prelude to a critique and understanding the stakeholder theory. In this context, two questions are raised: what is a stakeholder? and who is the stakeholder? The former defines and characterizes stakeholders and the latter categorizes the different stakeholders that a company can have. This will help explain the difference among stakeholders. This will also clarify the definition of stakeholders adopted in the study as stated in the preceding chapter. Accordingly, it was noted that due to the plurality of stakeholder definitions, the study delineated the concept and defined stakeholders as those who the organization formally depends on in reviewing organizational strategy, contributing inputs to strategy formulation, participating in the formulation of strategy, and translating and cascading strategy to different units of the organization.

First, some background on the stakeholder concept. When the stakeholder concept started to enter into management discourse, a multi-definition concept espoused by different authors started to emerge. The earliest use of the term stakeholder is credited to the

Stanford Research Institute (SRI) that used it in an internal memo in 1963 (Fontaine, Haarman, & Schmid, 2006). In this respect, Fontaine, et al. (2006: 6) cited the definition of stakeholders by the institute 'as those groups without whose support the organization would cease to exist.' This was later modified to include 'those groups who are vital to the survival and success of the organization.' (Fontaine et al., 2006:6) Academic circles, however, prefer using the earlier definition of stakeholders by Freeman (1984) as 'any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization objectives' (Fontaine, et al., 2009:6). According to Damak-Ayadi and Pesqueux (2005:4) they comprise 'all of the agents for whom the firm's development and good health are of prime concern.' Donaldson and Preston (1995) adds that stakeholders are defined by 'their legitimate interest in the organization.' (Damak-Ayadi & Pesqueux, 2005:4).

Through the years, the definition of stakeholders has varied from author to author. To illustrate the point, Mitchell, et al. (1997:858) present a summary of definitions of stakeholders according to their stake in the organization, which is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Definitions of Stakeholders (Mitchell, et al., 1987:858)

Definition	Source
Those groups without whose support the organization would cease to exist	Stanford memo, 1963
Those who depend on the firm in order to achieve their personal goals and on whom the firm is depending on for its existence	Rhenman, 1964 as cited by Nasi, 1995
Those who are driven by their own interests and goals and are participants in a firm thus depending on it and whom for its sake the firm is depending	Ahlstedt & Jahnukainen, 1971 as cited by Nasi, 1995
Those who can affect the achievement of an organization's objectives or who are affected by the achievement of an organization's objectives (wide) Those on which the organization is depending on for its survival (narrow)	Freeman & Reed, 1983:91

Those who can affect or are affected by the achievement of an organization's objectives	Freeman, 1984:46
Those who can affect or are affected by a business	Freeman & Gilbert, 1987:397
Claimants who have contracts	Cornell & Shapiro, 1987:5
Those who have a stake or claim in an organization	Evan & Freeman, 1988:75.
Benefit from or harmed by and whose rights are violated or respected by corporate actions	Evans & Freeman, 1988:79
Those without whose support the organization would not exist	Bowie, 1988:112
Groups to whom the corporation is responsible	Alkhafaji, 1989:36
Those who assert to have one or more kinds of stakes-ranging from an interest to a right to ownership or legal title to the company's assets or properties	Carroll, 1989:57
Contract holders	Freeman & Evan, 1990
Those in relation with the organization	Thompson, et al., 1991:209
Those who have interest in the actions of an organization and have the ability to influence it	Savage, et al., 1991:61
Constituents who have legitimate claim on the firm	Hill & Jones, 1992:61
Those having some legitimate, non-trivial relationship with organizations	Brenner, 1993:205
Those who assert to have one or more kinds of stakes in business	Carroll, 1993:60
Participants in the human process of joint value creation	Freeman, 1994:415
Those who interact with and give meaning and definition to the corporation	Wicks, et al., 1994:483
Those whose well-being is the responsibility of the firm and they hold a moral or legal claim on the firm	Langtry, 1994:433
Those that might be influenced by or are potentially influencers of some organizations	Starik, 1994:90
Those who have or claim ownership rights or interests in a corporation and its activity	Clarkson, 1995:106
Those who interact with the firm and thus make its operation possible	Nasi, 1995:19
Those who are impacted or who could impact the firm or organization	Brenner, 1995:76
Persons or groups with legitimate interests in procedural and/or substantive aspects of corporate activity	Donaldson & Preston, 1995:85

The implication of these definitions is that stakeholders do not only exist but have claims or want something from the organization in the same way that the organization depends on them for their continued existence. Another implication is that an inevitable relationship exists between stakeholders and the organization. This highlights the significance of looking into the relationship of stakeholders and the organization. It can be noted that the definitions are highlighted by key words such as 'influence,' 'affects,' 'interests,' 'stakes,' 'support,' 'impact,' 'ownership,' and the like which emphasize to a certain extent how the roles and significance of stakeholders are conceptualized. This can be problematic because different firms differ and hence their perspective of stakeholders and their relationship with the firm also differs. This makes the question of 'who' the stakeholder is controversial (Saint & Tripathi, 2010). Do they represent those who affect or are affected by the corporation? Or are they inclusive only of those who contribute to wealth creation? An affirmative answer to these would only subordinate the stakeholder theory to the shareholder theory. Hence, the need to identify *who* stakeholders are is a crucial starting point. As Carlon and Downs (2014) stated, it appears that the term stakeholder is one that needs no explanation but at the same time needs greater clarity and precision in order to be useful. The authors came up with this assertion based on their examination of journals between 2004 and 2008 and found a total of 66 definitions of stakeholders given by the authors. Even from the context of stakeholders, the difference in their values, convictions, interests, and knowledge give them different frames of reference, hence their perspective towards the same phenomenon varies. As Duijvesteijn, et al. (2014) cites, 'same pig, different conclusions.'

At this juncture, the researcher calls attention to his earlier claim that the term stakeholder has a variety of meanings according to different authors who write about them hence a 'one size fits all' definition is just not possible. By operationally defining stakeholders in the context of the study as those who the organization formally depends on in reviewing organizational strategy, contributing inputs to strategy formulation, participating in the formulation of strategy, and translating and cascading strategy to different units of the organization, I find that this operational definition can fall within the range of conceptualizations of Freeman (1984:46) from those who can affect or are affected by the achievement of an organization's objectives to being participants in the human process of joint value creation Freeman (1994:415). In relation to the preceding section on the theory of the firm, Freeman and McVea (2001) suggest that the picture of the firm is constantly re-drawn by stakeholder concept, hence strategic management processes need to incorporate the stakeholder concept in their view of strategy.

The approach used in dealing with the need for identifying stakeholders is to classify them into typologies based on certain criteria. Typologies can also be helpful in assessing and categorizing the level of participation in order to determine the expected level of support required. In turn, comparing the expected and actual levels of support can be useful in testing several claims about participatory approaches (Ayodeji, Ayodele, & Reuben, 2016). The different criteria used by different authors have resulted in a variety of stakeholder identities which are illustrated in the following sections. The existence of multiple typologies offer the advantage of providing a wider option for researchers to match the most appropriate type of stakeholders with the purpose and context of their investigation. The following also shows the multi-dimensionality of stakeholder identity. For the purpose

of a more systematic appreciation, the researcher grouped these typologies as binaries; three-part taxonomies; frameworks, grids, matrices, and models; group relations; organization-specific; and relationship-based typologies.

2.2.1. Binaries

Binaries classify stakeholders in a mutually exclusive and 'either-or' manner. Earlier typologies of stakeholders include a straightforward distinction between internal and external stakeholders representing those who are inside the organization and those who are outside of it (Markwell, 2010) Another classification is narrow and wide stakeholders (Evans & Freeman, 1988) representing those who are more affected and those whose are less affected by the organization, respectively. Stakeholders are also divided into those who are active and passive (Mahoney, 1994) on the basis of their desire and capacity to participate in organizational activities.

Stakeholders can also be primary or secondary (Clarkson, 1995) based on their importance. Saint and Tripathi (2010:5) point out that this classification was later extended by Wheeler and Sallanpaa (1997) who offered a broad framework that classified stakeholders into four categories: primary social, secondary social, primary non-social, and secondary non-social. Primary stakeholders are human entities who have formal, official or contractual relations in which the impacts of relationships are direct. The corporation cannot survive without the participation of primary stakeholders, hence they are extremely influential. Secondary stakeholders are sometimes extremely influential but have less direct involvement. They have a public or special interest stake in the organization. In contrast to social stakeholders, non-social stakeholders are not a factor in the survival of

the organization nor are they influenced by it. Saint and Tripathi (2010:6) show the make-up of each category in the framework shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Difference between Primary and Secondary Stakeholders (Saint & Tripathi, 2010:6)

Primary Social Stakeholders	Secondary Social Stakeholders
Shareholders and other investors	Government and regulators
Employees and managers	Civic institutions
Customers	Social pressure groups
Local communities	Media and academic commentators
Suppliers and business partners	Trade bodies
	Competitors
Primary Non-Social Stakeholders	Secondary Non-Social Stakeholders
The natural environment	Environmental interest groups
Future generations	Animal welfare organizations
Non-human species	

Other categorisations include voluntary or involuntary stakeholders who are dichotomized on the basis of their willing engagement with the corporation; legitimate or illegitimate stakeholders who are distinguished based on the validity of their claims; recognized or unrecognized stakeholders who are discerned based on the legitimacy of their claims; and known or unknown stakeholders who are accepted on the basis of their identity (ACCA, 2008).

From these classifications, I find that binaries are simplistic categories that have generic value. These are more useful in coming up with an inclusive classification of those who are

internal to the organization, but using these for external stakeholders can be problematic because external stakeholders come in so many varied forms. The use of binaries, however, has value to the study because of the exclusive nature of stakeholders who participated in the study. In using this system, there are indications that the stakeholders in the study can be internal, formal, primary, legitimate, recognized, and known stakeholders.

2.2.2. Three-part criteria taxonomies

Another way of identifying stakeholders is based on a taxonomy founded on a three-part criteria. For instance, Saint and Tripathi (2010:7-8) cites Donaldson and Preston's (1995) classification of stakeholders based on their relationship as normative, instrumental, and descriptive. Accordingly, the kind of relationship with stakeholders can be discerned by asking the right questions about them. Simply asking **how** the organization relates to its stakeholders is descriptive. Asking how organizations **should** relate to its stakeholders is normative while asking **about what happens** if the organization relate to stakeholders in certain ways is instrumental.

Another example is the three-part criteria of power, legitimacy, and urgency to identify important stakeholders suggested by Mitchell, et al. (1997:865-867). Accordingly, power refers to the relationship among social actors where some actors can get others to do that which they would not otherwise have done. Legitimacy refers to socially accepted and expected structures of behavior. Authority emerges when power is combined with legitimacy. Urgency refers to the degree to which a stakeholder claims call for immediate attention. Mitchell, et al. (1997) later added another criterion which they called salience. Salience refers to the degree to which competing stakeholders claims are given priority by

the organization. To this effect, Mitchell, et al. (1997:874) came up with qualitative classes of stakeholders shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Stakeholder Typology (Mitchell, et al., 1997:874)



Damas, et al. (2013) further explain that Mitchell, et al. (1997) built on these criteria and extended the classification of stakeholders as dormant, arbitrary, claimant, dominant dangerous, dependent, and definitive. Dormant stakeholders have the power but cannot use it to impose its will on the organization because they have no legitimacy and no urgency. As such, they have little or no interaction with the company. Arbitrary stakeholders have legitimacy but not the power to influence the company, hence it cannot even claim urgency. Claimant stakeholders' most important attribute is urgency but has no legitimacy or power, it should not so much disturb the company; however, it should be monitored for potential of obtaining a second attribute. Dominant stakeholders have power and legitimacy which is the basis of their influence. Dangerous stakeholders have power and urgency but no legitimacy. They can be coercive stakeholders and possibly

violent, and this endangers the organization. Dependent stakeholders claim urgency and legitimacy but depend on the power of another stakeholder group to have their claims be taken into consideration. Lastly, definitive stakeholders have power and legitimacy and are practically definitive and claims urgency to be immediately attended to (Damas, et al., 2013:250). A summary of the features of these stakeholders is show in Table 3.

This expanded permutation of stakeholder classification allows a better categorisation but is still quite general because of the varying outlook towards power, legitimacy, and urgency depending on the nature, size, and ownership of the organization and the nature of the personalities involved. In family-owned corporations for instance, the issue of legitimacy due to merit can be overturned by family affiliation. The legitimacy of a more meritorious stakeholder who is not a family member can be disregarded in favour of a family member. Nevertheless, the above classification has value in the study because it helps in situating the stakeholders investigated who are instrumental stakeholders by way of Donaldson and Preston's (1995) classification and comes close to expectant (dominant) stakeholders by way of Mitchell, et al.'s (1997) types.

Table 3. Typology of Stakeholders (Damas, et al., 2013:250)

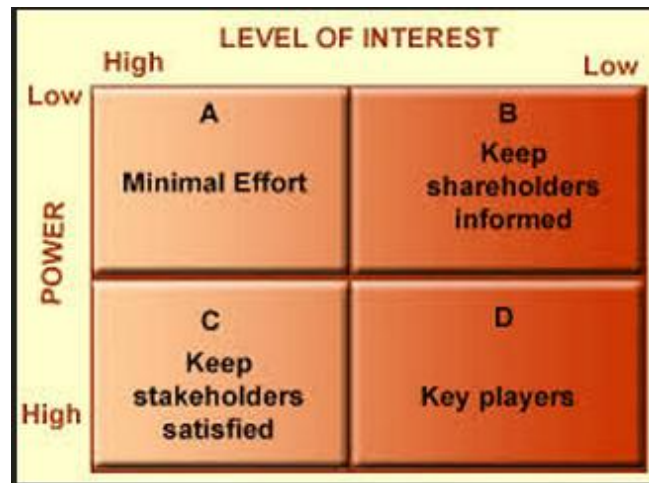
Class	Attribute	Company View	Company Action
Latent stakeholders	One of the identifying attributes	Recognition of stakeholder's existence	Limited time, energy, and other resources to track stakeholder behaviour and to manage relationship
Dormant stakeholder	Power No legitimate relationship or urgent claim	Cognizant of stakeholder as they may acquire legitimacy and urgency	Monitor
Discretionary stakeholder	Legitimacy No power	No pressure on company to engage in an active relationship	Engage through corporate social responsibility
Demanding stakeholders	Urgency Neither power nor legitimacy	Passing company attention	No action
Expectant stakeholders: dominant	Power and legitimacy	Formal mechanisms that recognize their relations with the company	Expect and receive much attention from the company
Expectant stakeholders: dependent	Urgency and legitimacy	Needs advocacy or guardianship of other stakeholders	Full engagement
Expectant stakeholders: dangerous	Urgency and power	Seen as coercion and possible danger to the stakeholder-company relationship	Mitigation
Definitive stakeholders	Urgency, legitimacy, and power		Clear and immediate mandate to give priority to stakeholder claim

2.2.3. Frameworks, grids, matrices, and models

Other authors have resorted to developing criterion frameworks, grids, matrices, and models to classify stakeholders. For instance, the interest of stakeholders on the firm is adopted in discerning who the stakeholders are. To this effect, Mendelow (1991) developed a framework reflecting the levels of stakeholder interest. This framework is

based on his argument that the behavioural predictability of stakeholders can influence the stakeholder management strategy (Austen, et al., 2006). Mendelow’s framework is shown in Figure 3.

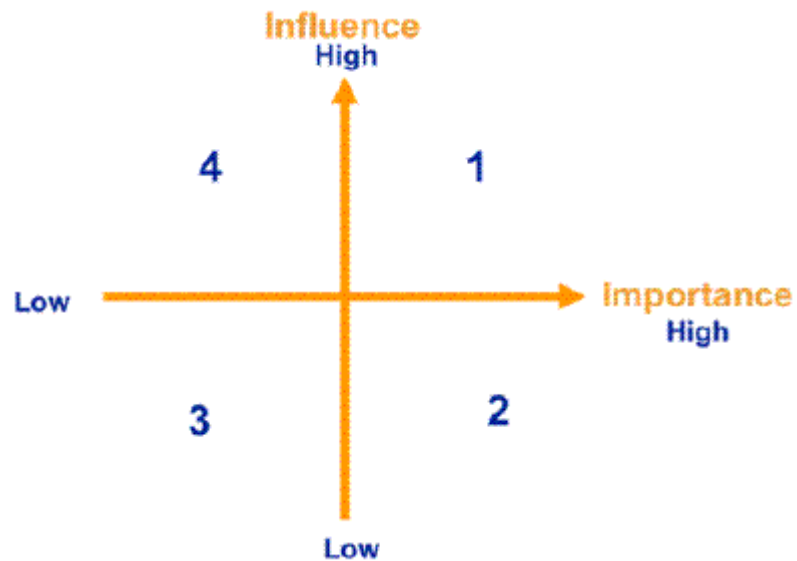
Figure 3. Stakeholders according to Levels of Interest (Austen, et al., 2008:9)



Of particular note, stakeholder interests and expectations can be in conflict with each other, hence the framework suggest ways for managing these competing relationships and interests. Accordingly, the stakeholders with the highest combination of power and interest are likely to be those with the most actual influence over objectives. Power is the stakeholder’s ability to influence objectives, while interest is the stakeholder’s willingness (Austen, et al., 2006:10). I find this simply an extension of Mitchell, et.al.’s (1997) typology which finds significance when there are conflicts of some form in terms of power and influence within the organization. Organizations that can take the most advantage of this typology are mergers and acquisitions or joint ventures where conflicts can be typical in terms of the management and control of organizations.

Another basic tool used in stakeholder identification, classification, and analysis is the influence/importance matrix of Kennon, Howden, and Hartley (2005) shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Tool for Stakeholder Analysis (Kennon, Howden, & Hartley, 2005:12)



Accordingly, key stakeholders placed in Quadrant 1 have high influence and high importance, hence need to be fully engaged. Stakeholders in Quadrant 2 can be highly important but having low influence or direct power, however need to be kept informed through appropriate education and communication. Stakeholders in Quadrant 3 have low influence and low importance and care should be taken to avoid the dangers of unfavorable lobbying and therefore should be closely monitored and kept on board. Lastly, stakeholders in Quadrant 4 can hold potentially high influence but low importance, hence should be kept satisfied with appropriate approval and perhaps bought in as patrons or supporters.

This matrix is but a variation of the previous framework but gives more focus on the importance of stakeholders. Importance is quite a relative term depending on organizations. At best, this matrix can be used in combination with that of Mendelow

(1991) for a more comprehensive classification of stakeholders. It can be used as a second layer of categorising stakeholders after the use of Mendelow's (1991) model.

A similar tool is the power/interest grid of Ackermann and Eden (2011), shown in Figure 5, in which each quadrant of the grid defines one of four categories of stakeholder.

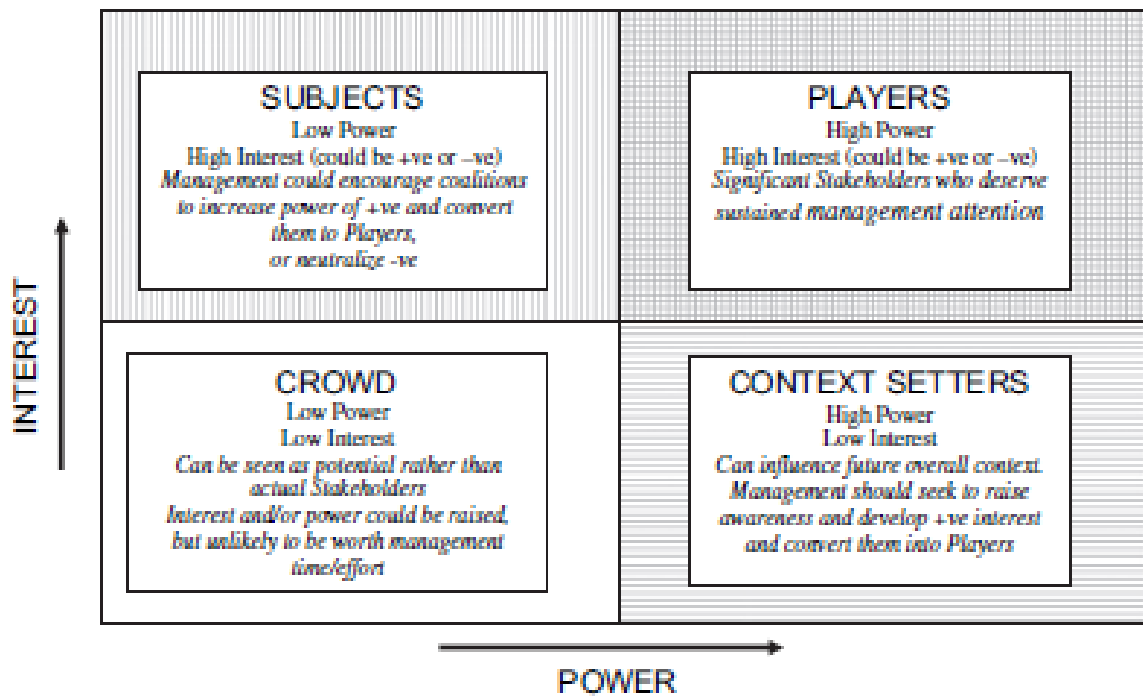


Figure 5. Power-Interest Grid (Ackerman & Eden, 2011:183)

Based on the descriptions given by Ackerman and Eden (2010),

the uppermost stakeholders in the grid are those with the most stakes in the organization, but with varying degrees of power. Those to the right-hand side enjoy more power to affect an organization's strategies, but may or may not actually be concerned about the organization's activities. 'Players' are those interested stakeholders who also have a high degree of power to support the organization's strategies. 'Subjects', on the other hand, are interested stakeholders but have less influence. The lowermost categories can be considered 'potential' stakeholders, who have not shown much interest in the organization. 'Context setters' are potential stakeholders who may have a high degree of power over the future of the organization. The 'Crowd' on the other hand currently exhibit either interest in or power to influence strategy outcomes" (Ackermann & Eden, 2011:183).

The power–interest grid uses the same criteria for classification as Mendelow (1991) but gives a different flavor to the interpretation that makes it a variant form. I find that Ackerman and Eden’s (2011) matrix is more appropriate for classifying actors while that of Mendelow (1991) is more for prescribing actions.

In consideration of the different types and kinds of stakeholders, Friedman and Miles (2006) have developed a model that can be used to identify the style of managing stakeholder relations shown in Table 4. According to the authors, manipulation, therapy, and informing on the lower level are related to situations in which stakeholders are merely being informed about decisions that have already taken place. Explaining, placation, consultation, and negotiation in the middle level relate to a situation where stakeholders have the opportunity to voice their concerns prior to a decision being made, but with no assurance that their concerns will impact on the end result. Involvement, collaboration, partnership, delegated power, and stakeholder control on the higher levels involve active or responsive attempts at empowering stakeholders in corporate decision-making (Friedman & Miles, 2006:162-163).

Table 4. Styles of Managing Stakeholder Relations (Friedman & Miles, 2006:162-163)

		Stakeholder management tools and nature of response			
Degrees of stakeholder power	Proactive or responsive/trusting	12. Stakeholder control	Majority representation of stakeholders in decision-making	Forming or agreeing to decisions	Multi-way dialogue: projects
		11. Delegated power	Minority representation of stakeholders in decision-making		Multi-way dialogue: board representation
		10. Partnership	Joint decision-making over specific projects		Multi-way dialogue: joint ventures
Degree of involvement		9. Collaboration	Some joint decision-making afforded to stakeholders	Having influence on decisions	Multi-way dialogue: strategic alliance
		8. Involvement	Stakeholders provide conditional support, if conditions are not met support is removed		Multi-way dialogue: constructive criticism
Degree of tokenism		Responsive/Neutral	7. Negotiation		
	6. Consultation		Organization has the right to decide, stakeholders can advise	Being heard before decisions	Two-way dialogue
	5. Placation		Stakeholders can hear and be heard and have no assurance of being heeded		
	4. Explaining		Educate stakeholders	Knowledge about decisions	Two-way dialogue: workshops

Non-participation	Autocratic/ Cynical	3.Informing			One-way dialogue: corporate reports
		2.Therapy	Cure stakeholders of their ignorance and pre-conceived beliefs		One-way dialogue: briefings, etc.
		1. Manipulation	Misleading stakeholders, attempting to change stakeholder expectations		

From the foregoing, it can be seen that relationships with stakeholders involve a dynamic process that is determined and governed by a number of factors, such as different stakeholder groups, same stakeholder groups at different times, stakeholder characteristics, different stages in an organization’s life cycle, and different strategies pursued by stakeholders and the organization, among others. Based on the dynamics of stakeholder relations, Harrison (2013) cites the steps in the stakeholder cycle (Bourne & Weaver, 2010:7) that can be used in developing a comprehensive stakeholder relations management. This includes the following processes:

- Identify stakeholders. Depending on the size and type of organization, likely stakeholders can include the board, management, employees, customers, suppliers and the community within which the organization operates.
- Prioritize them. Prioritizing begins with listing stakeholders in order of importance. This process needs to be done with the goal of the organization and the level of stakeholder information in mind. This will ensure personalization and consistency across communication channels at a later point in the process.
- Understand their needs. Stakeholders require consistent and regular communication and service a key that knows what information they have, how

accurate it is, how it aligns with the organization's goals and what information stakeholders need. This should be aligned with the groups at the bottom needing the least amount of information and the groups at the top needing the most.

- Engage with them. This involves an innovative and efficient manner in which to communicate with these stakeholders. There must be a communication plan in place and the engagement process must be a two-way process. It has also to be considered at this point that stakeholders need a forum to air concerns and grievances while having the comfort of knowing they will get a response. At this stage, stakeholders need to know when to expect communication and what sort of communication to expect.
- Monitor engagement efforts. This involves tracking the efforts of the organization and gauging how stakeholders respond to these. Speaking to individuals directly, encourage feedback and through email tracking can assess whether people are reading the information that are disseminated. . The use of surveys can also establish who thinks what and why. Knowing what the perception is will go a long way towards finding the necessary means to turn it around (Harrison, 2013:1-2).

The foregoing assumes that organizations are clear on who their stakeholders are and hence can focus on the management of their relations. The model attempts to cover a wide spectrum of possible consequences in relationships and I find this of value to organizations that have a wide range of stakeholder types whose relationships also proportionally vary in scope.

The aforementioned discussions which rationalize the theoretical basis for stakeholder analysis was extended and a comprehensive model was developed that identifies stakeholders, differentiates between and categorises stakeholders, and investigates the relationships between stakeholders. Figure 6 depicts the methods covered in the typology, including details of the resources required, level of stakeholder participation, and their strengths and weaknesses (Reed, et al., 2009:1936).

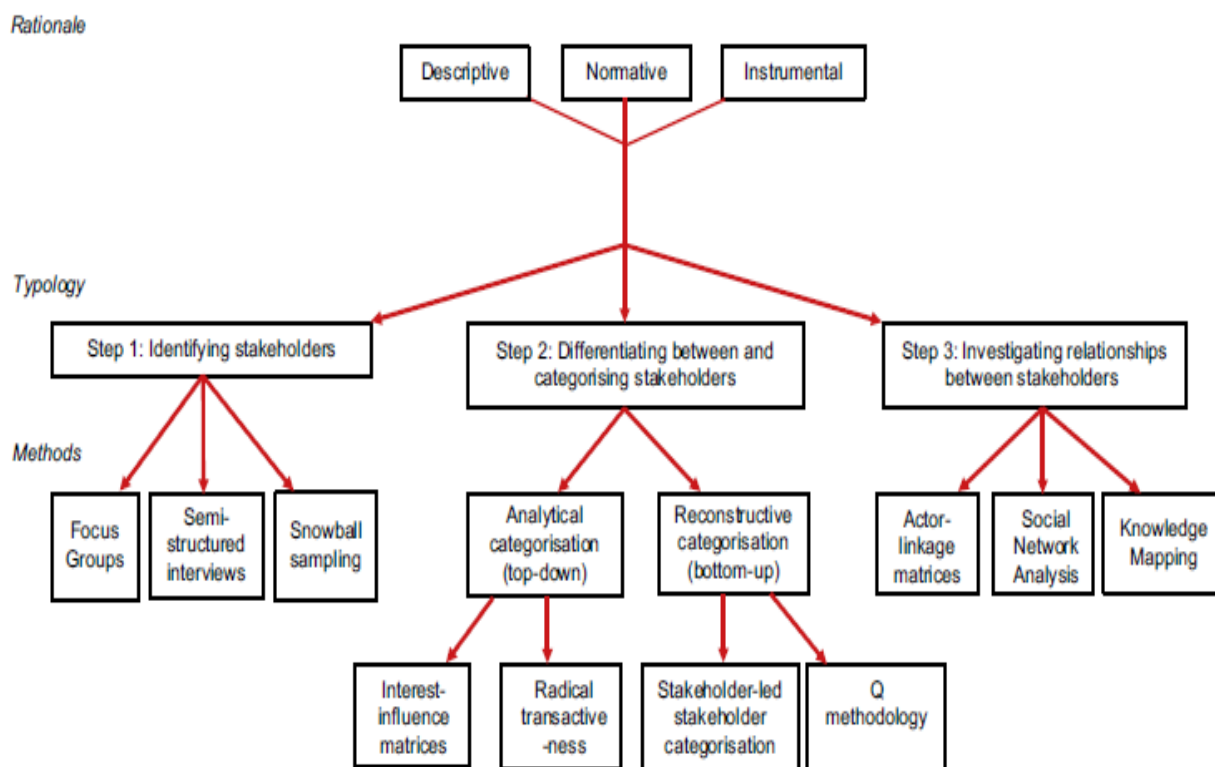


Figure 6. Comprehensive Model for Stakeholder Identification (Reed, et al., 2009:1936)

In Table 5, Reed, et al. (2009:1937) summarized the resources required, level of stakeholder participation, strengths and weaknesses of each of the method in the typology.

This model puts more flesh on the basic classification of stakeholders as descriptive, instrumental, or normative. It can be a good tool for organizations because they can fit their prescribed actions based on their capabilities and resources. The prescribed actions are also very specific, which means that the model can be ready for use by organizations that fit the assumptions of the model.

Table 5. Description of each of the Method in Reed, et al.'s Typology (Reed, et al., 2009:1937)

Focus groups	A small group brainstorm stakeholders, their interests, influences, and other attributes and categorise them	High quality facilitation; room hire; food and drinks; facilitation materials	Rapid hence cost effective; adaptable; possible to reach group consensus over stakeholder categories; particularly useful for generating data on complex issues requiring discussions	Less structured than some alternatives so requires effective facilitation for good results
Structured interviews	Interviews with a cross-section of stakeholders to supplement focus group data	Interview time; transport; audio-visual materials	Useful for in-depth insights to stakeholder relations to triangulate data collected from focus groups	Time-consuming and hence costly; difficult to reach consensus on stakeholder categories
Snow-ball sampling	Individuals from initial categories are interviewed, identifying new stakeholders and categories	Same as above	Easy to secure interviews without data protection issues	Sample may be biased by social networks of the first individuals in the snow ball
Interest-influence matrices	Stakeholders are placed on a matrix according to their relative interest and influence	Can be done within focus group setting as above	Possible to prioritize stakeholders for inclusion	Prioritization may marginalize certain groups

Stakeholder-led categorization	Stakeholders themselves classify stakeholders into categories	Same as semi-structured interviews	Stakeholder categories are based on perceptions of stakeholders	Different stakeholders may be placed in the same categories making categorisation meaningless
Q methodology	Stakeholders sort statement taken from a discourse according to how much they agree with them	Materials for statement sorting; interview time; transport	Different social discourses surrounding an issue can be identified	Does not identify all possible discourses
Actor-linkage matrices	Stakeholders are tabulated into a two-dimensional matrix and their relationships are identified using codes	Can be done within the focus group setting	Relatively easy requiring few resources	Can become confusing and difficult to use
Social network analysis	Used to identify the network of stakeholders and measuring relational ties between them	Interview questionnaire, training in the approach and analysis, time software	Gain insight into the boundary of stakeholder networks; the structure of the networks and identifies influential stakeholders	Time-consuming and tedious
Knowledge mapping	Used in conjunction with SNA; involves semi-structured interviews to identify interaction and knowledge	Same as semi-structured interviews	Identifies stakeholders that would work well together as well as those of power balance	Knowledge needs may still not be made due to the difference in the types of knowledge held and needed
Radical transactiveness	Snow-ball sampling to identify fringe stakeholders; development of strategies to address concerns	Training in approach; time	Identifies stakeholders and issues that might otherwise be missed and minimizes risks to future project	Time-consuming and costly

Another model is the Stakeholder Relationship Management Model (SRMM) developed by Bourne (2006). This model is based on the assumption that the readiness of the organization to promote and manage meaningful relations is paramount as managing the

relationship between and among stakeholders increases the chances of achieving successful outcomes. The SRMM is a powerful visualization tool that summarizes the guidelines for organizations to align their implementation of managing relations with stakeholders to their level of readiness.

An example of the model is shown in Figure 7.

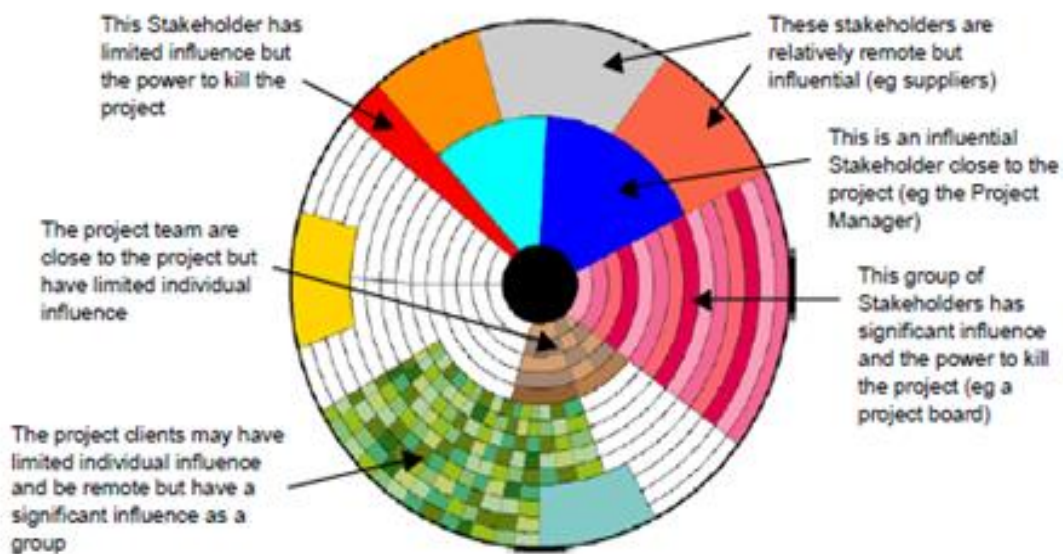


Figure 7. The SRMM Model (Bourne, 2006:36)

The stages and features of the SRMM are summarized in Table 6. An extension of the assumption behind the SRRM accounting for the right stakeholders and ensuring the readiness of the organization should consider certain principles that govern the relationship of stakeholders. Friedman and Miles (2006) cited a list of principles developed by the Clarkson Center for Business Ethics (1999) that summarize the key features of managing relations with stakeholders. These principles call on managers to (1)

acknowledge and actively monitor all the legitimate concerns of stakeholders and take into account their interest in decision-making and operations; (2) listen and openly communicate with stakeholders about their concerns and contributions as well as the risks they face in being involved with the company; (3) behave in a sensitive manner towards the concerns and capabilities of stakeholders; (4) recognize the interdependence of efforts and rewards, achieve equity in the distribution of benefits and burdens, and take into account the respective risks and vulnerabilities of stakeholders; (5) minimize risk and harm arising from corporate activity by cooperating with other entities, both private and public; (6) avoid jeopardizing inalienable human rights or giving rise to risks that are patently unacceptable to relevant stakeholders; and (7) address potential role conflicts by the use of open communication, appropriate reporting and incentive system, and third party review when the need arises (Friedman & Miles, 2006:151).

Table 6. Stages and Features of the SRMM Model (Bourne, 2008:9)

SRMM Stage	Features	Methodology Steps	Reporting / Tools	Comments
1. Ad hoc: some use of processes	One area recognises the need for improved SHM	Generally focuses on simplified selected steps. Sometimes just Steps 4 and 5	Self-developed tools - Word templates - Spreadsheet lists	Requires continuous and significant management 'push' to maintain impetus
2. Procedural: focus on processes and tools	SHM introduced as part of implementation of consistent processes (perhaps result of CMMI assessment)	Sometimes all five steps but truncated and simplified	Standardised tools - Word templates - Spreadsheets with macros - Simple database	Require continuous and significant management 'push' to maintain impetus
3. Relational: focus on the stakeholders and mutual benefits	Recognition of usefulness for competitor analysis, or support for mergers/acquisition	All five steps implemented. Move towards valuing insights / information in decision making	Fully functional tools - Spreadsheets with macros - Sophisticated databases	Useful for specific applications or events; rarely with an intention of continuous application
4. Integrated: methodology is repeatable and integrated	'Business as usual' application using the full methodology for all projects and selected operational work	Steps 1 – 5 with Step 4: engage and Step 5: being vital for evidence of success	Graphic reports, visualisation, engagement profiles, etc, used in management reports and KPIs	The methodology and tool are used as a demonstration of repeatable application within that part of the organisation
5. Predictive: used for health checks, predictive risk assessment and management:	Implementation of the full methodology and supporting tools tool	Steps 1 - 5. 'Lessons Learned' & comparative data. Integrated data across programs, etc.	Trend reporting, pro-active risk identification (unusual profiles) Comparison between projects and different categories of work	Organisation –wide and complete focus on continuous improvement as competitive advantage

The foregoing is an affirmation of what I earlier mentioned concerning different authors writing differently about stakeholders and how their relations can be managed. We can see, however, that there is some sort of conceptual accretion where the basic concepts are built upon to project a more complete picture of the situation. Accretion will likely go on and on because as discussed, firms vary in their nature; but one thing that cannot be overlooked is their spread in time which is inevitable. Considering everything said about stakeholders would just muddle the view in the same manner that 'too many chefs will spoil the broth.' The point is that these are prescriptions that are useful for organizations in understanding their stakeholders. One advantage of having several perspectives is that

it allows organizations some leeway in trying to choose the best concept, theory, or model that suits their nature and purpose. As the methods of classifying stakeholders and their relations develop to greater levels of complexity, this calls attention to the willingness and capacity of organizations to implement these otherwise, the purpose of these typologies and models would only be good on paper but would fail to be translated into concrete actions.

In so far as the nature of the typologies, grids, matrices, and models are concerned, it can be noted that these are largely heuristics and are qualitative in nature. This offers two advantages. First, these conceptualizations are not mutually exclusive, thus allowing cross-model corroboration. Second, the heuristic nature of these models allows future investigations into their validity through both empirical and qualitative validations. The usefulness of these models, however, depends on the relational orientation of the firm. Identifying stakeholders, for instance, is an imperative for dyadically independent and collectivist firms. For some firms, identifying stakeholders is but a first step in the value creation process because the more significant aspect of identity construction lies in the stakeholder valuing process. According to Carlon and Downs (2014), stakeholder valuing is a practical application of the stakeholder theory that starts with identity construction after which proceeding to the measurement of the value of stakeholders. The authors illustrated the case of Boeing in valuing their employees, customers, environment, and corporate citizenship.

2.2.4. Groups relations

The relationship of groups of people with the organization can identify who the stakeholders are (Friedman & Miles, 2006). According to Friedman and Miles (2006) the main groups of stakeholders are:

customers, employees, local communities, suppliers and distributors, and shareholders. In addition, other groups and individuals are also considered to be stakeholders such as the media, the public in general, business partners, future generations, past generations (founders of organizations), academics, competitors, NGOs, financiers, government, regulators, policy makers (Fontaine, et al., 2006:6-7)

Friedman (2012) further includes owners/investors, suppliers, competitors, communities, government regulators and legislators. Clarkson (1995) likewise identified stakeholders as shareholders/owners, employees, customers, suppliers, government, communities. Alexander, Miesing, and Parsons (2004) grouped stakeholders into three: customers/clients, employees, and suppliers/distributors. These groups were the groups recognized by Porter when he formulated his five forces of competition. For Schipper and Mircheff (2012), stakeholders include business associates, industry association, regulatory groups, government, academia, advocacy groups, environmental groups, consumer groups and community groups. For Morris and Baddache (2012), stakeholders consist of owners, customers, employees, industry, community, environment, government, and civil society organizations. Svendsen, et al. (2001) grouped of stakeholders according to the variety of interests or 'stakes' that groups of people hold in organizations. Hence, direct stakeholders include customers, employees, competitors, suppliers, and debt holders who have economic stakes or interests in a company. They also included in their list labour unions, community groups, environmental organizations, human rights organizations and

consumer advocates who have a stake in the company’s impact on the wider community and the environment.

What can be discerned in the foregoing enumeration of stakeholders is its totalizing nature because it attempts to be all inclusive. This, I find a problematic in the identification of what groups are truly the stakeholders of a firm. Strictly speaking, operationalizing these in the real sense would lead to a condition of ‘stakeholder overload’ which will only serve as a constraint to the smooth operation of organizations. Hence, I favour a more operational definition of stakeholders that is determined relative to the nature of the organization and its organizational prerogatives.

2.2.5. Organization-specific

Specific organizations also explicitly identify who their stakeholders are. An illustration that can be given are Firms of Endearment (FoEs). For FoEs, five stakeholders are organized around the company, where society is considered the ultimate stakeholder. Sisodia, Sheth, and Wolfe (2014:11) summarize these stakeholders in Table 7.

Table 7. Summary of Stakeholders (Sisodia, Sheth, & Wolfe, 2014:11)

Stakeholder	Definition
Society	Local and broader communities as well as governments and other societal institutions, especially non-governmental organizations (NGOs); we also include the environment as part of this stakeholder
Partners	Upstream partners such as suppliers, horizontal partners, and downstream partners such as retailers
Investors	Individual and institutional shareholders as well as lenders
Customers	Individual and organizational customers
Employees	Current, future, and past employees and their families

Each stakeholder is linked to all other stakeholders, coming together to form a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. This is shown in Figure 8.



Figure 8. Firms of Endearment (Sisodia, Sheth, & Wolfe, 2014:12)

The relationship between and among stakeholders is managed in such a way that allows a two-way flow of value between both parties to the relationship and aligns the interest of all parties.

From the gamut of concepts regarding stakeholders, Carlon and Downs (2014) agree with Mitchell, et al. (1997) on the need for a theory of stakeholder identification that can reliably distinguish stakeholders from non-stakeholders. Carlon and Downs (2014) also cited Jawahar and McLaughlin's (2001) suggestion on the identification of stakeholders based on the firm's life cycle. As the firm's life cycle changes, so will the value of stakeholders based on their capacity to satisfy certain organizational needs.

In the context of this study, the company in focus has grown to a stage where the various definitions and classifications of stakeholders apply considering the company's different

businesses units and their management processes. It is for this reason that in investigating the relationship of stakeholders in the planning process, the researcher set the parameters of the investigation by delineating stakeholders as those who the organization formally depends on in reviewing organizational strategy, contributing inputs to strategy formulation, participating in the formulation of strategy, and translating and cascading strategy to different units of the organization. As such, the stakeholders have active roles and responsibilities in the strategic planning process and are in a capacity to assess their relationship with other stakeholders and identify the challenges faced during the planning process. This assumption about stakeholders in the context of the company investigated was useful in informing the research questions investigated.

2.2.6 Stakeholder relations

In the context of the broader stakeholder relations process, Polonsky, et al. (2002:111-112) cited Touminen (1995) who suggested that stakeholder relations evolve and through relationships, organizations attempt to move stakeholders up in the ladder of loyalty by strengthening relations with stakeholders. He called this process stakeholder keeping which is different from stakeholder catching, which connotes establishing relations with stakeholders. He classifies stakeholders into potential, new, regular, supporting, and advocacy and predicted that all stakeholders would move up the ladder to become supportive stakeholders as their relationship with the organization matures. The ladder of loyalty is shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Ladder of Loyalty (Polonsky, et al., 2002:112)

Identify and establish stakeholder relationships (Stakeholder Catching)	Low ^	Advocating Stakeholders	High ^	Maintain and enhance stakeholder relationships (Stakeholder Keeping)
	:	Supporting Stakeholders	:	
	:	Regular Stakeholders	:	
	:	New Stakeholders	:	
	High v	Potential stakeholders	Low v	

Polonsky, et al. (2002) argued, however, that Tuominen's ladder of loyalty is rather simplistic and does not consider the complexity of relations in organizations. To this effect, they proposed a broadened ladder which may serve to locate a firm's actual and potential relationships with stakeholders. The broadened ladder is shown in Figure 9.

The expanded ladder classifies stakeholders into five groups: allied, cooperative, neutral, competitive, and threatening. Allied stakeholders are stakeholders with whom the firm shares a cooperative relationship orientation characterized by mutual understanding and welfare promotion. They have common experience that allows them to evaluate their relationship strategically based on an identification based form of trust. Cooperative stakeholders behave in the same manner relative to relationship orientation and evaluation modes. In this level, trust is no longer based on identification, but on the profound knowledge that the parties have about each other. This profound knowledge of each other makes the relationship resilient. Neutral stakeholders are those that share individualistic relationship orientation with the organization. Their relationship is based on the desire to achieve their individual goals, although they perceive their goals as

independent of the other party's goals. As such, the relationship is evaluated in an operative mode, such that the assessment is focused more on short-term interactions. Competitive stakeholders relate with the organization in a competitive manner such that they not only try to reach their individual goals, but also strive for outperforming the other. The organization and their competitive stakeholders perceive each other as engaged in a zero sum game. The relationship of threatening stakeholders and the organization is one of a struggle in which only one of them can prevail. Their relationship is characterized by distrust and both try to avoid vulnerability to the other (Polonsky, et al., 2002:199-121).

Table 9. Broadened Ladder of Loyalty (Polonsky, et al., 2002:119)

Allied	Cooperative Strategic	Identification-based	Argumentative High frequency Bi-directional Informal Indirect	Multi-loop	Very low	Positive and weak High commitment
Cooperative	Cooperative Strategic	Knowledge-based	Argumentative Persuasive High frequency Bi-directional Informal Indirect	Single loop Double Loop	Higher	Positive and weak Limited commitment
Neutral	Individualistic Operative	Calculus-based	Persuasive Low frequency Bi-directional Formal Direct	Single Loop	High	Positive/negative Low/no commitment
Competitive	Individualistic Operative Cooperative	Calculus-based	Persuasive Low frequency Uni-directional Formal Direct	Single Loop	High	Negative and strong Low commitment
Threatening	Cooperative Operative	Distrust	Persuasive Manipulative Low /high frequency Uni/bi-directional Informal Direct	Single Loop	Very high	Negative and strong Low/high commitment

In addition to the foregoing, there is also an opposition stakeholder who may have the capacity to adversely influence outcomes through the resources and influence the command. Others are marginalized stakeholders who lack the recognition or capacity in collaborative efforts (WWF, 2000). Other classifications emphasize the stakeholders' capacity for threat and cooperation (Savage, et al., 1991); awareness, ignorance and whether their attitude is supportive or opposing (Turner, 2002); and centrality and density in attempting to recognize and show the power and communication ties (Rowley, 1997).

Knowing who the stakeholders are and positioning them in relation to the organization is the first step in managing the organization's relationships with the stakeholders. On this note, the specific context of the study, the nature of the problem, and the influence of stakeholders are the driving forces for the choice of internal and external stakeholders in the study. The extent of engaging them in meaningful relations has also to be considered. One important consideration in this context is to understand that individuals and groups behave differently in different situations. Hence, their relationship can have differential impact on organizational policy, strategy, and operations. Hence, it is necessary to estimate the influence and importance of stakeholders in relation to achieving organizational goals and objectives (Markwell, 2010). According to Markwell (2010), influence refers to how powerful stakeholders are in influencing the direction of organizational outcomes. On the other hand, importance refers to stakeholders whose problems, needs and interests are given priority by the organization. Influence can either be direct or indirect. Markwell (2010) cites examples of direct influence such as:

- Legal hierarchy (command control of budgets)
- Authority of leadership (charismatic, political)
- Control of strategic resources (suppliers of services or other inputs)
- Possession of specialist knowledge
- Negotiation position (strength in relation to other stakeholders).

Similarly, indirect influence may also be achieved through:

- Social, economic or political in status
- Varying degrees of organization and consensus in groups
- Ability to influence the control of strategic resources significant to the project
- Informal influence through links with other group
- Other stakeholders in assessing their importance to the project issues.

Markwell (2010) further cites possible sources of stakeholder influence, to wit Table 10.

Table 10. Stakeholders' Source of Influence (Markwell, 2010)

Internal Stakeholders	External Stakeholders
Hierarchy (formal power), e.g. authority, senior position	Control of strategic resources, e.g. materials, labour, money
Influence (informal power), e.g. leadership style	Involvement in strategy implementation, e.g. strategic partners in distribution channels
Control of strategic resources, e.g. responsibility for strategic products	Possession of knowledge and skills, e.g. cooperation partners, subcontractors
Possession of knowledge and skills, e.g. expert knowledge that forms the organizations core competence	Through internal links, e.g. networking
Control of the environment, e.g. negotiation, and network of relationships to external stakeholders	
Involvement in strategy implementation, e.g. as a change agent or responsibility for strategic projects	

The rise of social media has given rise to the agenda of engaging stakeholders beyond simply managing their relations. As such, the relationship with stakeholders is one that needs to be protected and cultivated to facilitate dialogue dynamics and enable participation (Luoma-aho, 2015). It is in this sphere where the value of engagement lies. Luoma-aho (2015) cites Brodie, et al.'s (2011) definition of engagement as the level of interaction that stakeholders have with the organization. In turn, these interactions influence the thoughts, actions, and emotions that stakeholders have with the organization. Luoma-ao (2015) argues that engagement can be either positive or negative. Negative engagement arises out of negative attitudes that may give rise to

negative behaviours towards the organization. Out of these types of engagement, three types of stakeholders were identified: faith-holders, hate-holders, and fake-holders.

Faith-holders are defined as 'positively engaged stakeholders who trust and like the organization or brand and support it via their beliefs, emotions and behaviours' (Luoma-ao, 2015:10). A stakeholder becomes a faith-holder when he or she positively engages with an organization. Hate-holders on the other hand emerge through negative experience that results to anger on the part of the stakeholder, hence they become irresponsible to the organization. Luoma-ao (2015:12) defines a hate-holder as a 'negatively engaged stakeholder who hate the organization and harm it through negative behaviours.' Examples of negative stakeholders are whistleblowers or internal stakeholders who leak confidential information that can harm the organization. Lastly, the age of virtual reality has given rise to fake-holders who are edified by persona-creating software or algorithms to provide opposition or support to an issue. They do not exist in reality and are therefore inauthentic. They are compared to real-looking grass used in sports arenas manufactured by AstroTurf hence their behaviour is labelled as 'astroturfing.' These stakeholders are often associated with rising grassroots movements that either act favorably or unfavorably towards the organization (Luoma-ao, 2015). Based on these emerging groups of stakeholders, Luoma-ao presents the following propositions regarding the implications on their relations:

- 1) Priority in stakeholder relations should be placed on the faith-holders of high trust and long-term commitment, as they further influence all other stakeholders.

- 2) Hate-holders should not be ignored but seen as a potential future faith-holder group if their issues are addressed.
- 3) Public relations should monitor the stakeholder arenas to detect possible fake-holders, and if detected, invite the hidden influencer to dialogue.
- 4) All stakeholders may move from positive to negative engagement or from negative to positive engagement unexpectedly. Luoma-ao (2015:3)

The foregoing further affirms that the stakeholders can take on several identities depending on the context. As such, it is not only a dynamic but a powerful one because of its conceptual breadth. Such breadth of interpretation is considered one of the greatest strengths of the stakeholder theory (Phillips, Freeman, & Wicks, 2003). This is significant to the study in terms of stakeholder identification. Furthermore, identifying stakeholders according to Luoma-ao's (2015) typology would be relevant to the study because the foregoing propositions can be very applicable not only for identifying categories of stakeholders but also in further managing their relationship.

The identification of stakeholders is paramount because stakeholders comprise the constitutive elements upon which constructs and their key relationships can be developed. The problem, however, is that the diversity of stakeholder identities can spoil one's focus, reminiscent of the saying that 'too many chefs spoil the broth.' One approach to regain this focus is to understand the mindset that explains the phenomenon, hence the researcher found it prudent to delve into what is referred to as stakeholder theory (Whetton, 2002). The following elaborates on the meaning of this theory.

2.3. Stakeholder Theory

The stakeholder theory broke onto the strategic management landscape in the mid-1980s as a result of Freeman's (1984) book *Strategic Management: A stakeholder approach*. His work offers a managerial and practical scope which constituted a base for the development of the stakeholder theory. Henceforth, Freeman is popularly credited as the "father of the stakeholder concept (Fontaine, et al., 2006).

The stakeholder theory comes diametrically opposed to the shareholder theory on the purpose of the firm. Whereas the latter views the purpose of the firm as maximizing shareholder value, the former looks at the firm as an instrument of commercially serving the interest of society (Saint & Tripathi, 2010). In some literature, the term stockholder is also used synonymously with shareholder (Cooper, 2014).

The stakeholder concept became fertile soil for the gradual growth of theory developments. Theorizing from this fertile ground has led to several levels and approaches of the stakeholder theory. Saint and Tripathi (2010) cite Goodpaster's (1991) three levels of stakeholder theory: strategic, multifiduciary, and synthetic. The strategic level takes into account the stakeholders' interest as a means of achieving the economic goals of the company but is devoid of moral content. The multi-fiduciary level works on the moral level and attributes a fiduciary responsibility to the company towards all stakeholders alike regardless of whether they are owners or not. The synthetic level makes a distinction between certain fiduciary responsibilities towards owners and restricted non fiduciary responsibilities to other stakeholders (Saint & Tripathi, 2010). This can be visualized in the continuum of stakeholder theory shown in Figure 9.

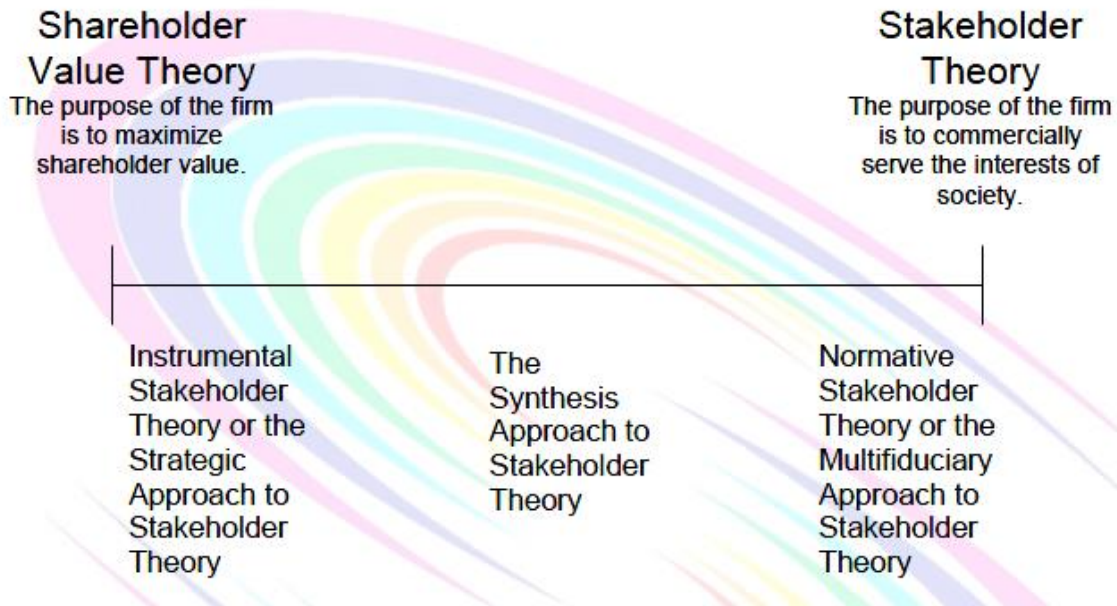


Figure 9. Continuum of Stakeholder Theory (Saint & Tripathi, 2010:7)

On the other hand, Saint and Tripathi (2010) cite Donaldson and Preston (1995) who identified three approaches to stakeholder theory that are different but mutually supportive. According to these authors, 'the stakeholder theory is unarguably descriptive. It presents a model describing what the corporation is. It describes the corporation as a constellation of co-operative and competitive interests possessing intrinsic value' (Donaldson & Preston, 2010:66). They also argued that the stakeholder theory is also instrumental. It establishes a framework for examining the connections, if any, between the practice of stakeholder management and the achievement of various corporate performance goals' (Donaldson & Preston:67)

They further asserted that the fundamental basis of the stakeholder theory is normative:

It involves the acceptance of the following ideas: (a) Stakeholders are persons or groups with legitimate interests in procedural and/or substantive aspects of corporate activity and (b) the interests of all stakeholders are of intrinsic value. That is, each group of stakeholders merits consideration for its own

sake and not merely because of its ability to further the interests of some other group, such as the shareowners (Donaldson & Preston:67).

Finally, they concluded that the stakeholder theory is managerial. 'It does not simply describe existing situations or predict cause effect relationships; it also recommends attitudes, structures, and practices that, taken together, constitute stakeholder management' (Donaldson & Preston:67).

The stakeholder theory with all its definitions, characterizations, and attributes casts its significance on this present study in terms of the contribution of theory and contribution to theory. This distinction was propounded by Whetten (1989): where contribution of theory refers to the use of theory to improve inquiry and contribution to theory refers to using inquiry to improve theory. On this note, an exploration of the stakeholder theory in this section significantly contributes to improving the conceptualization of this study as well as its methodology. On the other hand, the findings that arise out of this study can hopefully contribute to improving aspects of the stakeholder theory. The significance of the stakeholder theory in this study is therefore seen in terms of improving the process and extending the findings to improve its outcome.

Several other interrelated theories (Heath & Norman, 2004) in the literature that are ramifications of the stakeholder theory are worth distinguishing to show a field variety of theories that reflects a range of activity in theory development based on the stakeholder concept. According to Heath and Norman (2004:3-4), these interrelated theories include:

- Ontological SHT which describes the fundamental nature and purpose of the corporation;
- Explanatory SHT which purports to describe and explain how corporations and their managers actually behave;
- Strategic SHT which directs how to devote sufficient resources and managerial attention to stakeholder relations that will tend to lead to positive (profitable) outcomes for the corporation;
- SHT of Branding and Corporate Culture. A subset of strategic SHT, which describes how a commitment to pay extraordinary attention to the interests of particular stakeholder groups will generate profitable returns;
- Deontic SHT which determines the legitimate interests and rights of various stakeholders (presumably going above and beyond their legal rights), and uses these as a way of determining corporate and managerial duties;
- Managerial SHT describes a catch all theory of management (incorporating theories of organizational behaviour, HRM, CRM, leadership, operations research, accounting, and so on) that helps leaders and managers to realize the strategic benefits and satisfy the requirements of SHT;
- SHT of Governance which is about how specific stakeholder groups should exercise oversight and control over management;
- Regulatory SHT describes which interests and rights of specific stakeholder groups ought to be protected by government regulation of business activities;
- SHT of Corporate Law which describes how traditional corporate law should be amended to reflect the principles and practices favored by Ontological, Deontic and Governance approaches to SHT (Heath & Norman, 2004:3-4).

The foregoing reflects a range of applications that can be brought about by extending the stakeholder theory which can serve to explain a variety of phenomena. The theories project the 'whats' of the stakeholder concept by way presenting a variety of constructs. These also clarify the 'hows' and 'whys' by explaining relationships and presenting conceptual assumptions, respectively. The scope of the stakeholder theory also ranges from the abstract to the concrete and this makes it all the more significant to this study as the process progresses from conceptualization to realization.

For more than two decades, Freeman's work has continued to be the basis for countless scholarly articles and presentations (Key, 1999). Just like any other theory, it is not spared from criticism. According to Key (1999), there are basically four criticisms of the stakeholder theory. First, the theory does not sufficiently address the dynamics which link the firm to the stakeholders identified. Second, there seems to be a gap in linking internal and external variables. Third, the theory pays insufficient attention to the system within which business operates. Lastly, there seems to be lack of attention to environment assessment.

Phillips, Freeman, and Wicks (2003:482) summarized some of the criticisms as in Table 11.

Table 11. Summary of Critique (Phillips, et al., 2003:482)

Critical Distortions	Friendly Misinterpretations
Stakeholder theory is an excuse for managerial opportunism (Jensen 2000; Marcoux 2000; Sternberg 2000)	Stakeholder theory requires changes to current law (Hendry 2001a, 2001b; Van Buren 2001)
Stakeholder theory cannot provide a sufficiently specific objective function for the corporation (Jensen 2000)	Stakeholder theory is socialism and refers to the entire economy (Barnett 1997; Hutton 1995; Rustin 1997)
Stakeholder theory is primarily concerned with distribution of financial outputs (Marcoux 2000)	Stakeholder theory is a comprehensive moral doctrine (Orts and Strudler 2002)
All stakeholders must be treated equally (Gioia 1999; Marcoux 2000; Sternberg 2000)	Stakeholder theory applies only to corporations (Donaldson and Preston 1995)

Freeman reacted to such critiques in an accommodating fashion as he acknowledges that the breath of interpretation of the theory which is its strength is also at the same time its limitation: 'Such breadth of interpretation, though one of stakeholder theory's greatest strengths, is also one of its most prominent theoretical liabilities' (Phillips, et al., 2003:479). At the end of the day, Freeman concluded that the stakeholder theory should be viewed as 'a theory of organizational management and ethics' (Phillips, et al., 2003:480).

The researcher is in agreement with Freeman on the strengths and liabilities of the theory. The strength of the theory has allowed a variety of extensions, hence its range of applications is not just restricted to the field of management, per se, but possibly to all organizations that recognize stakeholders. This, however, invited a host of critiques that look at the theory as over-extended, hence lacking completeness.

To detect the current pulse of the stakeholder theory, the researcher searched for academic events on the stakeholder perspective. One such event noted by the researcher is the recent call for papers for a special 2017 issue of *Business and Society* on the theme, 'Stakeholder Theory at the Crossroads.' Such a publication is intended to address existing critical tensions surrounding the stakeholder theory. Such tension still exists because on one end of the spectrum are those who argue that most of the critical issues have been addressed by the stakeholder theory affirming its usefulness in business decision making. On the other end of the spectrum are those who argue that some important issues have not yet been resolved and this limits the usefulness of the theory. Coming in-between are those who argue that even if all issues were resolved, this does not guarantee that applying the stakeholder theory is a good thing. For all intents and purposes, the special issue is intended in building a new consensus on the stakeholder theory. However, the critical tensions identified in the evolution of the stakeholder theory pose significant questions that reflect its current status. These include:

1. Is stakeholder theory really a theory or is it merely a perspective? If it is a theory, what are its essential arguments? If it is not a theory, then what is it and which problems does it/can it address?
2. Is the primary role of stakeholder management one of satisfying stakeholders or is it seeing them as joint partners in co-production?
3. Is stakeholder theory primarily aimed at creating value for all involved or at creating value for the firm?

4. From a firm value creation perspective, is it really optimal to treat all essential stakeholders unusually well (within rational limits)? If, on the other hand, a firm focuses on a narrower group of stakeholders, to what extent are the benefits of generalized exchange lost?
5. To what extent are essential property decision rights allocated to stakeholders ex ante vs. do they tend to evolve as stakeholders are enrolled in co-production over time?
6. Are decision rights primarily a function of cash flow consideration or are they implicit for stakeholders that do not have explicit rights but are still critical to the creation of value?
7. To what extent does stakeholder theory focus on achieving commitment from stakeholders through procedural and distributional justice vs. a focus on instrumentality in the name of efficiency?
8. Is stakeholder theory a theory of ethical decision-making or does it simply promote moral minimums in managerial decisions?
9. Does a stakeholder approach promote primarily cost minimization or opportunity maximization? Which factors create tradeoffs between these two perspectives?
10. Can firms find common ground among stakeholders with competing interests vs. do such competing interests make finding common ground unlikely?
11. Does stakeholder-based management always lead to greater value creation vs. what are the essential moderators in this relationship?

12. Stakeholder theory and the resource-based view contradict each other vs. these two theories are complementary in some important ways (http://bas.sagepub.com/site/includefiles/STC_CFP.pdf)

Additionally, Imre (2016) noted in the literature that there is a the need for more dynamism and actor-orientation in the stakeholder theory as well as the need to complement the existing theory with perspectives that are more dynamic. Imre (2016) demonstrated a possible response by using insights from negotiated order theory to complement the Freeman model and came up with a dynamic illustration of stakeholder understanding from an actor-orientation point of view.

In relation to the foregoing, the researcher contends the stakeholder theory has an open-ended nature and that it is a matter of the standpoint that one takes that makes the stakeholder theory significant to research or practice or to research and practice. A researcher can look through the lens and see a whole range of possibilities or look at the lens and see applications limited by context. For this research, it involves a shift in focus that first looks through the lens and finally looks at the lens, a shift from idea to reality; conceptualization to application; or from theory to practice. In the context of the study, these shifts represent the movement from 'given knowledge' as described in the literature to the actual lived experiences of stakeholders. The whole point is to explore how stakeholders make sense of such given knowledge in their actual experience of the phenomenon investigated. This is the main thesis of Weick's (1995) work on sense-making in organizations that opened the doors for a number of sense-making and sense-giving studies in the context of different organizations covering a broad range of topics from leadership and management to strategic management processes (Smerek, 2009) Hence,

looking into how people make sense of their lived experience is already founded on research and research practices.

2.4. From Theory to Practice

The usefulness of knowing the relationship of stakeholders lies in several ends that it can serve in actual practice. Towards this end, this section explores some of the ramifications of the stakeholder theory and the significance of stakeholder relationships to actual practice. For the purpose of this study, the following practices are discussed: corporate social responsibility, company stakeholder responsibility (CSR), value creation, stakeholder engagement, and stakeholder valuing.

Corporate Social Responsibility

The implication of the stakeholder theory as normative implies that corporations should also behave ethically towards their stakeholders. According to Bailey (2015:9), a corporation that behaves ethically is one that 'understands, strategically manages and creates value for stakeholders.' The normative stakeholder theory underscores the moral obligation that corporate management has to its stakeholders. In this way, stakeholders feel that they are treated fairly. This notion sees the convergence of the concept of corporate social responsibility and the normative stakeholder theory.

Thulkanam (2014) cites that there is some confusion in the implementation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) because of numerous interpretations which have led to some difficulty in comprehending the concept. She adds that one reason for this is that CSR overlaps with a wide range of concepts such as 'sustainable development, corporate

citizenship, corporate social investment (CSI), sustainability, triple bottom line reporting and social accounting, to name a few' (Thulkanam, 2014:6). In the context of this study, the researcher adopts Thulkanam's (2014) definition of CSR as a 'a business strategy that integrates stakeholder input in order for an organisation to take account of its impacts on society, both immediately and over the long-term.' This definition situates the significance of stakeholders in the company strategic planning process which is investigated by the study.

Heath and Norman (2004) investigated the feasibility of a strong commitment to corporate social responsibility in the then recent spate of corporate scandals in the United States and elsewhere and found that adopting an extremely narrow concept of managerial responsibility or social responsibility which does not recognize anything beyond the obligation to maximize shareholder value can lead to very serious difficulties associated with the effective institutionalization of this obligation. This, according to the authors, brings to light three questions relative to the stakeholder theory as a theory of organizational management and ethics. The first is, which stakeholders should be taken into account; the second is, why should stakeholders be taken into account; and lastly, how should stakeholders be taken into account.

In terms of characteristics that should be taken into account, Mitchell, et al. (1997) assert that power, legitimacy, and urgency should come foremost. Power is the 'ability of those who possess power to bring about the outcomes they desire' (Mitchell, et al., 1997:865). The author's classified power as firm dominated and stakeholder dominated. Legitimacy is 'the assumption that actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some

socially constructed system of norms, values, or beliefs' (Mitchell, et al., 1997:866). Furthermore, they cited that the basis for legitimacy can stem from any or a combination of the following:

- The firm and stakeholders are in contractual relations
- The stakeholder has a claim on the firm
- The stakeholder has something at risk
- The stakeholder has a moral claim on the firm. (Mitchell, et Al., 1997:866)

Urgency is 'the degree to which stakeholders claims call for immediate attention' (Mitchell, et al., 1997:867). Although it was virtually ignored until now in any explicit sense in the stakeholder literature, the idea of paying attention to various stakeholder relationships in a timely fashion has been a focus of issues management and crisis management scholars for decades.

The question of why should stakeholders be taken into account can be answered on the basis of legal, economic, and moral arguments. The legal argument is in abeyance of the law and works in the favour of stakeholders (Goodpaster, 1991).

The economic argument takes stakeholders into account because it is to the self-interest of the organization. Since the organization also depends on stakeholders, the economic argument enhances the organization's pursuit of its own interest. The intrinsic value of stakeholders strengthens the moral argument. In which case, the organization should protect their stakeholders because of their capacity to capture economic surplus, hence stakeholders have intrinsic value (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). The significance of innovation in driving global economies also lends support to this argument as it was

demonstrated that collaboration among organizations which can involve voluntary or charitable institutions can be a source of open innovation (Holmes & Smart, 2009).

On the question of how stakeholders can be taken into account, Freeman (1984) suggests that managers can use tools such as a stakeholder map or stakeholder grid and plot the amount of power and the size of stake in a two-dimensional diagram or grid. Freeman (1984) also suggests the use of the old-fashion approach that highlights effective communication techniques. Furthermore, Freeman (1984) suggests a more direct approach such as involving stakeholders in decision-making through negotiations and voluntary agreements, Donaldson and Preston (1995), for their part, suggest the use of monitoring devices to come up with the best decision on how stakeholders can be taken into account.

Knowledge on the relationship among stakeholders has implications to CSR because a key concept in CSR reporting is stakeholder engagement (Eskerod, et al., 2016) which invariably implies the existence of relationships among stakeholders. CSR is increasingly being practiced among airports (Koc & Durmaz, 2015) and airlines (Eskerod, et al., 2016; Chang et al., 2016) because of their significance to global tourism as well their impacts on the economy and the environment. Different airlines and airports however, were observed to have different emphasis in their CSR reporting giving primary importance to social, economic, and environmental indicators with occasional mentioning of stakeholder engagement and participation (Eskerod, et al., 2016). This may be because of the absence of uniform indicators for reporting not because of the lack of indicators but because of so many indicators to choose from. Currently, there are almost 400 sustainability reporting

instruments in 64 countries. Comparatively, Africa and the Middle East have the least number of indicators (KPMG, 2016). Chang, et al. (2016) likewise found that air transport in the Asia-Pacific, Africa, and the Middle East have less remarkable CSR reports as compared to western air transport and hence needs more improvement in their sustainability reporting.

The foregoing illustrates the researcher's assumption on the shift in focus from looking through the lens and looking at the lens. By looking through the lens, the stakeholders of an organization seem to be unlimited to include not only those who are here and now but also those to come or future generations (as in primary non-social stakeholders). But a delineation of who the stakeholders really is made when one looks at the lens (e.g. power, legitimacy, urgency, etc.). From the perspective of the development of this research project, the shift in focus allows the whats (constructs), hows (relationships) and whys (conceptual assumptions) to find their applications in the when, where, and who (contextual assumptions), thereby moving from theoretical to practical application.

Company Stakeholder Responsibility

Corporations are increasingly recognizing CSR as a way of giving back to society, which in turn enhances the reputation of the company as doing business ethically in the eyes of its stakeholders. As more and more companies are adopting the concept, Bailey (2015) cites Freeman, Velamuri, & Moriarty's (2006) argument that the time has come for replacing the notion of corporate social responsibility with company stakeholder responsibility. According to Bailey (2015), Freeman, et al.'s (2006) argument is based on the premise that traditional corporate social responsibility has outlived its usefulness. They explain that

business issues and social issues as well as business decisions and ethical decisions should not be treated as separate but integrated.

Bailey (2015) cites the following reasons why the business role in the sphere of company social responsibility is a more relevant alternative to traditional CSR: First, 'the word *corporation* is misguided as it seems to leave out smaller business organizations and other corporations and that large corporations should shoulder more responsibilities due to their size and complexity. Social does not only apply to corporations but to all organizations. Second, '*stakeholder* goes back to the very purpose of the firm which is to create value for all its key stakeholders. Lastly, *responsibility* suggests that the company business decisions cannot be divorced from ethics or ethical decision-making.' (Bailey, 2015:10-11). In practice therefore, modern corporations not only function according to their legal and managerial mandates but have to behave according to their business values and broaden the scope of their purpose to also include improving the lives of stakeholders (Bailey, 2015).

The researcher finds that the notion of company stakeholder responsibility is a more straightforward way of looking at stakeholders in terms of their relationships. This is because one of the levels of commitment identified by Freeman and Velamuri (2008) is sustained stakeholder cooperation and one of the ten principles of company stakeholder responsibility is engaging in intensive communication and dialogue with stakeholders. These two aspects of company stakeholder responsibility requires heightened relationship with and among stakeholders (Freeman & Velamuri, 2008). In this way, business strategies and decisions already incorporate the concerns of stakeholders which should not be taken as a separate matter to be dealt with. Although the concept of company

stakeholder responsibility has not gained much attention in the literature, it nevertheless supports the stance of the researcher that looking into the relationship among stakeholders is a very essential requirement before they can be engaged or involved in the value creation process.

Value Creation

As presented earlier, there is a differentiation between the shareholder and the stakeholder theory in terms of ownership and value. Much of the foregoing review focused on purpose and ownership. The following shows the relationship of values to the stakeholder theory. In this respect, the central question is what is value for stakeholders? This is significant for the study because how stakeholders make sense of their experiences cannot be divorced from the values that they espouse.

Argandona (2011) cited six types of values. The first is economic value which is created through the collaboration of employees and may be appropriated by either side. The second is intangible extrinsic value provided by the company such as recognition and non-economic incentives. The third is psychological intrinsic value which is generated by the agent themselves. The fourth is intrinsic value which is created in the agent but not in the company. This may result from collaboration with stakeholders. The fifth is transcendent value which is generated in the agent themselves as a consequence of their own decision for themselves and for other agents. The last are values that consist of positive or negative externalities. These are values that are felt by agents themselves other than those with whom the relationship or transaction is conducted (Argandona, 2011:8-9).

From Argandona's (2011) analysis, the notion of creating value for the stakeholders is one that goes beyond economic extrinsic value to include other types of value which the stakeholder needs. This is reminiscent of the hierarchy of needs of Maslow (1970) where not everything that leads to self-realization is economic, physical, or tangible in nature.

Hausman and McPherson (2006) look at value from what is denoted by it. According to them, stakeholders also look into value in exchange, value of use, value of labour, value of production, among others. Value in exchange is the idea that value emanates from the negotiated and intersubjective market exchange. Value of use is the subjective evaluation of the worth of what a particular item is to a particular individual. This value is not the same for all. Value of labour is based on the amount of labour to create it. Lastly, value of production is based on the total cost that went into the production of an item.

To reconcile the seeming separation of perspectives on the meaning of value in the context of its creation and maximization, Wicks (1996) focused on four factors that emerge with respect to stakeholders and the value they seek from relations with a firm. These are: (1) stakeholder utility associated with the actual goods and services; (2) stakeholder utility associated with organizational justice; (3) stakeholder utility from affiliation; and (4) stakeholder utility associated with perceived opportunity cost (Wicks, 1996:11). The advantage of this approach to value is that it incorporates not only the tangible value the stakeholders seek but also the process and distribution of value (Harrison, Bosse, & Philipps, 2010). Moreover, these factors are defined according to the utility principle relative to the perceived utility stakeholders receive from the firm which is consistent with the perception that influences utility (Barney, 2011).

From a more dynamic day-to-day perspective, adopting value creation strategies means giving employees and managers a structure that will help them resist the temptation to maximize the short-term financial performance of the organization. This type of profit maximization simply is a sure way to destroy value. Hence, there is a need for an enlightened stakeholder theory. This denotes a stakeholder theory that is informed by the value criterion (Jensen, 2000). The stakeholder theory leads managers and participants in an organization to think more generally and creatively about how the organization's policies treat all important constituencies of the firm. But value cannot be created without good relations with customers, employees, financial backers, suppliers, regulators, communities, and the rest. From this point, the value criterion for choosing among those competing interests comes in. In this way, the theory also becomes an enlightened complement of value maximization. Jensen (2000) believes that using this value criterion will result in making society as well off as it can be.

The airline industry is faced with many challenges and opportunities making it one of the most competitive global industries. To sustain competitiveness, value creation is the key. Complexities and a number of external factors can, however, impose severe constraints on the competitiveness of the industry where creating value becomes more difficult to the point that it becomes a matter of survival. It has been shown however, that "the competitiveness equation needs to be solved from inside the organization, no matter how tough the environment becomes" (Navarro-Meneses, Pablo-Marti, & Carillo, 2015:1). It has been noted for instance, that best performing airports leverage collaboration among stakeholders to create greater value in terms of assessing required investment and

operational feasibility. (Van Audenhove & Betatti, 2016). This also highlights the significance of stakeholder synergy (Tantalo & Priem, 2014) and using dialogue to unlock shared value (Ulrich, 2014) as well as the importance of stakeholders in value planning (Gilb, 2015).

The foregoing situates the importance of stakeholders in the value creation process either as a receiver of value or a participant in the creation of value. Generally, the former has traces of shareholder features typical of the conventional view of the firm. The latter, however, reflects the features that differentiates stakeholder, as projected in the literature. The movement from theory to practice needs therefore to consider the contextual assumptions involving the when, where, and who would largely depend on the outlook of value that is widely held by organizations. In effect, this outlook will determine the importance placed on stakeholder and their relations.

Stakeholder Engagement

Bellantuono, Pontrandolfo, and Scozzi (2016) consider stakeholder engagement a central theme in stakeholder theory. Engagement comes in the form of involvement and participation and a method for enhancing trust (Bellantuono, et al., 2016). In this sense, it invariably involves stakeholder relations. Hautala (2016) cites Freeman, et al. (2010:4) who argued that 'the very core idea of stakeholder engagement is to add value for every actor in the company's environment.' Engaging stakeholders offers a number of benefits to the company. Engagement can:

- Lead to more equitable and sustainable social development by giving those who have a right to be heard the opportunity to be considered in decision-making processes
- Enable better management of risk and reputation
- Allow for the pooling of resources (knowledge, people, money and technology) to solve problems and reach objectives that cannot be reached by single organisations
- Enable understanding of the complex business environment, including market developments and identification of new strategic opportunities
- Enable corporations to learn from stakeholder, resulting in product and process improvements
- Inform, educate and influence stakeholders and the business environment to improve their decision-making and actions that impact on the company and on society
- Build trust between a company and its stakeholders (Misser, 2014:33).

Stakeholder engagement has undergone generational shifts. The first generation involves reactive engagement in response to pressure with localized benefits. The second generation involves systematic engagement for risk management and increased understanding of stakeholders. The third generation involves integrated strategic engagement for sustainable competitiveness (Misser, 2014:31). While different companies engage their stakeholders differently, the current focus on CSR and sustainability reporting gave more focus on stakeholder engagement. The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) for instance, requires companies to provide an overview of their stakeholder engagement which includes identifying their stakeholders, the approach to engagement utilized, and the key

issues that emerged during the process (Misser, 2014). While companies with first generation engagement undergo the process in compliance to external requirements, those who have moved to the second and third generations realize that engaging stakeholders is a potential source of learning and innovation in products and processes that can help sustain strategic directions in and out of the company (Misser, 2014). The airline company investigated in the study has moved beyond simply compliance and can be classified as one with second generation engagement based on its sustainability report of 2011. This highlights the significance of knowing the voice of stakeholders so that the company can adequately address concerns and issues raised by them. It also supports the view that stakeholders should be involved in strategic planning in order that their voice can be factored into the plan. The term 'voice' is used here to indicate what the stakeholders themselves articulate as a result of their perception. More importantly, companies should include stakeholder engagement goals regarding who to engage, why engage, and what to engage about (Misser, 2014).

In the air transport industry, it was noted in the study of Andersson and Jabkowski (2013) that stakeholder involvement and engagement only became evident in the reports of the various airlines investigated between 2005 to 2012. They also found that out of twenty airlines investigated, seven did not mention anything on stakeholder involvement or engagement in their reports. In terms of sustainable airport development, Amaeshi and Crane (2005) related sustainable airport management with meaningful stakeholder engagement because:

- (a) in drawing upon a wide range of interested parties, prospects for appropriate development and a mutually beneficial commitment to achieving objectives is likely to be maximized;
- (b) it is more sustainable: people brought into the process feel part of the development, thus gaining their consensus for future development; and

(c) development is seen as more transparent, responsive and accountable by local communities (Amaeshi & Crane, 2005:5).

They further affirmed that meaningful engagement with stakeholders in sustainable airport development can:

anticipate and manage conflicts; improve decision-making from management, employees, investors and other external stakeholders; build consensus amongst diverse views; create stakeholder identification with the outcomes of the organisation's activities; and build trust in the organization (Amaeshi & Crane, 2005:5).

Amaeshi and Crane (2005) however noted that one of the pressing challenges that still beset airports is how to apply the strategy of stakeholder engagement to address the issue of sustainable airport development.

Stakeholder Valuing

One of the practical applications of the stakeholder theory is stakeholder valuing. Stakeholder valuing begins with the identification of stakeholders and moves towards measuring their value as individuals or groups (Carlson & Downs, 2014). Stakeholder valuing therefore starts with asking the question of who are the stakeholders and their relations to the corporation. Answers to these questions matter because it drives the firm's motivation. As cited earlier, stakeholder firm identities vary in substance because *not all stakeholders are created equal and some stakeholders are more relevant to firms than others* (Carlson & Downs, 2014). According to Brickson's (2005) organizational identity orientation cited by Carlson and Downs (2014), this suggests that profit-motivated firms with independent relations have individualistic orientations and do not value their stakeholders that much. On the other extreme are firms that derive their identities from

their stakeholders, hence are collectivist in orientation and place a high value on all stakeholders. In a midway position are dyadically independent firms that have relational orientations but place higher value only on some stakeholders groups.

It is interesting to note that one of the companies that have successfully practiced stakeholder valuing is The Boeing Company, the majority of whose products and services are related to the air transport industry. The company practices valuing employees, customers, environment, and corporate citizenship and reflects these in their financial and non-financial disclosures. The company derives its identity from its members which it puts a value on. At the end of each year, the company issues a financial, environmental, and corporate citizenship report. In this manner, the company also discloses its corporate social responsibility to stakeholders (Carlson & Downs, 2014).

2.5. Strategic Planning

The foregoing sections dealt with the given knowledge on stakeholders. This section describes the scenario within the study context where specific experiences of stakeholders are explored. Since the study investigates stakeholder relations during strategic planning, providing salient information about strategic planning is in order.

Governments, corporations, and non-profits have long been using strategic planning as a tool for transformation and revitalization (Mittenthal, 2002). However, it has been observed that after almost four decades of research, the effects of strategic planning on an organization's performance are still unclear. Whereas some studies have found significant benefits from planning, others have found no relationship, or even small negative effects (Swayne, Duncan, & Ginter, 2008).

Zuckerman (2009) cites the view of Swayne, Duncan, and Ginter (2008) that the concept of strategy has both political and military usage from Sun Tzu to Homer and Euripides. Accordingly, It is derived from the word strategy, which means 'to plan the destruction of one's enemies through effective use of resources' (Zuckerman, 2009:2). To this effect, Swayne, et al. (2008) note many terms associated with strategic planning, such as objective, mission, strength, and weakness, were developed by or used in the military (Zuckerman, 2009:2).

Thereafter, a number of definitions have evolved aiming to capture the meaning of strategic planning. Zuckerman (2009:3) cites some of these definitions, to wit:

- Strategic planning defines where the organization is going, sometimes where it is not going, and provides focus. The plan sets direction for the organization and through a common understanding of the vision and broad strategic goals provides a template for everyone in the organization to make consistent decisions that move the organization towards its envisioned future. Strategic planning, in large part, is a decision-making activity. (Swayne, Duncan, & Ginter, 2008).
- Beckham (2000) describes true strategy as a plan for getting from a point in the present to some point in the future in the face of uncertainty and resistance.
- Strategic planning refers to a process for defining organizational objectives, implementing strategies to achieve those objectives, and measuring the effectiveness of those strategies (Campbell, 1992).

- Strategic planning is the process for assessing a changing environment to create a vision of the future; determining how the organization fits into the anticipated environment based on its institutional mission, strengths, and weaknesses; and then setting in motion a plan of action to position the organization accordingly (Zuckerman, 2009).

Historically, the general business community had been using strategic planning since the mid-twentieth century. The 1940s to the 1950s saw the introduction of the PPBS or the planning, programming, and budgeting systems, but these were used only sparingly by business and government at that time. In the 1960s and 1970s, the merits of planning beyond the 12-month framework were started to be practised including the systematic approach to managing business units (Webster, Reif, & Bracker 1989).

In the 1980s and 1990s, the emphasis was on corporate market planning that identified market segments and developed strategies to control that segment (Spiegel & Hyman 1991). Total quality management and productivity also emerged in strategic planning in the 1980s as strategists followed the lead of Jack Welch, head of General Electric.

Competitive strategy became the feature of twenty-first century strategic planning together with plans that call for alliances and mergers. The uncertainties that characterize the present time have made some companies abandon their usual strategic planning processes in favour of scenario planning. According to Dye, Sibony, and Vuguerie (2009), scenario planning will play a more critical role in strategic planning and companies must consider more variables and involve more decision-makers than in the past. This has implications for the current stakeholders of the organization.

There are certain highlights that can be seen in the development of strategic planning. In the 1950s strategic planning was subsumed in strategic management, and placed great emphasis on budgeting and financial and financial control. A decade later the emphasis was on strategic positioning consequent to the Harvard Business School's promotion of positioning relative to how a company's strengths and weaknesses of key business functions relate to those of competitors. The trend in the 1970s very much followed the trends set in the previous decades however gaining greater popularity and usage worldwide. In 1980 greater confidence and interest in strategic planning was reinforced by the works of Michael Porter who saw strategic planning as a tool for attaining competitive advantage. The 1980s saw a decline in the popularity of strategic planning in the United States as organizations began to question the return on investment of their efforts. This came on the heels of the popularity of strategy books such as *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu, *On War* by von Clausewitz, and *The Red Book* by Mao Zedong, which became widely read in business circles. This was also a time when General Electric's chairman, Jack Welch, became a very influential and equally controversial figure in the field of strategic management in his attempt to build and sustain the competitive advantage for his organization. Hence in the 1990s, there was renewed interest and passion for strategic planning as mergers and acquisitions and complex joint ventures increased in great numbers. This trend looked into strategic planning as an innovation tool through decentralized models, leveraging core competencies, and embracing emergent strategy. So far, the twenty-first century incorporates the orientation towards building competitive advantage and the trend of nurturing organizational innovation. The complexity, uncertainty, and volatility of the global environment are now driving the strategic planning

process to craft competitive strategies that would insulate organizations from the negative effects of change. Apparently, the emphasis now is on alignment, value creation and leveraging the role of knowledge (Methods Framework, 2014:4).

Based on *Strategic Planning with Critical Success Factors and Future Scenarios: An Integrated Strategic Planning Framework* (Gates 2010:3), when these are applied, the elements of strategic planning would now become visible. Figure 10 and Table 12 visualizes and describes the elements of strategic planning, respectively (Gates, 2010:4).

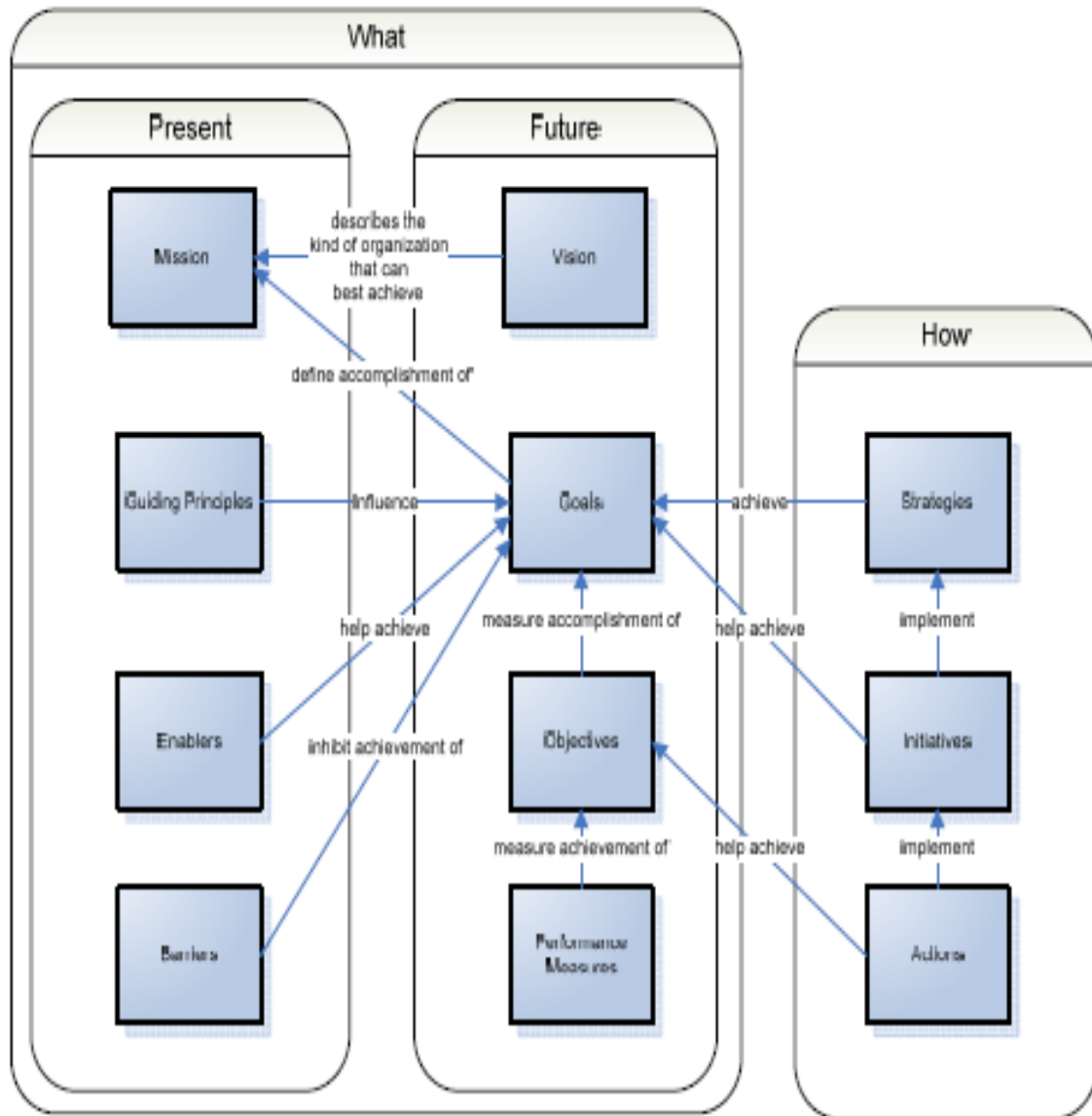


Figure 10. Elements of Strategic Planning (Gates, 2010:4)

Table 12. Elements of Strategic Planning (Gates, 2010:5)

Term	Definition
Mission	An organization's mission is its primary business or purpose; it describes what an organization does, for whom, and its benefit. The mission of an organization is not a time-bound objective.
Vision	A vision is an ideal that an organization intends to pursue. It links the organization to the future by articulating instantiations of successful execution of the mission. An organization's vision is a source of inspiration and can be broader than the organization's capabilities. It might, in fact, describe what can be achieved in a broader environment if the organization and others are successful in achieving their individual missions.
Goals	Goals are broad, measurable, aims that support the accomplishment of a mission.
Objectives	Objectives are specific, quantifiable, lower-level targets that indicate an accomplishment of a goal.
Guiding Principles	Guiding principles are directive statements that articulate the constraints an organization chooses to place upon the way it achieves its goals. Guiding principles embrace core values and are used to shape an organization's strategy. Guiding principles reflect long-term intentions, but are not necessarily permanent. ⁷
Enablers	Enablers are external conditions or organizational strengths that facilitate an organization's ability to accomplish its goals or objectives.
Barriers	Barriers are external conditions or organizational (internal) weaknesses that hinder an organization's ability to accomplish a goal or objective.
Strategy	A strategy is a derived approach to achieving the mission, goals, and objectives of an organization. It supports the organizational vision, takes into account organizational enablers and barriers, and upholds its guiding principles.
Strategic Plan	A strategic plan is a document that results from a strategic planning activity. It elaborates the organizational strategy and documents the elements that influence it.
Initiative	An initiative is a specific set of actions that implement a strategy.
Actions	Actions are specific steps to achieve a goal or objective. Actions typically have assigned staff and schedule constraints.
Performance Measures	Performance measures describe performance targets relevant to each objective.

The foregoing material presented by Gates (2010) is an attempt to provide a comprehensive coverage of strategic planning. Considering that strategic plans are crafted by top management, the fulfilling of every element by just a handful of executives is a tall

order. Hence, the elements of strategic planning also serve as platforms for participation of designated actors in the organization who are included in the planning process because of their expertise and experience. This to a certain extent strengthens the operational definition of strategic planning earlier given which views strategic planning from the participation and contribution of stakeholders to the overall process hence justifying the choice of the study participants even if they do not belong to the executive level of the organization.

Whereas the process of strategic planning can vary from one organization to another, it invariably involves any or a combination of processes. According to *The Strategic Planning Handbook and Managers Implementation Tools* of the Southern University of New Orleans (2010:2-4), these processes include:

Vision and Mission. Identification of the organization's vision and mission is the first step of any strategic planning process. The vision sets out the reasons for organization's existence and the 'ideal' state that the organization aims to achieve; the mission identifies major goals and performance objectives. Both are defined within the framework of the organization's philosophy, and are used as a context for development and evaluation of intended and emergent strategies.

Environmental Scan. Once the vision and mission are clearly identified, analysis of the external and internal environment follows. The environmental scan analyzes information about organization's external environment (economic, social, demographic, political, legal, technological, and international factors), the industry, and internal organizational factors.

Gap Analysis. Evaluating the difference between the organization's current position and desired future is achieved through gap analysis. As a result, an organization can develop specific strategies and allocate resources to close the gap and achieve its desired state.

Benchmarking. This involves measuring and comparing the organization's operations, practices, and performance against others to identify 'best' practices. Through an on-going systematic benchmarking process organizations find a reference point for setting their own goals and targets.

Strategic Issues. The organization determines its strategic issues based on (and consistent with) its vision and mission within the framework of environmental and other analyzes. Strategic issues are the fundamental issues the organization has to address to achieve its mission and move towards its desired future.

Strategic Programming. To address strategic issues and develop deliberate strategies for achieving their mission, organizations set strategic goals, action plans, and tactics during the strategic programming stage. Strategic goals are the milestones the organization aims to achieve that evolve from the strategic issues. Action plans define the steps required to reach the strategic goals. Tactics are specific actions used to achieve the strategic goals and implement the strategic plans.

Emergent Strategies. Organizations need to respond to unpredicted and unintended events that frequently occur which differ from the intended strategies. Emergent strategy results in a series of actions that converge around emergent issues that beset the organization.

Evaluation of Strategy. Periodic evaluations of strategies, tactics, and action programs are essential to assessing success of the strategic planning process. These are mostly done annually to measure current performance against previously set expectations, and consider any changes or events that may have impacted the desired course of actions.

Review of the Strategic Plan. After assessing the progress of the strategic planning process, the organization needs to review the strategic plan, make necessary changes, and adjust its course based on these evaluations. The revised plan must take into consideration emergent strategies, and changes affecting the organization's intended course.

Strategic Thinking. With time, people in the organization routinely make their decisions within the framework of the organization's strategic vision and mission. Strategic planning becomes an organizational norm, deeply embedded within the organization's decision-making process, and participants learn to think strategically *as part of their regular daily activities* (University of New Orleans, 2010:2-4).

There are many approaches to strategic planning and the approach or model to be adopted depends on a number of factors such as the purpose of planning, the experience of the organization in strategic planning, the organizational culture, the environment of the organization, and the past success of the organization in strategic planning (McNamara, 2000).

In consideration of these factors, Kriemadis and Theakou (2007) cited Mc Namara (2000) who explained that there is a wide a range of alternative models from which the

organization can choose from depending on the factors affecting the organization. These models include basic strategic planning, issues based strategic planning, alignment model, scenario planning, organic planning, and real-time planning. The following presents the models which are most cited in academic studies.

Model One: Basic, Vision-Based or Goals-Based Strategic Planning. This very basic model consists of processes that are typically implemented in extremely small, busy, and new organizations that have not done much strategic planning in the past. The implementation is short term and is usually carried out by top level management (Kriemadis & Theakou, 2007). The basic strategic planning process includes:

1. Identify the purpose (mission statement) – This is the statement(s) that describes why the organization exists, i.e., its basic purpose. The statements will change somewhat over the years.
2. Select the goals the organization must reach if it is to accomplish its mission – Goals are general statements about what the organization needs to accomplish to meet its purpose or mission, and address major issues facing the organization.
3. Identify specific approaches or strategies that must be implemented to reach each goal – The strategies are often what change the most as the organization eventually conducts more robust strategic planning, particularly by more closely examining the external and internal environments of the organization.
4. Identify specific action plans to implement each strategy – These are the specific activities that each major function (for example, department, etc.) must undertake to ensure it is effectively implementing each strategy. Objectives

should be clearly worded to the extent that people can assess if the objectives have been met or not.

5. Monitor and update the plan – Planners regularly reflect on the extent to which the goals are being met and whether action plans are being implemented. Perhaps the most important indicator of success of the organization is positive feedback from the organization’s customers (Kriemadis & Theakou, 2007:30).

Model Two: Issues Based Planning. Organizations that have very limited resources; several current, major issues; little success with achieving future-oriented goals; or very little buy-in to strategic planning might use the issues based approach to planning instead of the goals-based approach. The process includes:

1. External/internal assessment to identify SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats).
2. Strategic analysis to identify and prioritize major issues/goals.
3. Design major strategies (or programs) to address issues/goals.
4. Design/update vision, mission and values (some organizations may do this first in planning).
5. Establish action plans (objectives, resource needs, roles and responsibilities) for implementation).
6. Record issues, goals, strategies/programs, updated mission and vision, and action plans in a Strategic Plan document, and attach SWOT, etc.
7. Develop the yearly Operating Plan document (from year one of the multi-year strategic plan).

8. Develop and authorize Budget for year one (allocation of funds needed to fund year one).
9. Conduct the organization's year-one operations.
10. Monitor/review/evaluate/update Strategic Plan document (Kriemadis & Theakou, 2007:30-31).

Model Three: Alignment Model. This model is used to align the organization's mission and its resources to enhance organizational performance. This model is particularly useful in fine tuning non-performing strategies as well as in dealing with a variety of internal issues. The steps in using this model include:

1. The planning group outlines the organization's mission, programs, resources, and needed support.
2. Identify what is working well and what needs adjustment.
3. Identify how these adjustments should be made.
4. Include the adjustments as strategies in the strategic plan (Kriemadis & Theakou, 2007:31).

Model Four: Scenario Planning. This model can be used in identifying and addressing significant strategic concerns and goals and can be dovetailed with other models to promote strategic thinking. Accordingly, the steps include:

1. Select several external forces and imagine related changes which might influence the organization, e.g., change in regulations, demographic changes, etc. Scanning the newspaper for key headlines often suggests potential changes that might affect the organization.

2. For each change in a force, discuss three different future organizational scenarios (including best case, worst case, and OK/reasonable case) which might arise with the organization as a result of each change. Reviewing the worst-case scenario often provokes strong motivation to change the organization.
3. Suggest what the organization might do, or potential strategies, in each of the three scenarios to respond to each change.
4. Planners soon detect common considerations or strategies that must be addressed to respond to possible external changes.
5. Select the most likely external changes to effect the organization, e.g., over the next three to five years, and identify the most reasonable strategies the organization can undertake to respond to the change (Kriemadis & Theakou, 2007:31-32).

Model Five: 'Organic' (or Self Organizing) Planning. Conventional strategic planning processes are sometimes considered 'mechanistic' or 'linear,' these are rather general to specific or cause and effect in nature; another view of planning is similar to the development of an organism which is self-unfolding and naturalistic. This model requires continual reference to common values, dialoguing around these values, and continued shared reflection around the systems current processes. General steps include:

1. Clarify and articulate the organization's cultural values. Use dialogue and storyboarding techniques.
2. Articulate the group's vision for the organization. Use dialogue and storyboarding techniques.

3. On an on-going basis, e.g., once every quarter, dialogue about what processes are needed to arrive at the vision and what the group is going to do now about those processes.
4. Continually remind yourself and others that this type of naturalistic planning is never really 'over with', and that, rather, the group needs to learn to conduct its own values clarification, dialogue/reflection, and process updates.
5. Be very, very patient.
6. Focus on learning and less on method.
7. Ask the group to reflect on how the organization will portray its strategic plans to stakeholders, etc., who often expect the mechanistic, linear plan formats (Kriemadis & Theakou, 2007:32).

Model Six: Real-Time Planning. Many experts assert that conventional strategic planning has become rather outdated because the world is changing much more rapidly than before, to the extent that conventional plans quickly become obsolete. These experts might assert that planning be done continuously, or in real time. The process might look like the following:

1. Initial discussions to clarify mission, vision and values. Ideally, these are documented, such that changes are easily recognized and communicated.
2. Hold discussions in meetings to clarify current, major priorities. It is important that these discussions be based not only on people's current opinions, but that they also be based, as much as possible, on verified impressions from accurate data, for example, from environmental scans, market research, brainstorming or

product/program evaluations. It is important that the updated/changed priorities also be documented (Kriemadis & Thekous, 2007: 33).

A challenge in this type of planning is that many investors and funders expect to see stable, documented strategic plans. Many might infer that regular changes are the result of poor planning, rather than from a new type of strategic planning. On the whole, the literature on the models of strategic planning shows that there is no perfect model that fits all organizational purposes. Models vary but the steps are quite related depending on the nature and strategic intentions of the organization. It can be noted that the different models have common elements that define the essence of what planning is all about. These elements are better asked in the form of questions such as *where are we now?, where do we want to go?, and how do we get there?* What makes the models different is how the organization intends to use the strategic plan, how values come into play in the plan and planning process, and the focus on subjective elements such as capabilities of the planners and their mode of thinking.

The usefulness of the models presented depends on how they suit the nature and environment of the company. In comparison to corporations, airlines and airports are economic engines for development that also serve the community at large. Hence, airports have to be responsive not only to customers but the community as well. The challenge to strategic planning of airports or airlines therefore is complicated by a number of factors such as the environment, competitors, regulatory framework, and a host of other factors. It can also be influenced by the unique character of the industry. This sometimes necessitates that planning in the airline industry needs to be tailored-fit to the unique characteristics of the industry (ACRP, 2009). To this effect, *ACRP Report 20* specifically

dealt with strategic planning in the airport industry which is intended as a practical guideline in airport industry strategic planning. A look at the structure of the report reveals that the guideline incorporates what are already known about the process but are specifically contextualized to the airport setting. It is interesting to note that in the chapter on creating a process plan and roadmap which comes as the first step in the strategic planning sequence, a great deal is devoted to the identification of stakeholders, their expectations, and their roles and responsibilities in the planning process (ACRP, 2009).

Given the fact that airports have many stakeholders, it is important that the company understands each stakeholder group and knows how to most effectively partner with them in management processes such as strategic planning. This becomes an additional challenge because proactively engaging them in planning, for instance, requires considerable sustained effort in communicating and coordinating with them (ACRP, 2015). This constitutes the transactional relationship of airlines and airports which needs to be leveraged in order to obtain strategic benefits for both parties (Al Khateeri & Ocler, 2013).

2.6. Relationships among Stakeholders

Relationships exist between a firm and its stakeholders as well as between the various groups and individuals that constitute an organization (Freeman, 1999). Firms can be more successful by developing a network of relationships with customers, employees, communities and governments (Hillman & Keim, 2001). Firms do not always respond to each stakeholder individually but rather to the interaction of multiple influences from the stakeholder environment (Rowley, 1997). This is because different stakeholders have different priorities for the organization. For some it is critically dependent, and for others,

it should be considered (Harrison & Wicks, 2013). High priority stakeholders typically include customers, suppliers, staff, and partners. The main activities of the organization focus on creating value for its stakeholders. At the same time, the organization uses the value of its stakeholders. Stakeholder influence is an essential part of both strategic planning and the organization.

Stakeholder relationships change over time and are largely dependent on specific situations and problems (Beringer, Jonas, & Gemunder, 2012). The usual case is when two competitors in the industry become active allies in one aspect and antagonists in another. Thus, when one aspect disappears and another arises, today's enemies can become tomorrow's friends. According to Jones and Felps (2013), when an organization is faced with the threat of counterfeiting of its products, it can join its competitors, become loyal allies, and seek each other's support in the fight against imitators and government structures that do not regulate such cases.

Stakeholders create intricate networks of relationships. However, the way in which the organization chooses actions with each party concerned can dramatically affect its relations with other stakeholders (Harrison & Wicks, 2013). Therefore, the key challenge in the political strategy is to assess how actions or positions of the organization on a particular aspect will affect its relations with other stakeholders on a particular situation, and in other situations in which the organization is involved (Laczniak & Murphy, 2013). The organization does not take account of these dependent situations or relationships among the parties as it can be very easy to make mistakes with very severe consequences for the company.

The stakeholders of the company maintain relationships that are beneficial for the company (Lacznik & Murphy, 2012). The stakeholder theory adopted by an organization can offer innovative approaches to solve its specific problems. If an organization has a stakeholder interdependence perspective then effective stakeholder management will lead to good financial performance. All stakeholder relationships that are interdependent are collaborative in nature. Organizations that demand more collaboration are combined with integrity of intent if the relationship is to succeed. However, the organizations have to build a collaborative infrastructure which will enable stakeholders to interact, become interdependent, and become engaged in a form of 'organizational learning' (Imperial, 2005).

Inter-organizational collaboration has been extolled as desirable and even necessary for achieving competitive advance among business organizations (Powell, Koput, & Smith-Doerr, 1996). Collaboration among organizations and its stakeholders enables them to pool resources, capitalize on complementary capabilities, achieve economies of scale, and enhance innovativeness. Collaboration allows an organization to achieve something that could not be accomplished in any other way. Collaboration helps organizations tackle social or macro environmental problems, which cannot be solved by any single organization acting alone, i.e., the essential reason for social partnerships. Finally, organizations may gain an adaptive advantage through collaboration. That is, organizations may engage in collaboration as an adaptive response to environmental complexity, uncertainty, or turbulence (Savage, et al. 2010). That is, collaborative stakeholder relationships can be a source of opportunity and competitive advantage

(Svendsen, 1998). However, the relationships have to be intense. In low intensity relationships that entail high levels of uncertainty, perceptions of integrity may be necessary to induce the degree of trust relevant for coordination and cooperation (Pirson & Malhotra, 2007).

Polonsky, et al. (2002) cite that the evolution of stakeholder relations is influenced by a number of moderate variables that point to strategic options for organizations seeking to form or manage relationships with stakeholders (Schuppisser, 1998). These relational factors include relationship orientation, trust, communication, learning, power and reciprocity and commitment. These are all interdependent and serve to describe the nature of a relationship at a specific point in time, and on the other hand represent levers/motivators for parties to change the nature of their relationship. These were based on studies by Morgan and Hunt (1994), Mitchell, et al. (1997), and Savage, et al. (1991).

Relationship Orientation

Polonsky, et al. (2002) cited Berman, et al.'s (1999) notion of relationship orientation which refers to the motivational and evaluative orientations of the parties towards the relationship with each other. The motivational element one can distinguish as cooperative, individualistic and competitive relationship orientations. (Deutsch, 1982). In the cooperative orientation, the stakeholders' and company's welfare are taken into consideration. In an individualistic orientation, only one party is interested in doing well without regard to the other party. With a competitive orientation a party not only seeks to do as well as it can for itself but also tries to defeat the other party (Deutsch, 1982). In all cases, all parties continuously evaluate their interactions in the course of the relationship (Polonsky, et al., 2002).

Trust: The second relational factor is trust which is defined as the willingness of one party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party (Mayer & Shoorman, 1995). Three forms of trust have been identified: calculus based trust (CBT), knowledge based trust (KBT), and identification based trust (IBT) (Lewicki & Bunker, 1995). In CBT, the trust is based on comparing the value of market orientation and economic calculation that results from creating and sustaining the relationship. KBT, on the other hand, prevails in a relationship when the parties know each other very well and that the behaviour of each party is predictable. Lastly, IBT exists when the parties thoroughly understand, agree with and endorse each other's intentions and goals as they share the same needs, choices and preferences. To this effect, each can effectively act for the other (Polonsky, et al., 2002).

Communication: Communications allow relationships to happen which may vary in terms of frequency, direction, modality, and content (Mohr & Nevin, 1990). A combination of different facets of communication can either lead to a collaborative or an autonomous combination. Collaborative combination includes higher frequency and more bi-directional flows, informal modes and indirect content. In contrast, the autonomous combination includes lower frequency and more uni-directional communication, formal modes and direct content. Relationships may also be differentiated according to the style of communication which is persuasive, argumentative, or informative (Polonsky, et al., 2002).

Learning: Polonsky, et al. (2002) further explain that relationships and interactions offer opportunities for learning how the relationship affects the stakeholders. Learning can either be in the form of single loop, double loop, or triple loop learning. In single loop learning, a party considers instrumental actions for achieving the goals, but is not willing to challenge the appropriateness of the pursued goals. In double loop learning, the parties

involved consider both the instrumental actions and the possibility of changing the goals pursued. In triple loop action learning (Nielsen & Bartunek, 1996) a party is open to questioning instrumental actions, valued goals and in addition is willing and able to consider potential biases in their organization's context (Nielsen & Bartunek, 1996)

Power: Polonsky, et al. (2002) explain that power concerns the types of resource parties use to influence the other party to behave as it would not otherwise have done (Pfeffer, 1981). Power can be coercive, utilitarian, and normative. Coercive power is based on physical force, violence, or restraint. Utilitarian power is based on material or financial resources, and normative power is based on symbolic resources (Agle, Mitchell, & Sonnenfeld, 1999)

Reciprocity and Commitment: Commitment involves "taking actions that create a self-interest stake in the relationship and that demonstrates to the other party the willingness to undertake consistent future behavior" (Polonsky, et al., 2002:117). Reciprocity, on the other hand, is mutuality. Over time, action patterns of either positive or negative reciprocity may be identified in a relationship. The longer a certain type of pattern exists the harder it gets for the parties to change behaviour. Furthermore, the action of the pattern can be described according to the strength of reciprocity (Polonsky, et al., 2002).

While these factors were investigated in the context of stakeholder-organization relationship, their potential for influencing inter-stakeholder relations within organizations cannot be overlooked. It still remains however, that the academic literature as well as researches on the stakeholder relations has not sufficiently produced a universal model that can be applied to organizations rather, these have generated a pool of knowledge for

organizations to design their specific stakeholder relations plans, approaches, and strategies. For instance, IBERDROLA, in its social responsibility policy first laid down its policies on stakeholder relations, the basic purpose of the policy, the basic principles for stakeholder relations, the channels for dialogue with stakeholders, and other processes/ or instruments for stakeholder relations management. (IBERDROLA, 2016). The European Medicines Agency (EMA) employs a different approach to stakeholder relations. It first sets down the framework for stakeholder relations management, define the objectives and scope of relations, identify the principles for stakeholder relations management, prescribe the working methodology, and prescribes the implementation guidelines (EMA, 2016). The company Stora Enso puts emphasis on the development of stakeholder relations plans in consonance to how its different business units relate with their specific stakeholders. Prior to the development of the plan, the company must be clear on who their stakeholders are and how stakeholders affect the business. To improve the responsibility of each functional or business unit, the strategy of the stakeholder relations plan is employed. The plan consists of five steps: stakeholder analysis, business assessment, stakeholder action plan, integration, and monitoring and reporting. Underlying the planning process are the defined principles for stakeholder relations set down by the company (Stora Enso, 2016).

The foregoing illustrates some of the moves adopted by companies in dealing with stakeholder relations. What is common among the three companies is that they have well defined principles for stakeholder relations. What makes them different is that they customize their approaches based on the nature of their business and their stakeholders. Customization appears to be the trend among companies in approaching and responding to issues involving stakeholder relations.

The relationship of stakeholders in strategic planning in the airport industry has been highlighted in *ACRP Report 20* (ACRP, 2009). The report describes the strategic planning process, to wit:

The airport strategic planning process begins with preplanning activities. The strategic planning process then proceeds to assessment and development of (1) the organization's historical context, mission, vision, and core values; (2) the internal and external environment in which the organization operates; (3) the organization's strategic issues and strategies for creating competitive advantage; (4) specific long- and short-term objectives and action plans that must be implemented for the organization's vision to be successfully achieved; and (5) an evaluation plan using key performance indicators and targets (ACRP, 2009:10).

In the strategic planning sequence described in the report, the first step involves the definition of stakeholders, their expectations, and roles, all of which will influence their relations during the process. The report recognizes that airport strategic planning is a 'wicked problem.' This requires, among others, the broader participation of parties affected either directly or indirectly by planned outcomes. The report further noted that the strategic planning process in the airport setting 'typically incorporates elements of a bottom-up approach, in which stakeholder needs and wishes are considered and consensus among different interest groups is achieved to the extent possible' (ACRP, 2009:11).

The concept of involving stakeholders in strategic planning is based on the assumption that engaging stakeholders in a meaningful way will increase the benefits for both the organization and the stakeholders. This however, depends on the model and approach to strategic planning adopted by the organization. If organizations adopt the political model,

goal setting and goal attainment is centralized and this is usually accompanied by conflicting interests within and among the organization and external stakeholders. If the organization adopts the consensual model then meaningful action presumes agreement among stakeholders (Mgomezulu, 2007). Whereas the former model restricts the participation of stakeholders, the latter model engages stakeholders in the process and allows them wider latitude of participation. The consensual model is interactive in nature that involves all participants in designing strategies. According to Hunger and Wheelen (2001:114), 'a strategic plan that is based on the consensual model would be better able to take advantage of the environmental opportunities and organizational strengths and lead away from environmental threats and organizational weaknesses.'

The approach to strategic planning adopted by the organization can also influence stakeholder relationships in the organization. In the stakeholder management approach to planning, stakeholders become one of the major factors in determining the content and implementation of the strategic plan. The approach is premised on the belief that the strategy of the organization will be effective only in so far as it satisfies the needs of stakeholders. This necessitates that decision-makers identify key stakeholders and the strategies and tactics that should work when dealing with stakeholders. The approach also involves identifying the interests of stakeholders and the decisions that they will support (Bryson, 2004).

Furthermore, the mission and values of the organization should be formulated in stakeholder terms able to differentiate its responses well enough to satisfy them. Basically, this approach is based on the assumption that the survival and prosperity of the

organization is hinged on the extent to which it satisfies the interest of key stakeholders and successful strategy is gauged by the extent to which it meets the needs of stakeholders (Mgomezulu, 2007).

Another approach to strategic planning that values the relationship of stakeholders in single or multiple organizations is the 'get-everybody-in-the-same-room' approach. This is also referred to as a "future search conference" that gathers all the people who influence a particular issue or organization and explore the issue from various perspectives. In this approach, the readiness and preparation of the stakeholders are essential to the success of the process (Barry, 1997).

Lastly, organizations have adopted the strategic issue management approach because many important issues emerge too suddenly with too much urgency, which requires immediate attention. To address these issues, top managers form a task force that includes representatives of key stakeholders to develop a response for immediate implementation (Bryson, 2004). The relationship with stakeholders is essential to this approach because stakeholders become part of the strategic management group that is able to engage in the process and manage the issues.

Regardless of the model or approach adopted, engaging stakeholders in strategic planning is shaped by a number of rationales. First, the emphasis on the legal aspects focusing on the right of stakeholders to participate and express their opinions. This implies that all stakeholders therefore can participate and voice their views on organizational processes. This rationale however will tend to produce more disagreements than consensus. Second,

the preference for ideas of those who claim ownership of the organization. The rationale is that these will most likely work as compared to ideas coming from outside the circle of organizational ownership. Whereas this can have its advantages, the net result would be the marginalization of some stakeholders, Third, the importance of the peacefulness of the relationship between between managers and stakeholders in strengthening organizational commitment. This mutualistic relationship brings about greater affinity with the organization and the realization of stakeholder needs. Conflicts between managers and stakeholders will take their toll in terms of productive time channeled to conflict resolution. Fourth, the emphasis on trust building as a driver of organizational transparency. Greater trust for and among stakeholders can bring about more openness in decision-making where motives, desires, and intentions are known in an open framework and where honesty abounds. This of course is a very ideal situation but is at the heart of managing organizations ethically. Fifth, the improvement of the quality of managerial decisions through stakeholder involvement. In this case, managers and stakeholders can work together on a broader range of alternatives in decision-making and the most appropriate techniques in choosing the right decisions. This is advantageous to the organization because it operationalizes a system of checks and balances during the decision-making process. Sixth, the improvement of the quality of teamwork in solving a myriad of problems faced by the organization. The key to this rationale is the synergy brought about by effective communication and coordination. Lastly, improving efficiency through stakeholder involvement. This rationale is founded on the assumption that stakeholder involvement reduces amount of slack and duplication of functions. This is quite significant in optimizing the use of resources by the organization (Mgomezulu, 2007:115).

Involving stakeholders in strategic planning likewise entails that organizations have also the readiness and capacity to undertake a number of measures. First, the capacity to decentralize the process of decision-making. The rationale here is that decentralization encourages stakeholder participation and involvement and centralization tends to breed apathy for the organization. Second, mobilization of resources to the local levels. The effectiveness in mobilizing resources to local levels speeds up organizational processes and fosters the effectiveness of vertical continuity and relations in the organization. Third, strong leadership commitment for stakeholder involvement. The commitment of the leaders of the organization regarding the involvement of stakeholders is perceived as a gesture of sincerity that stimulates stakeholders to participate in organizational processes. Fourth, provision of time frame and funding. In the first place, it takes time to nurture stakeholder relations and organizations must be prepared to budget their time to allow relationships to form and mature. Similarly, funding is essential especially in orienting, training, and involving stakeholders to effectively partake in organizational processes. Fifth, establishing a mechanism of transparency in decision-making. The capacity of organizations to share information and communicate decisions to stakeholders creates an atmosphere of transparency that would reduce suspicions on motivations and actions of managers or leaders of the organization. Lastly, involvement of local level stakeholders. The only way that the organization can have a good grasp of the local situation is to have the perspectives of ground-level stakeholders to the strategic level of management. More often than not, local level stakeholders feel that they are marginalized but with the capacity of the organization to involve them, would reverse this perception and strengthen partnership (Mgomezulu. 2007:116).

2.7. Critique

From 1916 when Henry Fayol advocated the need for theory in management (Wren, Bedeian, & Breeze, 2002), the practice of modern management that followed his generation has always been theory driven. Currently, management narratives are hinting of the emergence of post-modern organizations but this will not suddenly change the landscape of management. The most that can be expected is the emergence of alternative theories. Such is the case in the so-called Friedman vs. Freeman debate which finds the shareholder theory and the stakeholder theory at opposite ends of the spectrum.

The shareholder theory is more conceptually contained and its implementation is driven by known and concrete parameters. Its main strength is in the clarity of how it conceives and defines the role of the firm. Its validity and legitimization is evident in the hegemony of corporate power worldwide. Its weakness is also evident in the exploitation of the workers and the poverty of nations. This is simply because power is in the hands of the shareholder.

The drive towards a more libertarian and egalitarian workplace earlier envisioned by the Gilbreths (Price, 1989) is finding its way in terms of alternative theorizing driven partly by the shift in the philosophical mindset from modernism to post-modernism which is paralleled in the domain of theory as the shape from positivism to constructionism.

The bone of contention of the theory debate lies in the meaning of the stakeholder as this is the main driver of the purpose of the corporation, but this can also have a reverse effect as Giddens (1984) has demonstrated in his theory of structuration earlier mentioned in

this chapter, where structure may be seen as the firm and the agency is the stakeholder. In this context, the shareholder theory fits well into the structuration theory because structure is instantiated in the very action of the agency. In short, the corporation can only be legitimated by the actions and decisions of the stakeholders.

This is not the case in the context of the stakeholder theory because the corporation is called to extend the creation of value beyond the shareholders and this can create a problematic because the range of the stakeholder continuum can extend towards infinity. Of course this is just thinking aloud but it is a possibility.

To start with, there are criticisms on the stakeholder theory of Freeman (1984) that the theory is not theory at all. On the basis of Whetton's (1989) distinction between contribution of theory and contribution to theory where contribution of theory refers to the use of theory to improve inquiry and contribution to theory refers to using inquiry to improve theory, I claim the stakeholder theory to be a legitimate theory. Undoubtedly, the stakeholder theory served as a platform for much research in stakeholder management in the same way that research has contributed to the improvement of the stakeholder theory in time. Another attribute of theory is its capacity for extension to other theories and attain similar effects. This is evident in scientific history and in the case of Freeman (1984): his stakeholder theory serves as a legitimate platform for building other theories either in the descriptive, normative, or instrumental domain. This is evidenced by the different theoretical ramifications of his theory as presented in the review.

By legitimating the theory, my critique is based on a pragmatic perspective: how the stakeholder theory can allow me to conduct a meaningful research. In this regard, I identified three dimensions which I call the conceptual, substantive, and operational. In the conceptual domain, the question is whether the theory can serve as a framework for understanding that can lead to more informed knowledge about the firm. In this respect, I would say that the stakeholder theory is conceptually sound as it gives a clear idea of the purpose of the organization and who the organization is to serve. It also provides a means by which stakeholders can be identified. The conceptual difficulty, however, is knowing exactly what value means to stakeholders and in what form value can be delivered to them. Whereas the ontology of firm and stakeholder existence can be conceptually grasped, I find that the epistemology of value in the stakeholder theory should draw more attention in terms of research and should also be raised in the level of the current debate.

From the substantive domain, the question is on the possibility of an evidence-based stakeholder theory. A universal aspect of theory is verifiability and this brings me to the question: can the stakeholder theory produce verifiable evidence? Using the assumptions of looking through the lens and looking at the lens which I propounded earlier, I see the possibility of the theory being verified. Hence, research on the stakeholder theory in different disciplines such as psychology, economics, marketing, healthcare, communication, travel, and other service-oriented disciplines are either in the trajectory of looking through the lens or looking at the lens to further substantiate the theory. From the substantive domain, the theory can generate more evidence from the field through research.

From the operational domain, the question is how to translate theory to practice. This of course is loaded with much uncertainty, especially if the conceptual landscape has not been thoroughly swept. I found that the first level of translation has to be from the conceptual to the empirical. For example, when a company refers to its stakeholders, it must already be clear to them who these stakeholders are based on empirical criteria. This is where tools such as stakeholder maps and grids can come in handy. The criteria and indicators must be clear, but before they are clarified, these must first be developed. This again is a challenge to research.

The multiplicity of terms and perspectives generated by the stakeholder theory make meaning giving a challenge. Jensen (2000) aptly pointed to this as a semantic issue. This makes the stakeholder theory a hermeneutic phenomenon that places it within the landscape of qualitative research. With this, the stakeholder theory is well poised to take its place as a research area in post-modern management that makes use of critical theory and constructivism to produce more enlightened constructs in management.

The second level of translation after evidence has been gathered is from theory to practice. The Deming cycle or the plan, do, check, and act (PDCA) cycle becomes a useful tool in this initiative. The last level of translation is methodological. There can be two major sources for this: research and best practices. My main critique of the literature reviewed is that it is rich in "what" but is lacking in "how." Whereas some companies have started to configuration their business based on the theory, many are still grappling with the question of "how."

2.8. Theoretical Framework

The literature review reveals a number of independent concepts and theories that can be used to edify causal relations that account for the relationship of stakeholders during strategic planning. In the absence of a worked-out model to this effect, the researcher has synthesised a framework that links some of these essential concepts and theories, particularly revolving around the company and stakeholders within the context of strategic planning.

In Figure 11, the theoretical orientation of the company or the firm represents its understanding of stakeholders in terms of who they are, what roles they hold, and how significant are they to the company. The theoretical orientation of the company is an antecedent to its actual view of stakeholders in practice. On the other hand, the company's value creation strategies give employees and managers a structure that will help them to think more generally and creatively about how the organization's strategic functions and policies treat all important constituencies of the firm from a more dynamic day to day perspective. Invariably, this involves processes that aid managers and employees to negotiate the requirements inherent to the structure. The more significant rationale underlying value creation is that value cannot be created without good relations (Jensen, 2000). Hence structures serve as platforms for relations to transpire, happen, or occur.

The company's view of stakeholders and the structures and processes that determine their behaviour build a collaborative infrastructure which will enable stakeholders to interact and become interdependent. Interaction and interdependence are collaborative processes

hence stakeholder relations should be collaborative in nature (Imperial, 2005). The efficiency of collaboration is based on the extent of stakeholder involvement (Mgomezulu, 2007). Accordingly, stakeholder involvement improves the quality of managerial decisions since collaboration allows stakeholders to work together on a broader range of alternatives in decision-making and the most appropriate techniques in choosing the right decisions. It is in this aspect where the roles and responsibilities as well as the expectations of stakeholders influence the quality of their relationships in relating and collaborating with each other. This in turn, shapes their relationship orientation during the strategic planning process. This is advantageous to the organization because it operationalizes a system of checks and balances.

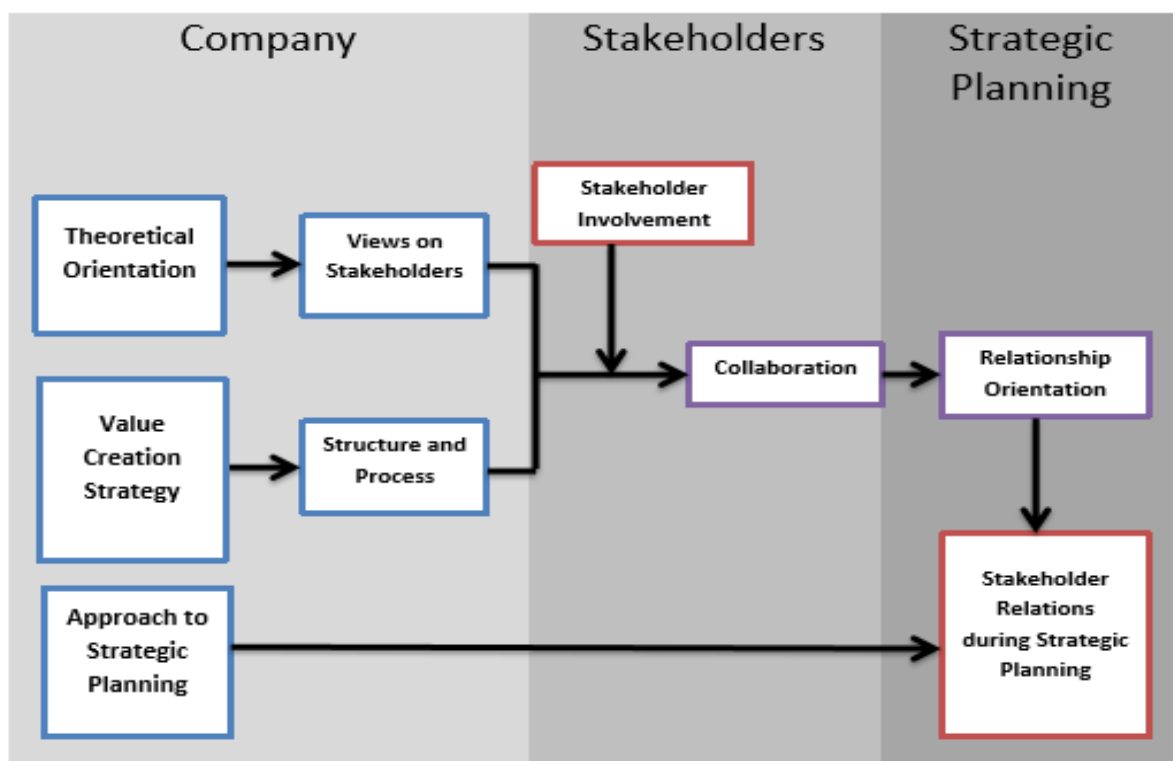


Figure 11. Theoretical Framework

To reiterate, the extent of collaboration shapes the relationship orientation of stakeholders. Their relationship orientation refers to the motivational and evaluative

orientations of the parties towards the relationship with each other (Polonsky, et al., 2002 cited in Berman, et al., 1999). This is significant because it allows multiple perceptions among stakeholders of the quality relationships that they have as they relate to each other. This is also based on the extent to which stakeholders are involved and allowed to relate with each other. The concept of involving stakeholders in strategic planning is based on the assumption that engaging stakeholders in a meaningful way will increase the benefits for both the organization and the stakeholders. In terms of strategic planning, the involvement of stakeholders planning will largely depend on the approach to planning adopted by the organization (Mgomezulu, 2007). Hence, the approach to strategic planning adopted by the organization is a crucial factor that invariably influences the stakeholder relationships that take place (Bryson, 2004).

On the whole, the theoretical framework depicts the causal factors that shape stakeholder relationship during strategic planning. Accordingly, the framework shows that stakeholder relations is a function of stakeholder involvement, the approach to strategic planning adopted by the company, and the collaborative infrastructure created by the company that determines "what drives" and "what draws" stakeholders together during strategic planning.

The literature points out that influence of stakeholders on the formulation of strategy and its consequential strategic outcomes have underscored the importance of understanding the dynamics of stakeholder relationships especially during the strategic planning process. On one hand, stakeholder relations can be conceptualized as something that transpire, happens, or occur among stakeholders within presumed the existence of interpersonal

spaces, gaps, or openings. On the other hand, stakeholder relations can be conceptualized as an inherent connectivity established among stakeholders due to the nature of interaction.

Whereas the framework allows further quantitative verification of the relationship of stakeholders, this study verifies the relationships focusing on the stakeholders' perception of their relationships during the strategic planning process and how they make sense of their experiences. This will contribute to a more informed understanding of the challenges faced by organizations in managing their stakeholders' relationship.

2.9. Research Gap

From Braendle's (2007) conceptualization on the theoretical accounts of the firm and Waldkirch's (2008) elaborations on the spread of the firm, the continuing discourse on corporate purpose in today's ever spreading and omnipresent organizations (Etzioni, 1964), has spawned other theories with strong focus on stakeholder relationships (Key, 1999). This opened the shareholder–stakeholder debate or what is also identified in literature as the Friedman–Freeman debate. At present, there is a multiplicity of definitions of stakeholders (Mitchell, et al., 1997) that has created a menu of classifications that ranges from binaries (Markwell, 2010; Evans & Freeman, 1988; Mahoney, 1994; Clarkson, 1995; Saint & Tripathi, 2010; Wheeler & Sallanpaa, 1997) to group relations (Friedman & Miles, 2006; Fontaine, et al., 2006; Friedman, 2012; Clarkson, 1995; Alexander, Miesing, & Parsons, 2004; Schipper & Mircheff, 2012; Morris & Baddache, 2012; Svendsen, et al., 2001). As a corollary, Norman (2004) catalogued more than a dozen stakeholder theories.

In the midst of these, a highlight in the stakeholder discourse is Freeman's (1999) call to pay attention to stakeholder relationships, which have become a major theme in the strategic management literature. Stakeholder theory (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Evans & Freeman, 1988; Freeman, 1984) and empirical research (Clarkson, 1995) explicitly describe the management of stakeholder relations by companies. Donaldson and Preston (1995) descriptively point out to the reasons for managing relations that can be instrumental or normative. Also, there have been investigations that determine the success and failure of relationships by examining organization as well as specific stakeholder groups (Pfeffer, 1981; Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Currently, two streams of stakeholder relations have been conceptualized (Metcalf & Game, 2006; Bennett, 1997; Gibbs, 2006; Palmer, 1997; Doane, 2002) and studies have linked stakeholder relations with company success (Clarkston, 1991; Kotter & Heskett, 1992; de Geus, 1997; Collins & Porras, 1995; Waddock & Graves, 1997; Berman, et al., 1999; Roman, et al., 1999; Svendsen, et al., 2002).

While the academic literature describes the relationship of stakeholders during strategic planning, these are largely theoretical in nature. Moreover, stakeholder relationships that are mostly discussed in the literature have reference to the organization-stakeholder and not the stakeholder-stakeholder context. The dearth of studies exploring inter-stakeholder relationships during strategic planning creates a substantive gap on the subject. Inter-stakeholder relationship in this context connotes the relationship of internal stakeholders with their external stakeholders. Contributing to this gap is the apparent lack of a new consensus on the stakeholder theory and its application. One of the aspects of the airline industry that has an implication on the relationship with stakeholders is CSR and

sustainability reporting. Andersson and Jabkowski (2013) tracked the development of CSR and sustainability reporting in the airline industry and noted that out of twenty airlines investigated, seven did not mention anything on stakeholder involvement or engagement in their reports. One among these seven airlines is a UAE-based airline. It was also noted that stakeholder involvement and engagement only became evident in the reports of the various airlines investigated from 2005 to 2012. Chang, Chen, Hsu, and Hu (2015) also reported that airlines in western countries exhibit a more remarkable CSR performance as compared to airlines in the Asia-Pacific region. Andersson and Jabkowski (2013) noted the lack of research on sustainability reporting in the airline industry while Chang, et al. (2015) noted that CSR performance needs improvement specifically in the Asia-Pacific region. The KPMG (2016) report further noted that Africa, and the Middle East had the least number of indicators for sustainability reporting that involved stakeholder engagement. To reiterate what was noted by the researcher, studies on stakeholder relations or engagements largely describe the relationship in the context of organization to stakeholders or vice versa and not from stakeholder to stakeholder context. In studies on stakeholders, there appear to be a tendency to emphasize the use of the quantitative methodology over the qualitative methodology of inquiry, hence the existence of a methodological gap. The researcher notes Freeman's (2014:13) argument that by 'retelling the story of business in stakeholder terms, we enable it to create more value, be engaged in solving some of our societal problems, and thus be seen as a deeply human institution.' This is suggestive of the use of the qualitative method in stakeholder research which appears to be wanting. Lastly, most researches are western-oriented and done in western companies. There is a dearth of studies on stakeholders in the Arab world and in the local context hence a contextual gap exists. It will also be noted that the relational factors that influence

stakeholders during strategic planning such as their perceived responsibilities during the planning process, the importance of communication and coordination, and their expectations of changes that need to be in the strategic plan have not been collectively investigated. The findings of the study will contribute knowledge to fill these research gaps.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the methodology which I employed to conduct my study, which includes the method that I used to arrive at the answers to the research questions and attain the research objectives. The terms methodology and method are often taken to be interchangeable in research, hence making a distinction between these terms in order.

Rajasekar, Philominathan, and Chinnathambi (2013:5) explain that methodology is

a systematic way to solve a problem. It is a science of studying how research is to be carried out. Essentially, the procedures by which researchers go about their work of describing, explaining and predicting phenomena are called research methodology. It is also defined as the study of methods by which knowledge is gained. Its aim is to give the work plan of research.

The same authors distinguish that method connotes 'the various procedures, schemes and algorithms used in research' (Rajasekar, et al., 2013:5). It can be inferred from these definitions that methodology is broader in scope and includes the method used. In short, methodology covers the whole of the research design while method deals with specific operations, procedures, and techniques used.

In consideration of the foregoing distinction, this chapter discusses the research philosophy, research approach, strategy and method used, including the sampling technique data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations in the conduct of the research. A significant point that I need to emphasize is that the choice of methodology is always problem-driven, largely depending of the nature of the objectives pursued and the

research questions investigated. To situate the methodology in the context of the study, the research objectives and research questions are hereby reiterated.

The study seeks answers to the following research questions:

1. How do stakeholders understand their responsibilities in strategic planning based on their lived experiences?
2. How do stakeholders perceive the importance of communication and coordination to their relations during the strategic planning process?
3. How do the stakeholders' expectations shape the challenges faced by the company and their relations during strategic planning?

Based on the research questions, the study attains the following research objectives:

1. To draw out insights into how stakeholders of an airline industry understand their responsibilities as lived experiences in their company's strategic planning process.
2. To analyse the meaning of stakeholder relationship from the frame of coordination and communication during strategic planning.
3. To explore the challenges to stakeholder relations faced by a company emanating from the stakeholders' expectations during strategic planning.

3.1. Research Philosophy

As stated earlier, research methodology is broad in scope which includes among others the principles or theoretical rationale that justifies the methods used in research. As such, methodology cannot be derived from research but from a form of pre-existing theoretical knowledge referred to as philosophy (Carr, 2006). Hence, Creswell (1998) recommends that once a researcher has defined his research problem, his next task is to locate his study within the philosophical or paradigmatic landscape. The relationship of philosophy to research is, hence, seen in a form of justification. Research method is justified by methodology and methodology is justified by philosophy.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) used the term 'paradigm' to denote a set of basic beliefs. To this effect, they call it also a philosophy. The methodology is shaped by the philosophical position of the researcher, which is dependent on his stand relative to three basic issues: ontological, epistemological, and methodological. The ontological question deals with what the researcher considers the stuff of being and reality. Hence it asks about what the nature of reality and truth is and what can be known about it. The epistemological question deals with the nature of knowledge and asks about what is knowable and the nature of the relationship of the knower and what can be known. The methodological question deals with how the researcher can go about finding out that which can be known from what exists or what is assumed to real or true.

The basic belief systems of the inquiry paradigms are shown in Table 13 (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Table 13. Research Paradigms (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:109)

ELEMENTS	PHILOSOPHIES			
	POSITIVISM	POST POSITIVISM	CRITICAL THEORY	CONSTRUCTIVISM
ONTOLOGY	Naïve realism "real" reality but apprehendable	Critical realism "real" reality but only imperfectly apprehendable	Historical realism Virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values crystallized over time	Relativism Local and specific constructed realities
EPISTEMOLOGY	Dualist & objectivist Findings true	Modified dualist & objectivist; critical tradition Findings probably true	Transactional & subjectivist Value-mediated findings	Transactional & subjectivist Created findings
METHODOLOGY	Experimental or manipulative Verification of hypothesis; chiefly quantitative methods	Modified experimental or manipulative; critical multiplism Falsification of hypothesis; may include qualitative methods	Dialogic/dialectic	Hermeneutic/dialectic

The various responses of researchers to each of the three essential questions give rise to four competing paradigms in research: positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, and constructivism.

Positivism adopts the ontology of crude or naive realism which assumes the existence of apprehendable reality driven by immutable natural laws and mechanisms. The epistemology of positivism is dualist and objectivist which assumes the independence of the investigator and the investigated entity. Its methodology is experimental and

manipulative in which hypotheses are stated in the form of propositions and are empirically tested (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Post-positivism is founded on the ontology of critical realism which assumes that reality exists but is imperfectly apprehendable because the human intellect is basically flawed (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Its epistemology is modified dualist/objectivist. It is modified dualist because it assumes that the independence of the knower and the known cannot be maintained. However, objectivity still remains as a regulatory ideal. The methodology of post-positivism is modified experimental/manipulative which puts emphasis on falsifying hypotheses rather than verifying these.

Critical theory is based on the ontology of historical realism which assumes reality to be apprehendable as once plastic and recrystallized into structures that are now taken as real (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The epistemology of critical theory is transactional and subjectivist which assumes that the investigator and the investigated are interactively linked. The values of the investigator influences inquiry hence, the findings are value mediated. The methodology of critical theory is dialogic and dialectic. The nature of inquiry is transactional that requires a dialogue between the investigator and the investigated. The dialogue has to be necessarily dialectic in nature.

Constructivism is founded on the ontology of relativism which posits that reality is apprehendable as intangible mental constructions that are socially constructed in specific contexts. The epistemology of constructivism is transactional and subjectivist. This means that the investigator and the investigated are assumed to be interactively linked so that

the findings are literally created (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The methodology of constructivism is hermeneutical and dialectic. The varying constructions elicited through the interaction of investigator and investigated are interpreted using hermeneutic techniques that are compared and contrasted through dialectical interchange.

Table 14 combines the works of Guba and Lincoln (1994) and Creswell (2009) to further elaborate the key points of the research paradigms with the addition of pragmatism and advocacy (President & Fellows Harvard University, 2014).

Table 14. Summary of Research Paradigms (combining: Lincoln & Guba, 1994; Creswell, 2009; President & Fellows Harvard University, 2014)

<p>Positivism (Very rare in qualitative research)</p>	<p>Ontology: Realism. There is a “real,” objective reality that is knowable.</p> <p>Epistemology: Objectivist. The researcher can, and should, avoid any bias or influence on the outcome. Results, if done well, are true.</p> <p>Methods: Tends towards quantification and controlled experiments.</p>
<p>Post-positivism</p>	<p>Ontology: Critical Realism. There is a “real,” objective reality, but humans cannot know it for sure.</p> <p>Epistemology: Modified Objectivist. The goal is objectivity, but pure objectivity is impossible. Results are “probably” true.</p> <p>Methods: Includes both qualitative and quantitative methods. Seeks reduction of bias through qualitative validity techniques (e.g. triangulation).</p>
<p>Critical Theory</p>	<p>Ontology: Historical Realism. Reality can be understood, but only as constructed historically and connected to power.</p> <p>Epistemology: Knowledge is mediated reflectively through the perspective of the researcher.</p> <p>Methods: Focused on investigator/participant dialogue, uncovering subjugated knowledge and linking it to social critique.</p>

Constructivism	<p>Ontology: Relativist. All truth is “constructed” by humans and situated within a historical moment and social context. Multiple meanings exist of perhaps the same data.</p> <p>Epistemology: Researcher and participants are linked, constructing knowledge together.</p> <p>Methods: Generally qualitative, research through dialogue.</p>
Advocacy/ Participatory	<p>Ontology: Varied.</p> <p>Epistemology: The distinction between researcher and researched breaks down. Insider knowledge highly valued.</p> <p>Methods: Works with individuals on empowerment and issues that matter to them. Tends towards social, cultural or political change, using any appropriate method.</p>
Pragmatism	<p>Ontology: Varied. Pragmatists may be less interested in what “truth” is and more interested in “what works”.</p> <p>Epistemology: Accepts many different viewpoints and works to reconcile those perspectives through pluralistic means.</p> <p>Methods: Focuses on a real world problem, by whatever methods are most appropriate, and tends towards changes in practice.</p>

Positivism and post-positivism constitute the basic justifications for quantitative research while critical theory and constructivism provide the basis for qualitative research. For and in consideration of the research questions that the study seeks to answer, I locate my study within the the spectrum of constructivism, specifically intepretivist constructivism which seeks to show how variations in human meanings and sense-making generate and reflect differences in reified or objective realities (Gephart, 1999). As a researcher, interpetivism dictates that I have to be actively engaged in the research process of drawing out insights from the participants concerning the central questions investigated. These insights serve as the elements in constructing the plot of the participants’ “story.” It is how the participants see the situation that merits interpretation and not my pre-

conceived notion of what should be. It is also by virtue of my philosophical stance that I used the qualitative research methods to investigate the research problem.

3.2. Rationale for Choice of Qualitative Research Method

In this study qualitative research method is employed to find answers to the research questions. The underlying purpose of this research is to generate knowledge on the relationships among stakeholders during strategic planning. Qualitative methods are ideal for exploring aspects related to strategic planning as it focuses on an individual's experience and his perception of his role and life situations in an organization (Weick, 1996). Since this study explores the nature of stakeholder relationships during strategic planning process, qualitative approach is best suited for the researcher to gain insights about the nature of the interactions and discover the problems that exist within the organization through the lived experiences of the participants. This is consistent with Freeman's (2014:13) argument that by 'retelling the story of business in stakeholder terms, we enable it to create more value, be engaged in solving some of our societal problems, and thus be seen as a deeply human institution.' Likewise issues relating to company competitiveness can be best 'solved from inside the organization, no matter how tough the environment becomes' (Navarro-Meneses, Pablo-Marti, & Carillo, 2015:1). This highlights the significance of a multiple-voice discourse that can be generated through the use of qualitative research. In addition to this, qualitative research allows the researcher to explore how the participants make sense of their experiences of relating to other stakeholders during the process. The qualitative method is also compatible with the study of subjective data assessments and judgments of a selected group of participants from the case study organization (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Qualitative research is a participatory

process which is considered with developing particularly understanding a phenomenon based on the expertise of participants, rather than filtered through an outsider's perspective (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Hence the qualitative method allows me to subjectively interact with the participants in order to realistically construct and tell their story.

The researcher's ontological and epistemological stance and the position related to the methodology in this study are depicted in Table 15.

Table 15. Researcher's Ontological and Epistemological Stance

Components	Quantitative Researcher	Qualitative Researcher	Methods used and Role of Researcher in this study
Epistemology	Objective	Subjectivist	Subjectivist – Knowledge is constructed by individuals
Paradigm & Philosophy	Positivist perspective; Researcher is independent of what is being researched	Interpretivist perspective; Researcher interacts with participant	Interpretivist perspective: to collect information from individual (participant's); establish trust with informants to gain information
Ontology	Foundationalist - everything that happens can be observed and understood without any mediation	Anti-foundationalist - everything is socially constructed	Socially construct meaning through interactions with participants; construct own subjective reality by interpreting the perceptions of the participants;
Method/Types of research	Experimental, Descriptive, Comparative, Correlational	Phenomenology, case study, ethnography, grounded theory, action research	Qualitative Case study; The role of the researcher is that of a process consultant (Schein, 2001); Applying clinical inquiry approach (Schein, 2001 in Reason & Bradbury, 2008) to understand the stakeholder relationships during strategic planning implementation
Data	Questionnaire, surveys, tests. Statistical	In-depth interviews, observations, focus groups	In-depth interviews; data will be generated through an interaction process among the researcher and client (Schein, 2001; Reason & Bradbury, 2008)
Data Analysis	Deductive process, statistical	Inductive process,, codes, themes, patterns, emergent theory	Inductive process,, codes, themes, patterns, emergent theory

3.3. Research Design

Based on the foregoing, the design and methodological choice of the research is shown in the following.

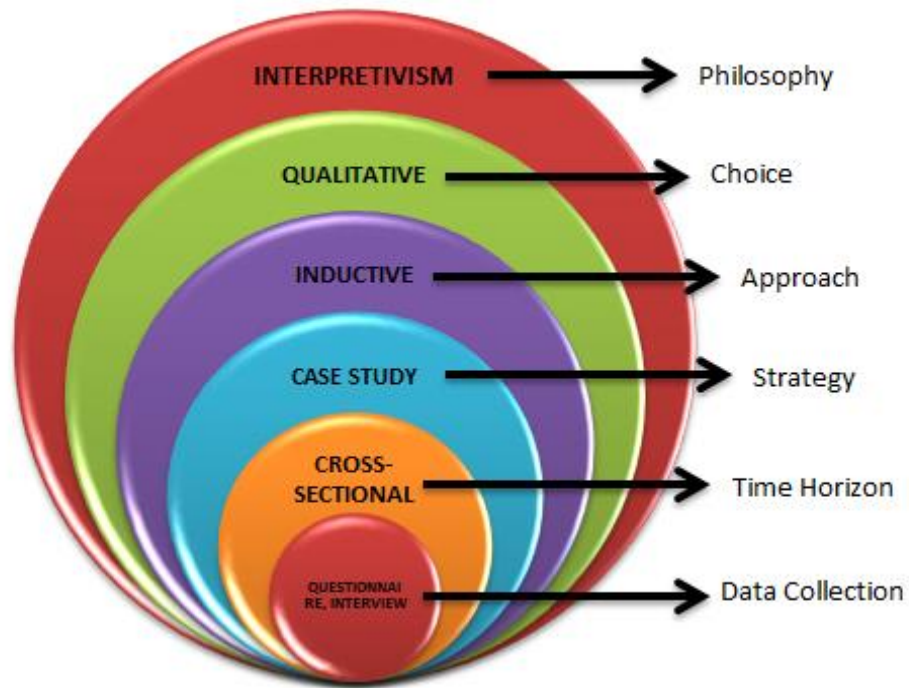


Figure 12. Design of the Study

To reiterate, the study adopts interpretivism as its research philosophy and the corresponding choice of method is qualitative. Since the aim of the study is to investigate how the participants make sense and give meaning to their lived experiences, it has largely to do with how participants interpret these experiences. The study therefore starts from the ground experiences of participants and gradually builds understanding through the accumulation and accretion of these experiences. By virtue of the movement from specific data to general knowledge, the study adopts the inductive approach. The

inductive approach starts from specific data gathered from the field as a basis for formulating generalizations. The study made use of the case study and adopt the clinical approach to inquiry. The time horizon of the study is cross sectional because the study was undertaken to answer a question or address the problem at a particular time. Finally, the study made use of semi-structured interviews and questionnaires to collect data.

3.4. Strategy: Case study using clinical inquiry approach

The choice of the case study as the method of investigation was based on the framework for research methods developed by Meredith, et al. (1989), presented in Table 16.

Table 16. Framework for Choice of Method (Meredith, et al., 1989:305)

		<i>Natural</i> _____ <i>Artificial</i>		
<i>Rational</i>	<i>Approach to knowledge generation</i>	<i>Direct observation of object reality</i>	<i>People's perceptions of object reality</i>	
	<i>Existential</i>	Axiomatic		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reason/logic theorems • Normative/descriptive modelling
	Logical positivist/empiricist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field studies • Field experiments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured interviewing • Survey research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prototyping • Physical modelling • Laboratory experimentation • Simulation
	Interpretive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action research • Case studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical analysis • Delphi/expert panel • Intensive interviewing • Introspective reflection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptual modelling

The framework is shaped by two dimensions: the existential/rational dimension and the natural/artificial dimension. The rational/existential dimension defines truth from 'out there' to 'in here' (Harrison, 2009) hence, is similar to Guba and Lincoln's (1994) positivist constructivist dichotomy. The rational pole tends to be deductive, formally structured, and

concerned with coherence with law while the existential pole tends to be inductive, more subjective, and concerned with coherence with the real world. The natural/artificial pole is concerned with the source and nature of data used in research. At the natural pole, the concern of the research process is on real phenomena which are more current and closer to reality. At the artificial pole, the research process is more concerned with the use of highly abstracted models that are highly controlled.

Based on the philosophy and source of data, the study locates its strategy at the intersection of the existential and natural poles hence, the adoption of the case study. Case studies are investigations which are used by researchers to examine in depth a topic of interest or phenomenon mostly by integrating diverse qualitative methods, techniques, and practices that are available (Easterby-Smith, et al., 2008). A case study is

a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Cases are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Stake, 1995 cited by Creswell, 2008:13).

More specifically, the case study used was both descriptive and exploratory. It is descriptive because it describes events which occur relative to the process in question. It is also exploratory because it explores an event in the data which is the point of interest of the study (Zainal, 2007). The case study has several advantages for use. Zainal (2007) cites Yin (1984) in this regard and identified that the case study is advantageous because it is conducted where the activity takes place; it draws out evidence from the categorical answers of the interviewees; and it allows both description and exploration of events from real-life experiences. Yin (1984) as cited by Zainal (2007) also identified some disadvantages of the case study. Accordingly, since the strategy depends on a single case

exploration, the case study has been criticized for the lack of rigor; its limitations in terms of making scientific generalizations; and the tediousness of analyzing massive documentation.

In using the case study, the researcher ensures that data not only meet the quality criteria for that particular method but convince the reader of the overall contribution of the study (Farquhar, 2012). In this case study, the clinical inquiry approach (Schein, 2001 in Reason & Bradbury, 2008) was used to analyse the role and relationship of stakeholders, including competitors, during the strategic planning process of the case study organization. The adoption of clinical inquiry approach, a variant of action research, is considered an appropriate methodology to understand strategic planning process, and the challenges faced while implementing strategic planning in a case study enterprise (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Clinical inquiry is ideal for tracking of participant's subjective experience. Data is generated through a process of interaction among the researcher and the participants (Schein, 1995, 2001). In order to gain information the researcher interviews participants. The rationale for choosing clinical inquiry action research is that it is a scientific orientation of inquiry where participation in and exploration of organizational practices and processes can be understood at first hand by the researcher (Schein, 2001). More specifically, 'it is a strategy that stimulates real openness on the part of the clients to reveal a set of variables and phenomena that will make it possible to build far better theories of organizational dynamics' (Schein, 2001:13). To this effect, Schein (2001) also calls it process consultation involving pure inquiry (i.e., what is going on?), diagnostic inquiry (i.e., why do you think that happened?), and action-oriented inquiry (i.e., what did you do?). In short, clinical inquiry comes to play during the interview process.

3.5. Sampling

From the total number of about 26,953 company employees, 60 key managers (40 airline stakeholders and 20 airport stakeholders) were chosen to participate in the study. The chosen sample size is a little higher than the prescribed sample for qualitative research which ranges from a minimum of 5 to 50 (Creswell, 1998), based on the presumption of one interview per participant. The researcher's familiarity with the organizational structure and the key company personalities in terms of decision-making and influence made his choice of managers as the key participants where the inclusion criteria include having served the company for more than seven years, willingness to participate in the study and should have experience of being involved in strategic planning in the company.

Because of the inclusion criteria set, the study used purposive sampling in selecting the participants of the study. The rationale for choosing this approach is that the researcher sought knowledge from expert (participants) opinion on stakeholder relationships in the strategic planning process, which the participants provided by virtue of their experience. Purposive sampling has also been referred to as non-probability sampling, purposeful sampling, or qualitative sampling. It is a method of sampling that involves selecting certain units or cases not at random but based on a specific purpose (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). The difference between purposive and probability sampling is shown in Table 17 (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

According to Teddlie & Tashakkori (2009), purposive sampling can generate a wealth of detail for the researcher from a few cases. Purposive sampling includes several characteristics. First, purposive sampling addresses specific purposes related to research

questions allowing the researcher to select cases that are information rich in regard to those questions. Second, purposive samples are often selected using the expert judgement of researchers and informants. Third, purposive sampling procedures focus on the depth of information that can be generated by individual cases. Lastly, purposive samples are typically small but specific sample size can depend on the specific research being conducted and the research questions being answered.

Table 17. Comparison Between Purposive and Probability Sampling (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009)

Dimension of Contrast	Purposive Sampling	Probability Sampling
Other names	Purposeful sampling Nonprobability sampling Qualitative sampling	Scientific sampling Random sampling Quantitative sampling
Overall purpose of sampling	Designed to generate a sample that will address research questions	Designed to generate a sample that will address research questions
Issue of generalizability	Sometimes seeks a form of generalizability (transferability)	Seeks a form of generalizability (external validity)
Rationale for selecting cases/units	To address specific purposes related to research questions The researcher selects cases she or he can learn the most from	Representativeness The researcher selects cases that are collectively representative of the population
Sample size	Typically small (usually 30 cases or less)	Large enough to establish representativeness (usually at least 50 units)
Depth/breadth of information per case/unit	Focus on depth of information generated by the cases	Focus on breadth of information generated by the sampling units
When the sample is selected	Before the study begins, during the study, or both	Before the study begins
How selection is made	Utilizes expert judgment	Often based on application of mathematical formulas
Sampling frame	Informal sampling frame somewhat larger than sample	Formal sampling frame typically much larger than sample
Form of data generated	Focus on narrative data Numeric data can also be generated	Focus on numeric data Narrative data can also be generated

3.6. Data Collection

The interview technique was used as the main data collection tool in-depth knowledge of the case investigated. More specifically, the study used a semi-structured interview. This means that the researcher used a prepared interview guide throughout the sessions

conducted but allowed the opportunity for the participants to freely express their answers. The nature of questioning adopted the clinical approach which allowed the researcher to probe deeper into the answers provided by the participants. The interview was conducted face to face within the premises of the company and ran for an average of 45 minutes. All of the sessions were audio-taped with the full knowledge and consent of the participants. The semi-structured interview was adopted because the technique ensures that the questions asked are consistent throughout; the respondents were able to answer freely, and the researcher could probe deeper on the answers of the participants.

For the purpose of conducting interviews; emails, telephone calls, and personal meetings were used to ensure that the aims of the research were communicated to the participants. Participant consent forms were provided and they were asked to complete the form before participating in the interview.

The interview proved to be an effective way of gathering the data but it had its own drawbacks. Since the researcher is a part of the company, the participants sometimes deviated to discuss more on company pleasantries and a lot of ad libs had to be done before keeping the participants on track. At times the researcher had to entertain some queries from the respondents which did not have anything to do with the data gathering. The superiority in rank of the respondents relative to the researcher also made the researcher indulge them in their comments and conversations during the interview.

Secondary data that supported the development of the narratives of this thesis were collected using online search for journals either individually or those published by Sage, or found through Academia.edu, ResearchGate, and Google Scholar.

3.7. Analysis of Data

The analysis of data involved the use of approaches in qualitative research that give meaning to the processed data. Once codes have been categorised, inferences were made and the reconstructions of meanings derived from the data was presented (Patton, 2002). Analysis of data varies according to the research problem sought hence the following tools were employed in the study.

3.7.1. Inductive content analysis

Inductive content analysis is a 'rigorous and systematic reading and coding of the transcripts to allow major themes to emerge. Segments of interview text are coded enabling an analysis of interview segments on a particular theme, the documentation of relationships between themes and the identification of themes important to participants' (Ellioy and Gillie, 1998:331).

Some of the assumptions underlying the use of a general inductive approach are as follows:

1. Data analysis is determined by both the research objectives and the research problems. Thus the findings are derived from both the research objectives outlined by the researcher and findings arising directly from the analysis of the raw data (Thomas, 2003).

2. The primary mode of analysis is the development of categories from the raw data into framework that captures key themes and processes judged to be important by the researcher.

3. The research findings result from multiple interpretations using the appropriate qualitative methods to best answer the research questions. Inevitably, the findings are shaped by the assumptions and experiences of the researcher conducting the research and carrying out the data analyzes. In order for the findings to be usable, the researcher decides about what is more important and less important in the data.

4. Different researchers are likely to produce findings which are not identical and which have non-overlapping components.

5. The results of the analysis of qualitative data vary according to the analytic methods used by the researcher. This means that different researchers working on the same topic can come up with different results.

Based on these assumptions, the following procedures are used in the inductive analysis of qualitative data.

1. Preparation of raw data files. This involves cleaning the data of irrelevant information such as introductions, side comments, ad libs, etc.

2. Close reading of text. Once the text has been prepared, the raw text is read in detail so the researcher is familiar with the content and gains an understanding of the "themes" and details in the text.

3. Creation of categories. The research identifies and defines categories or themes. The upper level or more general categories are derived from the research aims. The lower level or specific categories are derived from multiple readings of the raw data (in vivo coding).

4. Overlapping coding. The researcher notes overlapping codes and goes over the uncoded text to review if other codes can still emerge.

5. Continuing revision and refinement of category system. Within each category, sub-topics are searched for, including contradictory points of view and new insights.

3.7.2. Narrative analysis

In the study, narrative analysis is the process of focusing on how participants construct their views on the reality of a phenomenon (Guba & Lincoln, 2004). In the context of the study, the transcribed text was the narrative that provides a stage for the voice of the participants to be heard, to let them tell 'their story.' This conception of narrative analysis is rooted in a critique of traditional studies that deprived participants of their own lives and voices. In this case, adopting a narrative approach means seeing research as a channel for communicating the participants' experience (Robert & Shenhav, 2014).

3.7.3. Phenomenological reduction

The operative word in phenomenological research is 'describe' (Cailli, 2001), hence the aim of the researcher is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon, refraining from any pre-given knowledge, bias, or prejudice but remaining true to the facts. Applying

phenomenology is concerned with the lived experiences of the people (Maypole & Davies, 2001) involved, or who were involved, with the issue that is being researched.

This explication process has five 'steps' or phases, namely:

- 1) Bracketing and phenomenological reduction
- 2) Delineating units of meaning
- 3) Clustering of units of meaning to form themes
- 4) Summarizing each interview, validating it and where necessary modifying it
- 5) Extracting general and unique themes from all the interviews and making a composite summary.

1. Bracketing and phenomenological reduction points to a suspension or 'bracketing out' of previous knowledge or position not allowing the researcher's meanings and interpretations or theoretical concepts to enter the unique world of the informant/participant (Creswell, 1998), hence bracketing the phenomenon refers to the bracketing of the researcher's personal views or preconceptions (Miller & Crabtree, 1992).

2. Delineating units of meaning. This is a critical phase of explicating the data, in that those statements that are seen to illuminate the researched phenomenon are extracted or 'isolated' (Creswell, 1998). To do this the researcher considers the literal content and how it was stated.

3. Clustering of units of meaning to form themes. In this stage, the researcher elicits the units of meaning within the holistic context (Hycner, 1999).

4. Summarize the text and modify. This incorporates all the themes elicited from the data and gives a holistic context. The aim of the investigator is the reconstruction of the inner world of experience of the subject.

5. General and unique themes for all the interviews and composite summary. The researcher concludes the explication by writing a composite summary, which reflects the context or 'horizon' from which the themes emerged (Hycner, 1999).

3.7.4. Sense-making

Sense-making includes processes by which individuals interpret and reinterpret events which take place, and put them in a context to make sense of what is happening (Weick, 1995). This process occurs at the sub-conscious and conscious levels. At the sub-conscious level, it is an instantaneous process, enabling individuals to cope with equivocal situations and contexts (Craig-Lees, 2001). In organizing their understanding of what is happening, individuals create plausible, but not necessarily correct, explanations, which lead to action.

The concept of sense-making (Weick, 1995) and the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckman, 1966) are perspectives within which data are understood. The value of sense-making as a diagnostic tool is emphasized by the fact that examining the interviewees' responses reflects 'what is going on here.' Making sense in the study is seen in terms of how the data is organized in such a way to present a continuous line of thought regarding the theme investigated.

The foregoing procedures described how the data collected from the interviews was translated to the units of analysis of the study. Operationally, it entailed the translation of audio-taped data to narratives. After each interview, the audio-tape was given to a trained transcriber who transcribed the tapes into written form. The written transcripts were reviewed by the researcher vis-à-vis the audio tapes. Each of the transcripts was coded, and the codes were arranged into categories to identify themes. Open coding was employed which involved identifying and labelling of key words. The labelled section of data was later grouped into distinct ideas or events. As the codes for new concepts are created, it was compared with new codes that keep emerging. At that stage, the codes were analyzed to find the similarities and then they were grouped into conceptual categories based on their common properties (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

On the whole, how do these tools fit together as analytic approaches? In inductive content analysis, all individually transcribed are coded by labelling or marking key words or ideas. The codes from the transcript are pooled together and classified into categories based on their similarity or affinity and differences or variance. The goal here is to achieve a level of abstraction from categorised codes. To do this would entail phenomenological reduction. Hence reduction of the categorised codes would yield the products of inductive content analysis which are filtered themes or higher level constructs derived from the whole sample. In this case, inductive content analysis and phenomenological reduction go hand in hand in the processing of the text. The next protocol is narrative analysis which entails a thorough examination of the themes generated by the preceding procedures and writing down the plot of the participants' story while thoroughly referencing this with their own voice by going back and forth from the narrative under construction to individual

interviews. This is a tedious and iterative process to unfold how the reality of the phenomenon investigated is constructed by the participants themselves. The initial narrative derived from this procedure is cyclically reviewed and revised to establish coherence in the flow of the story line. In the process, the researcher pays attention to how the participants are making sense of their experiences and the researcher notes this down in the text. Finally the narrative is organized in writing.

Unlike in quantitative research where data processing happens in a computer or paper, qualitative analysis all happens in the researcher and the processes are embedded in the researcher's action of reading, thinking, and writing that goes on and on in a spiraling manner until the final text is distilled from the iterative actions involved.

3.8. Reliability and Validity

This study conducted interviews to include a diversity of perspectives. The participants in this study were carefully identified and selected so that they would provide rich information. That only participants who would share information essential to unravelling the complex and unique issues that are being studied, were selected. In order to collect trustworthy data targeted and unbiased open-ended questions were developed for the interviews. The questions were coherent and logically assembled and aligned with research goals, carefully worded to elicit honest responses and producing reliable data.

Triangulation was not restricted to the use of different methods, but as a tool for multiple perspectives (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Obtaining different information from multiple perspectives (interviews, and secondary data) was used to gain insight into stakeholder

relationships. This procedure was not only aimed at validation but also at intensifying and broadening the understanding of the research topic. During the analysis stage, feedback from the interviewees was compared to determine areas of agreement as well as areas of divergence.

3.9. Research Ethics

Throughout the conduct of the study, the researcher was guided by ethical principles of research. First, no one was harmed in anyway either physically, mentally, or emotionally by the operations employed by the researcher. Secondly, the researcher safeguarded the identity of the participants and safeguarded their privacy by not revealing their personal identities in presenting the findings of the study. The information given by the participants were kept confidential by securing the tapes and the transcripts through a data storage system that is accessible only to the researcher. All of the participants were duly informed of the nature and purpose of the study and the interview and their consent was sought prior to the interview. Finally, none of the participants were exploited nor abused by the nature of the questions asked and the manner of clinical inquiry employed.

3.10. Summary

In recapitulation, this chapter initially made a distinction between methodology and method. To situate the problem-drivenness of the methodology, the research questions and objectives were re-iterated. Based on the nature of inquiry, the researcher chose to anchor the methodology on the interpretivist philosophy which *ipso facto* led to the choice of the qualitative method, the use of the inductive logic of inquiry, and the use of the case study as research strategy. The chapter also discussed the sample and the method of data collection used in the study which is the through the use of semi-structured interview

using the clinical inquiry technique. Finally, the chapter described the data analysis tools used to generate the answers to the research questions.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The influence of stakeholders on strategy formulation and the consequent strategic outcomes underscore the importance of understanding the dynamics of stakeholder relationships, especially during the strategic planning process. As a corollary, the study draws on the two streams of meaning of stakeholder relations and contextualizes these in the strategic planning process of the company. The study contends that an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the planning process, their perception of the importance of communication and coordination during in strategic planning, and how their perceived relations shape the challenges faced by their company can drive or draw relations of stakeholders during the planning process.

To this effect, the study posed the following questions: (1) how do stakeholders understand their responsibilities in strategic planning?; (2) how do they perceive the importance of communication and coordination to their relationship during thlanning process?; and (c) how do the stakeholders' expectations shape the challenges faced by the company and their relationship during strategic planning.

In faithfulness to the character of qualitative research and the nature of narrative analysis, this chapter specifically highlights the voice of the participants as the researcher tells their stories. To sustain the flow of the participants' voice in the narratives, the researcher has reserved any discussion of the findings for the next chapter, hence this chapter is structured according to the researcher's point of view but the contents are largely those of the participants. In this regard, the storyline is organized by the researcher but the script

is written using the voice of the participants. This shifts the focus of the findings to the level of stakeholders, which gives emphasis to their multiple voices. It aims to empower the voice of stakeholders and surfaces hidden meanings which has previously been submerged in silence (Calton & Kurland, 1996). This is also consistent with Freeman's (2014:13) argument that by 'retelling the story of business in stakeholder terms, we enable it to create more value...'

Accordingly, the findings presented in this chapter are organized according to the following themes: (1) responsibilities of stakeholders in strategic planning, (2) perceived significance of strategic planning, (3) subjects taken up during strategic planning, (4) coordination among stakeholders, (5) the role of communication in strategic planning, and (6) perceived changes needed in the strategic plan.

4.1. Responsibilities of Stakeholders in Strategic Planning

This chapter presents the stakeholders' points of view on their responsibilities in their company's strategic planning process with the end-view of looking into how these drive them to relate with other stakeholders during strategic planning. For this purpose, the content codes are first presented as a sort of a skeletal framework of the findings which are later elaborated in the descriptive text that follows. The content codes from the narratives are shown in Table 18. The first column shows the in vivo codes extracted from the narratives. Codes that are conceptually related are collapsed into categories and the conceptual links between categories are grouped into themes to address more directly the overarching research question.

Table 18. The Responsibilities of Stakeholders in Strategic Planning

to make big change	Foster survival	Facilitating adaptability
to protect the company		
support the vision	Sustain momentum	
support the strategic plan		
allow the high-level strategy to be met		
look at overall strategic direction	Normative - Competitive	
forecast and look into the future		
focus on what we want to do		
implement strategic directions		
develop plans around forecasted future		
ustifying needs for new projects	Dealing with contingency	Championing alternatives
plan to cope with increasing demand/growth		
plan for events from the master plan		
build business cases	Innovation-oriented	
design solutions		
design enhancement		
customize the plan		
involved in the development of SP in all departments	Facilitation	Translating strategy
work with planning colleagues		
get 80 percent involved		
direct the team		
leading the planning team		
reporting KPIs	Process orientation	
analysis work		
evaluate data		
assess where we need to go		
identify root causes		
align the requirements to the plan		
align equity partners to the plan		
decision-making		
come up with corrective actions; ensure operational readiness		

develop synergies with partners; sustain good relations with the airlines	Bridging relations	Bargaining and Negotiation
build synergies		
discuss various issues		
share knowledge and opportunities		
reduce loss	Attaining efficiency	Attaining cost-effectiveness
schedule specialist		
reduce cost everywhere		
ensuring efficiency		

Accordingly, the table reflects the variety of responsibilities that stakeholders bring to the table during their company's strategic planning process. These responsibilities stem from the different roles played by stakeholders in relation to strategic planning either in the airline or airport. Of the respondents interviewed, some (12) of the stakeholders consider themselves implementers and others (3) categorically stated that they are not currently involved in strategic planning at the moment. These stakeholders nevertheless gave important insights on the other questions asked by the researcher.

A group of stakeholders perceived that their main responsibility during strategic planning is to foster the survival of the company. This has to do with making big changes within and protecting the company. One among these stakeholders articulated his responsibility citing a particular situation as an example in the following:

- To make big changes, like between at the airport, when at the airport to respond to the needs, and the airport has tended to be, stubborn, resistant, and a bit separated from us (airline). For example, I know there is a need for more up-to-date information in the passenger screens where they can see where the next flight is departing from and what time. So during the disruptions we have had, there has been a lot of inaccurate or old information on the screens, and that is why there are a lot of volunteers needed with iPads to tell customers where the next plane is, what gate, what time, because the information is not up on these*

screens and even though parts of the airline have been talking to the airport about using a better source of information to update the screens, they do not want to, and it will take some political strength to say we got better information available that you are not using. (20)

Apparently, the stakeholder wants to see big changes in terms of airline–airport coordination by way of the flow of updated information to be able to cope with contingencies in times of temporary crisis, such as disruptions. In this case, the manager is looking to the planning process as a platform for exercising his responsibility in signaling the significance of responding or being proactive to crisis situations but more importantly, sharing information between the airline and the airport.

Still in relation to change, one of the stakeholders from the airport side expressed his responsibility as:

- *Supporting the change initiatives that need to be rolled out. It's easy to talk about change. Many of us wants to change this or to change that and almost everyone wants to change the situation. But if we don't provide the support, it will just remain as a discussion thing. In our case, equipment, trials, training and we're involved them as well. It's for the maintenance contractors' work for the next few years to ensure that when we open everything is ready there. We put policy there. We would have a maintenance contract for the supply for all the equipment and the systems installed within this airport for at least two to three years. (32)*

Other stakeholders expressed their responsibility as protecting the company. This is cited by one among the stakeholders who articulated responsibility during strategic planning as:

- *Largely it is to protect the company. So we are not in the business to develop the brand. We are not in the business to fly the plane. We are in the business to protect the airline should anything happen. Bottom line is the company has to*

survive at all cost for business to thrive and this has to be strongly considered in the planning process. The mandate given to us by the top management, and I am very happy with the support that the top management are giving to our department, in every business, you have to protect it. All businesses must be protected. When push comes to shove and if crisis arises, we believe and we have the commitment that that is the time that our guest needs us the most. (23)

From the airport side, one of the stakeholders expressed that:

- *The growth of the airline depends on the capacity of the airport not only in providing the space but also in ensuring that the planes are safe. We cannot compromise the aspect of safety as this will undermine the brand should there be negative consequences. Once safety is compromised, the consequences on the overall business can be disastrous. We have to see that the airline is protected that is why we are very strict in monitoring our infrastructure and its technologies. Our plans have to largely reflect this.... (41)*

The foregoing participants take their responsibility as ensuring the continuity of the company's grand strategy by fostering its survival. Among the stakeholders, it is well acknowledged that the strategic plan is developed from the top echelons of the organization and cascaded downwards. In which case, some stakeholders perceive their responsibility in relation to sustaining the momentum on the ground. One of the stakeholders explained this in relation to his responsibility:

- *I think. Is supporting the actual execution of that strategy and that is what filters down to the rest of the business. One of the things that I think the airline is really good at is the communication that happens to actually get the business to understand that high-level vision that comes down from the top and what needs to be done, at senior middle management level, to execute that vision. As, I guess, a senior manager in the airline my job is not to come up with the vision; my job is to see the vision moving and gain momentum in the process. Every three to four months the whole company is invited to understand where the high-level business*

strategy is going, what the thoughts are of how the business is going, and that translates into the individual objectives that then come down the chain to my kind of level and it is my job to actually make sure that those division objectives are met. And so, from a strategy execution point of view, I think I am quite clear on where the business is headed and on the tactical day-to-day level, what I need to do to allow that high-level strategy to be met. (30)

This is further corroborated by another stakeholder:

- *The strategic plan of the airline, if you go all the way to the top, the vision is the main thing. That is to be the best airline in the world. We've got other companies like airport services so ground, cargo, and catering, also a part of that plan. On the broad scale, our job is to support that vision to make sure that we do the best for our partners, and the airline. That then obviously cascades down from my Senior Vice President to my general manager, to my management. Our strategic planning within our department is very much formulated by our general manager. For us at the moment, last year and up to around now, we're very focused on the momentum of the partner system because this is a priority in the company vision just as I said before... (29)*

Another stakeholder explains that:

- *As it is, the strategic plan is developed by top management and this gives us the umbrella plan for the whole organization. My responsibility is to work within the bounds of the strategic parameters set. I have the responsibility of supporting the strategic plan because it is the source of all other plans. My advocacy when we plan at my level is always to support the company strategic plan because it would be disastrous to change the rules in the middle of the game. Get the ball rolling at all cost, momentum lost is profit lost. When others see that we are on target, their motivation is bolstered so it would be good also for sustaining the morale on the ground... (17)*

From the foregoing, it is clear that the stakeholders take on the responsibility of seeing that the operational plans generated at ground level are aligned with the company

strategic plan and that specific actions expected are implemented on a continuing basis to sustain the momentum of strategic planning.

Another category of responsibilities articulated by the stakeholders is subject to the vision, is strategy-driven, and inclined to future orientation. As such, the researcher categorised these as competitive-normative responsibilities. Accordingly, this involves looking at overall strategic direction, forecasting and looking to the future, focusing on what needs to be done and implementing the strategic direction. As articulated by one of the stakeholders:

- *Strategically, my responsibility is to look at the five-year plan. I'm looking ahead within my portfolio. I'm looking at where I need to take my team. I'm looking at high-level objectives and looking to target where the direction of my team is going. Now, that is broadly overlaid by the needs of the business. Strategic targets will be shaped by the direction that the airline is going in. For example, the airline partnership really came to the fore in 2014 where we started really developing our relationships with partner airlines and looking at what we could do within the sphere of my responsibility to ensure that we were developing relationships with partner airlines in the future timeframe. (1)*

From the airport side, a stakeholder cited that:

- *Considering the tremendous growth experienced in the past years, dealing with the issue of increased support capacity of the airport should not be solely limited by addressing the present problem because we will continue to face these problem as the airline continues to grow. My responsibility and I have to be strong on this is to focus on the future growth because no matter what, we are moving there, it's only a question of how fast or slow can we get there. We need to have very clear steps, we need to know the future forecasts of the airline... (38)*

In support of this view, another stakeholder intimated that:

- *From a strategic planning perspective, my biggest responsibility is ensuring that the airport operates to its most efficient potential. It involves everything from ensuring that the front of house or check-in has got a sufficient capacity to manage the number of guests along with ensuring that the gate allocation and the management of the airside terminal is sufficient, and partner airlines and the company's best interests are considered. Also, a big responsibility to forecast and look into the future what areas and what times of year are going to be the greatest stress to the operation and develop plans around dealing with that such as Eid, Ramadan, summer, and Christmas where the peak travel period, the number of people coming through the airport could quadruple. (12)*

It can be inferred from the foregoing that their responsibilities articulate the purpose and process of strategic planning and hence are more in accordance with the expectations of manager's responsibilities and contribution during strategic planning.

Some of the responsibilities of stakeholders have a strong strategic focus. This only varies in terms of context. One of them is quite specific in terms of skills readiness to equip manpower in dealing with future contingencies:

- *My responsibility is to contribute to ensuring that the plan prepares us for readiness. When we talk about strategy, we're looking of course in the current, the present, and we're looking at the future. For me, I've broken it down into two windows. Predominantly, the 72-hour operational window and then I've got beyond 72-hours into the future. In our interim, the strategy is, because we have a large team and we have different units within the division, we've got CRC, ticketing, flight editing, scheduling, what we wanted to do? The end game is to have them cross-functionally utilized. So, I'm never gonna be in the same situation if somebody calls in sick or somebody has to go in emergency leave, everybody across the bench has the experience to come in and pitch in when required. They*

have the skill set. Part of our strategy is upscaling everybody across the end bench. (31)

Another area of responsibility is in line with the strategic use of resources, as expressed by one of the stakeholders:

- *In terms of strategy, it is my responsibility to see that cross functional utilization of resources is factored in the plan. The second biggest thing for me is automation and innovation. When I talk about automation, we are currently reviewing the systems that we use to do different tasks. How can we drive efficiencies from each of these systems? How can we get the best of the systems? Inherently, every system has its own limitations. A part of my future, part of the outside 72-hour window and looking into the future is what does my system do for me today. What do I wanted to do for me today? In parallel, we are also exploring what systems we have available in the market which could potentially add benefit or add value to the business. Those are some of the key things that are always on our radar. (27)*

It can be noted that the strategic use of resources as expressed not only has a strong undertone in improving operational efficiency and partnership equity but includes improving the learning curve as part of the strategy. Strategic directions need to be translated into ground specification and some stakeholders view this as their responsibility. This is aptly expressed by one of the stakeholders, to wit:

- *My responsibilities derive from a high-level strategic perspective, yes. Some guidance does come down from above particularly. To give you an example, when it came to the introduction of the airline partners and how that relationship with them should translate into the operation of the terminal. So the senior vice president, would pass down guidance or recommendations coming from the top to other people, stakeholders around the business, and it would be up to try and design a plan that would best implement that strategic direction. It is a challenge because the terminal's capacity is constrained that you're trying to look after so*

many airlines' best interests and putting them first means there's got to be a bit of a balance. Direction does come down from the top and you've just got to create a balance (12)

This group of responsibilities articulated by the participants focuses on their intent to see that company strategy is smoothly translated into actions and ensuring that the necessary supports are in place in order to ensure greater competitiveness.

Owing to unplanned or uncertain events or phenomena that are beyond control that might cause disruptions, other stakeholders see their responsibilities in line with dealing with contingencies. A case in point mostly cited by the participants was the disruption caused by fogging. Dealing with contingency was however expressed more in the context of their responsibilities in justifying the need for new projects, coping with increasing demand or growth, and planning for events based on the master plan, as expressed by one of the stakeholders:

- *My personal responsibility in planning is that, I am basically looking and supporting in the contractual agreement, building up business cases to senior managements, to justify the needs or explaining to them the need for new aircrafts or what developments we might do. I am also looking after the long-term plan for the fleet model. I run the fleet model. It would be basically maintain the fleet details in terms of what is happening in the movements of the aircrafts. What is coming in? What is out? When the lease would be expiring? What is going to go with the partners? I also work with the various other projects covered within the fleet planning. (25)*

In reference to planning for contingencies due to unpredicted phenomena, one of the stakeholders expressed that this should be the responsibility of stakeholders in:

- *...the whole strategic planning of the airline that is disseminated until it reaches to our level. However, we do have moments where we do plan for events, most usual one is the fog events that we are facing in the mornings. Now in that case, during the day, the day prior, we go through an extensive planning stage where we look at, somehow we look at the master plan, with disruption event and we make sure that each individual element of it has been addressed by the coordinating stakeholders. So the idea is that we start working on a master plan and we have an idea to start with. And the plan is somehow to achieve the flying schedule without incurring diversions, without incurring the safety issues, or matters that would disrupt the schedule of the airline. (15)*

Other stakeholders see their responsibilities in planning to cope up with growth:

- *My responsibility and the whole objective of planning is to cope with existing demand from the side of the departments. Again, like I said, within the shift, I'm the most senior person representing the airlines, alright. So what happens is that on a daily basis, when I come in, I need to see the whole operation. I need to see what's happening, is it a normal operation, is it an abnormal operation. We discuss this in our briefings, we ask lots of questions. Once that is discussed, then we take it one step lower and we discuss it with the duty managers and with the supervisors and the rest of the team. The discussions are valuable to the strategic planning process... (14)*

The responsibilities of the foregoing stakeholders are largely oriented towards focusing on dealing with future uncertainties considering the realities surrounding the company. Apparently, these responsibilities contribute to the proactive elements in the strategic plan. Quite related are the responsibilities of stakeholders in signaling the need for innovation and creating novel solutions. This is seen in terms of building business cases, designing solutions, designing enhancement, or customizing the plan. In relation to building business cases, one stakeholder explained that:

- *In terms of roles and responsibilities in planning, we have a very good relationship between us and the departments from which we generate valuable information in building business cases during planning. We do have weekly meetings with network planning, finance, and revenue management teams. We sit together and talk on a weekly basis basically to get to understand what is going to happen in the next few months and also on the long-term plans. . We come up with inputs in these exercises which are fed into the planning process. Actually, we have come up with surprisingly new cases from these some of which are very much in place now. (25)*

Planning for innovations can come in the form of planning new designs or new enhancements which some of the stakeholders see as their responsibility. As cited by one of them:

- *So one of the key areas that I've been assigned to in planning is to work on is to sort of make sure that any enhancements that we request for the airlines also satisfies the needs of our customers, as in, our partners. So what I'm doing is working with Air Berlin. If they're coming up with the plan, it has to include these enhancements. I'm working with them in order to plan for what enhancement would be suitable for the airline; or I plan to raise a new enhancement. In planning, I'm keeping in mind that we design the solution, et cetera, that it satisfies all the other partners. So we were working as a team. (15)*

Adding novelty can be attained by customizing the plan so that it will be suitable to the context. One of the stakeholders was asked about this as a responsibility and he replied:

- *Absolutely, absolutely. So, in planning I see to it that we have to plan another contract which actually says that, "Okay, if there's lots of room for customization which the airline can do." Again, if it's something that's gonna benefit all the other partners and they're interested in, then, customize the agreement or contract or the plan. This is essential if you're going for X, Y, Z enhancement. Also regarding the cost, and how we split it. (11)*

These are stakeholders who see that the complexities of the competitive market need to be addressed in the plan in order to get ahead of the game. As such, their responsibilities during the strategic planning process serve as a response to this need by building competitive business cases and formulating creative solutions that can deal with market contingencies.

Getting the process moving on the ground by being involved in the planning process is aligned with the motivation of the responsibilities of stakeholders in strategic planning. This was particularly expressed in the context in being involved in the planning process of all departments, working with planning colleagues, directing the team, and leading the planning team. The responsibilities of these stakeholders are more functionally aligned with people involved in the planning process. As explained by a stakeholder:

- *We have a department that is participatory. So almost from senior vice president, our vice president head and a senior manager, we work very closely and learning what is required by our internal client in network planning and alliances, we joined and work together in developing our annual, in this case five years plan. So I'm actively involved in all the development of strategic planning with the departments. It's a corporate strategy and we fit into that corporate strategy. If the airline who wants to fly to a certain destinations in the next two years, three years, four years or five years, we come in. . (4)*

This is corroborated by another stakeholder who explains that:

- *Once again, it is such a broad portfolio that I could take many examples. We will use the network planning examples where we work very closely with our network planning colleagues where they build a commercial schedule and we, in network operations, must deliver that schedule. Therefore, we work with them in terms of looking at the next season or the season after when they are building the 2016 schedule or when they are building the 2017 schedule for Midfield and onwards.*

We need to work with those guys such that we are using our operation experience to ensure that there is a balance between what they are building – revenue schedule, commercial schedule, and operation deliverable schedule. (16)

It is apparent that these stakeholders define their responsibilities in relation to the continuity of the planning process by attaining both vertical and horizontal integration. In such a way, they facilitate the translation of strategy to action.

Exercising leadership during the planning process by directing and leading the team came up as a responsibility of stakeholders. Accordingly, one explains that:

- *As you know there are several levels of planning and many different actors involved. This can either be in the context of the airline as well as the airport. This might be in the field of finance, HR, operations, and the like so its complex and can be complicated. The strategic plan as we know it comes from the top and we sure pretty well that all are not involved but moving the plan in terms of actionable elements on the ground is very important so as I said earlier, giving directions to those who plan at the departments, guiding them through, providing the resources needed would be of value to the people involve. That's how I direct them so it's pretty much in this aspect that I find my responsibilities useful in planning. (51)*

Quite in relation to the above responsibility, another stakeholder explained further that:

- *In answer to your question, my position finds me in the intersection of various departments and I am in the position to influence them in countless ways but let's get back to planning. Here, a lot of times sometimes is spent in discussions. Without a gate-keeper, this can get way out of hand not as a matter of rule but you know sometimes we get so enthusiastic with a topic that it pegs us to the table. In times like these, you need people to keep you on track. That's pretty much my responsibility, to lead the planning team so we don't lose track of the purpose of why we are planning in the first place... (44)*

These stakeholders look at their responsibilities in terms of the influence that they bear on the planning process itself. These are stakeholders who perceive that the exercise of their responsibilities is essential to keeping the teams going and the process running. They typify respondents in the literature who are aptly called influential stakeholders.

The majority of the stakeholders locate their responsibilities within the different aspects of the planning process itself hence are more structurally aligned. Among the stakeholders, this may be seen in the context of their expressed responsibilities in checking the KPIs (Key Performance Indicators), analysis work, evaluating data, identifying root causes, aligning the plan, decision-making, and coming up with corrective actions.

Accordingly, one of the stakeholders explained that:

- *Okay. That's a good question. Things that I do to add to that, the whole caring, improving, and enhancing the service, things like I have a lot of KPIs for the staff, for check in, at boarding. They have certain KPIs that they must follow, so I ensure that these well spelled out in the plan.. It's like an ordered form as such. That kind of contributes to ensuring that they are delivering good customer service and caring about detail. It actually kind of draws in all our values. (13)*

Another expressed his responsibility as follows:

- *My responsibility in planning has to do with analysis work. I think the ground services are an enabler as a division. We do a lot of analysis works. So as we get to the business planning stage, I and my team have been working through the things that we can enable the business to help them drive down and improve performance. . We have to come up with changes in procedure, change in policy. So our team are constantly monitoring data to come up with strategies to enable as we go forward to improve operational performance. So if I will put my objectives for 2015, I have the target of reducing the cost of mishandled baggage*

by 30 percent percent. So we have now come up with a bunch of strategies to do that. (26).

- *Yeah, sure. I mean, I think, I do have a significant strategic component as part of my responsibility. I would say it's more of evaluating data. For example, some brief examples would be during 2013. We had a number of fairly serious aircraft ground damage events, which in majority of cases was down to willful misconduct almost, well from negligence on the part of the ground handling agents. And what we did to elevate awareness of ground damage and compliance was. When we evaluated data to plan for measures to deal with this, the data pointed that it was the ground handling agents globally which were causing these problems. We would not have planned properly if we did not do the evaluation in the first place. Yes, I see to it that there is proper evaluation made before we do planning (34)*

Quite related to the foregoing response, a stakeholder explained that:

- *Yes, surely, in planning, I would say my responsibility is predicting where we want to go. . So basically, and my role is to assess where we need to go next and determine if we are in a proactive or predictive state. The predictive role in my opinion is our end goal, so I carry it to the planning table, but with some way from that significantly. I would like to think we've started moving towards a proactive state where we're getting more and more reports. (5)*

Others looked at their responsibilities in planning in line with alignment:

- *My responsibility is aligning requirements with the plan and the plan with equity partners. Basically on our area, there's a high-level strategic plan for the company. On our area, we also deal with the airline and equity partners. So, if there is a path or a goal; on our area, we first look at it in terms of how does the airline require this to be completed and then how would the different equity partner require this specific planning. We, myself and my team, communicates with the other stakeholders of this equity partner and then we try to align whatever we have for the airline and to include that in their strategic planning as well. If they agree, then*

we proceed with whatever enhancements and functional settings that we do in terms of system. (37)

Planning also opens the opportunity for some of the stakeholders to exercise the responsibility of strategizing:

- *Yes. So, for any strategic planning exercises, we do get our own chance to strategize on our level. Based on that, we conduct research, we conduct the same interview as what you are conducting so that we learn what we need to actually change in the initial strategy. In terms of implementation, we involve everyone included in the project. By the way, our area is primarily focused on system requirements and project-base requirements. Most of our main responsibility is done in phases and in what we call an isolated phase. Once it's completed, that's the time that we merge it with the airline company itself or the other subsidiaries (56)*

Others take to decision-making as their prime responsibility in planning:

- *So let's say, it's all about partner carriers I would say, it's decision-making that I take responsibility for in planning. And also in the airline. If there is a very high-level decision-making that we need to contribute to planning for moving ahead in 2015 and 2016 with how do we get support with the partner carriers, it's kind of a high-level decision made on a top level and then it comes to a management level, as in, you get in a system process. And if I get an instruction saying that we need to support, for example, I'm saying Alitalia with airports where we support them with operationally, so I could present a plan saying that these are the airports where we fly and Alitalia also flies, so we can move them on our system. (21)*

Finally, some stakeholders take responsibility for coming up with corrective actions during planning. One explained that:

- *Okay, when we say strategic planning, the projects and the processes that we have implemented is vast and my responsibility is to see we come up with*

corrective actions. Part of our strategic plan was to evaluate the response level for each and every station. So, a big part of our strategic planning is in uplifting the standards of stations is to conduct a regional emergency exercises. In the regional emergency exercises, all the airport managers in that particular region attends the regional exercise that we have conducted in a particular station. (49).

By and large, these stakeholders assume their responsibilities in terms of the elements of the strategic planning process that suit their specializations. This means that these stakeholders are specialists in aspects of the strategic plan and look at the strategic planning process as an opportunity where they can contribute to the parts of the planning process.

Some stakeholder responsibilities in planning have also a strong focus on partners. In the context of the study, this was expressed as responsibilities in bridging relations through developing synergies and sustaining good relations, discussion various issues with them, and sharing knowledge and opportunities. Regarding developing synergy with partners, a stakeholder cited that:

- *Well, in terms of the planning, what we are trying to do is that as we grow we are not just an airline, we are a group now. The mindset has to change within the team. . We want to see how we can further develop the synergies with partner airlines such as Alitalia, Air Berlin, Air Seychelles, so on and so forth. This will mean working closely with procurement in terms of a joint procurement planning (18)*

Related to creating synergies is the responsibility of maintaining good working relations during planning:

- *As a stakeholder manager, over the last eight years or so, developing a good working relationship especially with the airlines to ensure that what were being*

built and how we're gonna operate it so successfully that we as a team working together are in agreement with everything. . Just basically, talking the same language as the airline and making sure that on an operational basis, you work well together. (32)

Lastly, bridging relations with stakeholders during planning also calls for the responsibility of sharing. As one stakeholder explains:

- *Planning is an opportunity for sharing knowledge, sharing opportunities, sharing resource, making opportunities for resource sharing, for cost sharing, for efficiency, for common use of best practice in the safety space, looking for opportunity to bring us all together to reach a common goal really. To answer the question, I would look at the overall strategic direction, the ebb and the flow of where the business is going, and I would direct my team in accordance with the requirement I guess of the business, the direction from the top. (2)*

From the foregoing, it is clear that these stakeholders are relations-oriented and exercise their responsibilities towards creating, supporting, and sustaining relations with other stakeholders. The responsibilities of these stakeholders underscore the significance of stakeholder networks in the strategic planning process.

The last category of expressed responsibilities of stakeholders has to do with attaining efficiency. This is expressed as responsibilities in the context of reducing cost, reducing waste, and timeliness. As expressed by one of the stakeholders:

- *My responsibility and is our team is to constantly monitoring data to come up with strategies to enable as we go forward to improve operational performance. So if I will put my objectives for 2015, I have the target of reducing the cost of mishandled baggage by 30 percent. So we have now come up with a bunch of strategies to do that. (26)*

- *Every year before the end of the financial year, I do project assessment associated with what is required in Human Resources especially financial resources, the risk associated with their project and then it is approved by airport Management accordingly. (59)*

One of the stakeholders intimated that his responsibility stems from the fact that he is a schedule specialist:

- *I think I am fairly clear in terms of what I do and what my responsibilities are. I am a schedule specialist. I am the resource manager in terms of the fact that I use the resources that we have to the best possible level. Because my background is the low cost airline background that I am always looking for the value of money in terms of trying to make sure that we reduce cost everywhere. (28)*

From the side of the airport, one stakeholder describes his responsibility as:

- *My responsibility is to ensure that we plan for operational efficiency. This should involve all operational units in the airport. At times we receive complains of inadequacies owing to many things from airport lighting to airport runways. I admit that there are some points in the airport that really have to change to cope with airline growth. Efficiency is also looking for how we can optimize potentials. Let's first work on the givens then expand forward. In planning, I feel that it is vital to look at our potentials and work from this point on. (57)*

On the whole, the respondents bring to the table a variety of responsibilities during the strategic planning process. From the multiple perspectives of responsibilities, the researcher noted the relationship among categories. On the whole, the stakeholders' understanding of their responsibilities show a trajectory towards facilitating adaptability, championing alternatives, translating strategy, bargaining and negotiations, and rational-analytical responsibilities. These are discussed properly in the next chapter of the study. Suffice to say, that the responsibilities attached to the position of the managers drive

them to interact and relate with other stakeholders during strategic planning. It is worth noting that some of the responsibilities articulated come on the heels of the proposed expansion of the company, reminiscent of the spread of the firm propounded by Smith (2003).

4.2. Perceived Significance of Strategic Planning

Theoretically, the academic literature is replete on the advantages and significance of strategic planning and empirical studies have verified some of these advantages. The difference in the nature of companies, their manpower, and the strategic planning models and processes that they adopt can be factors that can account for differences in actual or perceived advantages.

This portion of the study presents how the stakeholders of the company in focus perceive the advantages or value of strategic planning in their company. This is with the end-view of looking into the inherent value of the planning process which draws the stakeholders to interrelate with each other. The perceived values of strategic planning are derived from the content codes extracted which are shown in Table 19.

Table 19. Perceived Value of Strategic Planning

Department won't exist w/o SP	Survival	Enhancing momentum
W/o SP, it would be disastrous		
it's my job		
meeting strategic values	Achieving effectiveness	
gives us clearly defined KPIs		
we have the commitment of top management	Support	

to make proper forecasts	Adaptability	Enhancing organizational performance
know the future		
clear focus where the company wants to go		
we have to look at the long term		
achieve the needed change	Operational Efficiency	
better prepared, better delivery		
release pressure of operation		
ease operational pressure		
manage schedules to be on target		
eliminate day-to-day problems		
add value to every single day		
save on time	Problem-solving	
troubleshoot issues		
solve issues		
allows us to strategize and do research	Exploring solutions	
overcome vulnerabilities	Sustain partnership	Enhancing profitability
establish loop of communication with partners		
tenders and huge savings	Economic viability	
improve cost by 45 percent		
increased revenues		
profitability and growth		

Survival

One of the more general advantages of strategic planning perceived by the stakeholders is survival. As expressed by one of the stakeholders, *I don't think the department would exist or be successful as it is without any strategic planning*. Others intimated that, *without strategic planning, it would be disastrous*. Some of the participants explain that the advantage is job-related. As expressed by one stakeholder:

- *To be brutally honest, it's our job. That's the main thing. What my manager tells me, they are my goals. They're set for me in my iAchieve and I'm gonna get to those strategic values and I'm gonna meet them. (29)*

The strategic plan serves as the company's roadmap to the future which gives a lot of weight to the process by which it is formulated. The participants perceived that in the

absence of a guide in negotiating the company's future, the results can be catastrophic to the continued survival of the company. Hence the value of strategic planning is inherently tied up with the survival of the company.

Effectiveness

Another advantage perceived by the stakeholders is that strategic planning is a means of attaining effectiveness. To them this means having clear goals and meeting strategic values. In this context, one of the stakeholders explained that:

- *Yes, definitely. I think from my point of view, looking within our division, within network operations specifically, as I said, the organization has evolved over the past few years. Probably in the past 6-12 months, as a division, the first time we actually had a divisional strategic road map laid out for us which I believe is incredibly beneficial because what it does is it gives us a clear oversight of where we want to go, where we need to go, and then effectively allows us to formulate how we're gonna get there. As I said, that's only something that has been developed in the last 6-12 months specifically for our department. Prior to that, I won't say it was ad hoc in terms of the strategic road map, it has always been clearly defined in the bigger picture. It has only been recently we've had a more fine detail to come down much lower to our level to help us to play those things out. (39)*

In relation to meeting strategic values, one stakeholder cited that:

- *Well, I think, the fact that as a company, strategic planning allows us to attain our strategic values. For example, I have set these thing, but it is very easy that by the end of March I am into detail because I start the year by saying I am going to plan ahead. I need to keep my head strategic, but then the day-to-day starts to build and before you know it, your head is in the detail and then you stop looking at the big picture. The strategic plan however keeps you on track. So again, we are just going to the budget of the business planning process now and setting the*

objectives for this year and I can clearly see some projects that I need to deliver this year that will alleviate and take the business to a whole new level. This is adding value so now, I am working very hard with my team to stop getting dragged into the detail to enable me to keep that strategic position to ensure that we deliver those projects because the issue is if I get into the detail. (26)

Strategy is a means of bridging means with ends and the effectiveness of how the company meets its strategic goals highlights one of the values of strategic planning perceived by the participants. The planning process in itself sets the strategic goals and the means of achieving these while pursuing the strategic values espoused by the company.

Adaptability

Other respondents perceive that strategic planning increases the adaptability of the company. Strategic planning allows them to make proper forecasts, know the future, have a clear focus on where to go, and achieving the needed change. In relation to making forecasts, one of the stakeholders explained that:

- *Absolutely, Yes. We have worked in the airport planning and also we work closely with our network management so that they have some typical 2018 forecast to work from. They work very closely with fleet management in bringing the passenger figures going forward and so now we will know what to expect. Now we were all on the same page with where we need to work towards and it is obviously the airport's primary role to take that to the executive council in order to get the funds to go with it. (30)*

In relation to providing the company with a future orientation, a stakeholder cited that:

- *Oh yes, yes for sure. If you don't have a strategic planning, you don't know what the future is. Our work here, airline industry is a long-term industry, not a short-term thing. By the virtue of the vehicle that you use is the aircraft. Aircraft delivery are years ahead. So if you don't have strategic planning, how to use them, where to use them, it cannot work in this industry. (22)*

Another stakeholder further elaborated that:

- *We are very clearly a three-product airline in terms of that we're providing a premium product and we provide that to our guest and there are certain rules are taken to be premium and protected even though at times it feels it is a constraint that makes life more difficult, it gives us a direction in terms of we are providing a service that is different. As an airline, we are focused on the fact that we are this and that is good and it is clear and I think it is good to see what we have done with A380 and the 787. (24)*

In relation to the foregoing, some stakeholders perceive that the needed change can only be achieved if there is a strategic plan. One explained that:

- *Okay. The strategic direction of the airline of course, since I've joined the business has been set by the strategic plan. . One of the great opportunities we've had here is actually looking at everything we do and think laterally about what we do in the business and come up with new ways of working which will positively benefit the business in terms of again, just coming back to efficiency. With a clear plan we have the opportunity to basically break through the walls of legacy. (51)*

As mentioned earlier, one of the unavoidable changes among firms is growth. This may be influenced by changes in the external markets and economic conditions surrounding the markets. At times, the changing and growing demands of customers drive firms to change in the way they produce products and provide services that lead to the maximum

satisfaction of customers. All of these factors influence the evolution of the firm. As firms evolve, adaptation becomes the critical determinant of the firms' fitness or demise. Accordingly, the findings indicate that some participants locate the value of strategic planning in terms of providing the company with the inherent capacity to adapt to its environment.

Operational Efficiency

Another advantage or value of strategic planning perceived by the stakeholders is that it improves operational efficiency. Planning contributes to operational efficiency by being better prepared. As one respondent explained:

- *Yes, definitely. We continue to review our strategy. I am a big believer of we manage what we have today, but to manage it easier tomorrow, if we have a strategic planning place such that we are trying to overcome those issues tomorrow. I am not literally meaning tomorrow. I am talking about the horizon of 6 months, 12 months, or three years. The better we will be prepared such, the better we deliver. So energy put in today, I put the same energy in for next year today. I will be using less energy when I actually get there. It will be more deliverable, whatever I am doing so far for our project management. The better we are prepared today, means our lives will be easier in the years' time because we would have driven out all of those challenges and risks. (16)*

Operational efficiency is also achieved by releasing the pressure of operations. As cited by one of the stakeholders:

- *Okay. Our plan allows us to release the pressure of operations. One of the examples that I can think of is that we wanted to improve the staff travel experience. Equally, we wanted to release the pressure on the airport operation with handling staff. So we successfully implemented new functionality to enable*

staff to actually check-in online regardless if they've got a confirmed booking or if they're on standby. Even though it was extremely challenging on a long road, we got through it and now we've got a much better system than we had before. (3)

In relation to the foregoing, another exemplified that:

- *Okay. I'll give you one example. There was a time when we were really struggling with regards to... I wouldn't say struggling but we were finding it difficult to cope up with the volume of people that were checking-in in terminal 3, obviously with the growth; so then because of planning we came up with introducing mobile check-in desk. So that was an initiative that we took. Mobile check-in desk – these are counters which are placed in different locations within the airport. You have those static fixed desk and you have the mobile counters. Those mobile counters, what they did was that we put them in strategic locations. This did not just come about without thorough planning. (15)*

Planning also allowed the company to manage schedules on target:

- *Yes planning is valuable to allow us to manage schedules. For example, the recent one is that, due to the on-going construction and on-going development at Abu Dhabi Airport, the traffic services are a bit congested and to the point the Abu Dhabi tower in case of low visibility can only sustain a certain number of movement, 15 movements per hour, which means arrival and departures. So one asked me that we have to start looking into is to look into the way to manage our schedule, forecasted periods, we're looking into managing the schedule in such a way that we do not exceed this 15 movements per hour peak. So we had fog in the morning forecasted for, I think it was 8 January. Fog actually occurred. However, planning stages, we thin on the bank of departures and arrivals and we manage the schedule in such a way that we don't exceed those 15 movements. (49)*

Planning also helps eliminate day-to-day problems:

- *I think the issue that we all face is we get caught up in day to day. We discuss this in planning sessions and somehow, slowly, we move towards dealing with it through our plans. As I said we are caught up in the operation today. The more senior you become, the more you need to try and break away from dealing with the reaction of today's event because you need to have your airport manager focusing on today's event so that you can focus on the future and for me, the more senior you are, the more you can develop a strategic plan to track today's event. You want to identify what today's event is telling you, but you need to plan your strategic direction to try and remove the things that are causing the day-to-day problems because if you are always involved in the day to day you never get ahead of them. (26)*

Quite related to the above is the advantage of adding value to every single day:

- *Absolutely. We did implement some of our strategic plans in 2014 which carried over to 2015. This is shortly after the disruptions of 6 March 2014, in planning we looked at cross functional utilization, we looked at going out and seeing other systems. Half the team, if now all of them have already been for cross-functional training. So that is an on-going process which does add value and we see that every single day as a result of planning. (36)*

Lastly, saving on time adds to operational efficiency as perceived:

- *Yes. Let's say, I will take the same example, now that was a benefit to Alitalia, right? They just had the revenues now saved and everything. On the other hand, we proposed that we wanted to make sure that the airline's workload is reduced. We planned for automation and its requirements. From the airline perspective, what was happening is there's a lot of manual work going on by the check-in agents. So after the flight is gone, they have to sit and then validate all the coupons and, it takes time. With planning on automation, we can save on time and be on target. (2)*

Quite related to the values of survival and adaptability is the capacity to optimize the use of limited resources to attain optimum advantage. Strategic planning not only ensures that the company does the right thing but also considers that in the process, doing the thing right is equally critical. Operational efficiency is achieved on condition that the strategic plan prioritizes and supports the attainment of this outcome. To some respondents, the inherent value of strategic planning is seen in facilitating how the company negotiates its day-to-day activities to attaining the big picture. Invariably, attaining operational effectiveness entails drawing a cross-section of stakeholders together.

Problem-solving

One of the real values of strategic planning perceived by the stakeholders is that it allows problem-solving in the context of trouble shooting issues or addressing these issues:

- *Absolutely yes. Let me tell you one thing. We are in an operational environment. We work towards solving the issues through planning. We don't keep it stranded and waiting for a long process. One of the biggest example, last year where we had a strike being implemented in Frankfurt where the airport was closed for all the arrivals into that station because the local labor laws had some issues with the government. I don't want to go into it. By in coordination with the duty managers in Munich and duty managers in Frankfurt, I coordinated with all of them and got this sorted out. So we had a plan place for all the passengers going to Frankfurt and on the return. (7)*

Although this stakeholder was speaking from a specific arena of operations, enabling departments to be flexible in dealing with emerging issues and contingencies is a function of strategic plans. The perceived value of the planning process is hereby seen in terms of the extent that it allows flexible problem-solving to happen at all levels of the organization.

Exploring Solutions

According to the stakeholders, planning is an opportunity to explore solutions. This is allows strategizing and doing research to overcome vulnerabilities:

- *Yes. So, for any strategic planning exercises, we do get our own chance to strategize on our level. Based on that, we conduct research, we conduct the same interview as what you are conducting so that we learn what we need to actually change in the initial strategy. In terms of implementation, we involve everyone included in the project. By the way, our area is primarily focused on system requirements and project-base requirements. Most of our main responsibility is done in phases and in what we call an isolated phase. Once it's completed, that's the time that we merge it with the airline company itself or the other subsidiaries. (9)*

Another stakeholder further elaborated that:

- *Yes, definitely. One advantage of planning is that we can overcome vulnerabilities. I'll give you an example is back up DCS because of the events that happened on March 6, and it was again in 3rd of Jan. So it's sort of portrayed or made it very clear to the organization that we have to overcome vulnerabilities. And these are the gaps that need to be fitted. So I mean the disruption that happened was not a system outage. But if there is system outage, the situation would be worse than what we experienced. So this was one of the strategic goals, or one of my objectives is to have a back-up in place which will protect the airline in the event there is a system outage. Planning gives us the solution needed for these. (11)*

While problem-solving during planning at all levels is a desirable, this must be first addressed at the strategic level of the company. Some participants perceived that the value of the planning process is seen to the extent that it facilitates exploring novel solutions to organizational problems.

Sustain Partnership

Another value of strategic planning perceived by the participants is the capacity of planning to sustain partnerships by integrating them in the loop of communications:

- *So my first area was commercial planning. What we did was, the main work was the revenue budgets and that was very detailed on the cabin volumes and average fares telling our sales organization exactly what we thought they should be selling and that included the new routes that were coming in the next year. What I would do is they should be trying to sell to use that route. So that is one year to two year kind of short-term strategic document that budget where we have information that sales people do not necessarily have, and we try to give them guidance as to what to focus on selling into the future. And like anything, it needs communication. We need to plan to sustain partners domestically and internationally. Without planning we cannot establish a loop of communication with the sales in all the countries.*
(20)

Although speaking about a strictly financial context, the perceived value of planning rests in its capacity to get partner stakeholders in the loop, which is sustained by continuous communication. Seen in the broader context, planning draws stakeholders together and forms meaningful relations provided that effective means of communication are in place.

Economic Viability

The economic viability of the company is ensured through planning. This is perceived in the context of tenders and savings, increased revenues, and profitability and growth.

Regarding tenders and savings:

- *Strategic planning today, I think the records speak for itself. We are today considered to be the instrumental organization in the maximum contribution to*

profitability. We have done so successfully in the last four years. If you look at our KPI on one aspect of the technical cost, we have reduced over 400-500 billion dollars of technical cost over four to five years. Our fleet has grown by 50 percent. The record and the results speak for itself. From your experience, I'm not speaking only your experience in the airlines, in the past that you have explained, what do you believe are the major actors in the organizational planning process when there are any project during the process of the planning, what are the major elements? Do you believe that communication should be there and awareness should be there? (32)

Another stakeholder corroborates this by stating that:

- *I think the most important thing from a project planning or any project is to have a clear set of objectives because if you're not clear on what you're trying to aim and achieve, then there is no basis of any project in succeeding and that applies in everywhere and success means profitability and growth. . So from a project management perspective, there should be clear sets of goal lines, clear set of responsibility as who is responsible to deliver what, and you or who is the project manager, he needs to have an oversight on every aspect of the business of that project from end to delivery. (19)*

This perception of the value of strategic planning in relation to economic viability can be seen in terms of how strategic planning sustains organizational health. In today's business organization, financial viability is an important aspect of overall organizational health. Hence, the perceived value of strategic planning in attaining financial viability is seen in terms of its long-range effect in promoting organizational health.

On the whole, it can be inferred from the category of answers given by the participants that strategic planning in their company is valuable and advantageous because it enhances momentum by achieving effectiveness, support, and ultimately survival.

Planning also enhances organizational performance by attaining organizational efficiency and adaptability. It encourages innovation through problem-solving and exploration, and it enhances profitability and growth through sustained partnership and economic viability.

4.3. Subjects taken up during Strategic Planning

Apart from the expressed responsibilities of the stakeholders and the value of strategic planning that they perceived, are the subjects, themes, or topics that they discuss, participate in, or bring to the table during strategic planning. The specific responses given by the participants allowed these to be categorised as follows.

Looking for Buy-ins

Owing to the airline–airport relations, some stakeholders cited that looking for buy-ins is a subject taken up during strategic planning. As explained by one of them:

- *We're looking for buy-in to the concepts that we're referring to so again, I can only refer to the safety component but the introduction of the 380s is a very good example. We've had numerous events of tire bursts on takeoff. Getting the support and traction with the airport has been again, it's not been an easy journey. One sense is that there is a resistance to being open and feeling that they're being blamed. I don't think we've ever gone down the route of finger-pointing saying it's the airport's fault but it seems to be almost a default position. It's not our fault. We need to get away from that. We need the airport to buy into our plans and vice versa. We need the airport to be actually working very closely with the airlines on providing us with an indication of where the risks exist and working with us to mitigate that risk. (1)*

Projects/ Investments

For other stakeholders, most of the topics that they have high interest in during strategic planning are projects and investments. As expressed by one stakeholder:

- *So first thing, any project in that matter. I would first like to know what is the objective. Why are we doing that? Then I would like to know what are the benefits, the whole high-level thing. Then, what is the target date. Now, once the target date is come in place, then I would like to know, is it achievable or not practically. I mean at my level. If it is achievable, then I move forward with man power, what is the number of hours which will require. What are the negatives, what are the positive testing you need to do, how is gonna be the implementation into production, is it gonna be all together or do we need to make it in phases, all that kind of stuff will come up. But if I see any risk, then that's a different issue. (33)*

In relation to projects are investments that are taken up during strategic planning. As expressed by a participant:

- *I think we take up both projects and investments. I think that some investment in the airport in terms of an example, way-finding information, how do they communicate better to the guests, I think there's a big piece on that that the airport can do. They need to invest and we need to invest in them. We as the sole ground handler in Abu Dhabi that needs to have a state-of-the-art baggage system that can look at the entire network as well as the hub and then help us make decisions on day-to-day operations as well as our ops. That's a big piece of investment I think that needs to be done. (13)*

Investment is the driver of change to a new system from the old. One participant cited that:

- *The past was an old system. In the new world, we've got the Sabre system which is a lot more advanced from the older desk model that we had. We can do anything from a touch from a terminal. We can sell, we can charge, we can disrupt, we can re-accommodate, we can run day to day. What we need to do now and this is another area that I'm interested in doing is increasing the self-service opportunities for a good proposition for the guests. (7)*

Constraints and Difficulties

One of the more common topics taken up during strategic planning are constraints and difficulties faced. One stakeholder intimated that:

- *In our case, our meetings, our monthly meetings with network planning or internal meetings, we talk about the constraints, the difficulties that we have in terms of our flights with the different destinations. So it's just how to operate within the scope of the airport's management plan. There's not too much we can do about slot. It is done by the airport, by the airport authorities. Airport authorities are expected to treat each and every airline on equal basis. (44)*

Some constraints may arise out of the need to fulfill requirements. As expressed by one participant:

- *Yeah. So basically, in our strategic planning meetings, what we do is we discuss. I think I would call it, we have two strategic meetings. One is network planning, where we discuss their plan and their needs in terms of frequencies. The other one is an interface meetings. So whatever we discussed internally with the network planning, we take it with the Department of Transport, and identify a strategy how we can acquire and how we can realize this additional requirement. So the strategy*

depends on the nature of the problem but it's pretty much on how we fulfill requirements. (6)

Strategic planning allows the participants to solve problems and constraints and this has come across in the planning sessions:

- *I agree, me as a person, I always have to remember that there are 1,000 ways on how to skin a cat. People think differently. They might take a different approach but they only want one thing – to solve that problem. There are many ways on how to show an issue. We have you, me, us, even the bosses understand that this is the reality. We want the problem solved but sometimes, there are different ways of solving it. It's a compromise. You have one objective. As long as the objective is to close that gap and solve that problem, you are fine. It's just a matter of respecting one's opinion. If they suggest something, we embrace it, we respect it, we think about it, we don't say no, and we don't say that's wrong. (40)*

Allied to the operational, management, or financial constraints discussed is also resistance to change or the culture of resistance as identified by the stakeholders. One participant explained that:

- *Absolutely, have a balance. There's some amount of resistance let's say in the introduction of new technology. Let me talk about passengers, you see some just got so used to the old ways but when it doesn't work their way, they complain. Just an illustration, I'm saying self-service is the way forward but have a balance. So one of the areas that my objective is to introduce self-service technologies so it will reduce queue times, and to make sure that their entire journey, from the time that they check in until the boarding gate, everything is smooth without any issues. (11)*

Targets and Goals and Future Developments

As planning is future-oriented, one general subject looked into are targets, goals, and future developments. A stakeholder cited that:

- *Key subjects would normally discuss initially the current status that we are in, the targets and goals for whatever strategic planning we're working on, the challenges and difficulties for us to get there, resources and expertise that are required for us to be successful in reaching our goals, and basically, coordination to the right entities within the other stakeholders that you require to complete this planning. (47)*

One of the stakeholders illustrated that:

- *Okay. So I'm planning to have a meeting with the airport because I was just advised recently that they are going to introduce self-service bag drops. And they want to have a pilot study, pilot practice. Exactly, so they want to just get one machine and to see how it works, is it really beneficial, do passengers actually would want to use it, what is the feedback? This is just an example you know but you find potentials for future development in both the airline and the airport. (9)*

Having Clear Direction

Allied to having clear goals are having clear directions in the plan. The goal is the journey and there must be a clear trajectory towards these. Hence one participant explained that in strategic planning:

- *A clear plan, a clear idea, that's the most important thing, but also, the entire picture and a focal point. I think a key project manager or stakeholder or representative, one person so it's the same, it's a consistent message and a consistent idea or plan. The consistency is great in this operational environment because otherwise, things can be misinterpreted and reinterpreted in people's*

desire. I think that consistency is key, so one central point of contact and consistency are the main aspects. (52)

Another stakeholder corroborated this by stating that having a clear direction is:

- *Absolutely essential, because unless you have a clear vision, you will get lost in the process. I have worked in organizations before that do not have a clear vision, and when you do not have a clear vision, what tends to happen is individuals themselves create their own view of where the company should be headed because everybody likes to have a view, but if you are not getting it from above, then you have lots of little mini-visions, at operation and senior management level competing for resources. It is disastrous, absolutely disastrous. It's a waste of your time, waste resources when people are not working together. So having a clear strategic company-wide vision drives everything. I think that is very important and we are very strong at that with the airline, very strong. (45)*

Strategic Outlook

Participants intimated that strategic planning is an opportunity to look at strategy. As expressed by a stakeholder:

- *Generally speaking, in planning, we look at strategy which can be a big thing so let's break that to an example. I have seen ground handling for example for global stationers. The strategy now is that I work closer with our partners, our friends, partners, and good friends with the airline. They are seeing where the benefits are to reduce cost and to have the alliance presence out there. I guess they can see and feel that as well. When we sit down, it is the senior management the chief, and the VPs who come up with the strategy. For us, we will then go through and apply those strategies in our planning sessions but without these strategies, we will not have proper directions (33)*

Others refer to the topic of strategy on a broader scale:

- *Well, first of all, understand what the company growth strategy would be. This is normally in the high peak discussion. What we are trying to do? What we are trying to achieve? What are the areas and parts of the world we are trying to fly to? What are the capabilities to have the proper aircraft flying on that route? What would be operating costs or the overhead costs we will be facing to operate that. I am also looking at the type of revenues that would be generated, looking at the competition, and whether we can be able to get into these markets at the right time so we can basically generate revenue. Revenue is not only cash. In revenue, basically you get credit, you get ancillary revenue such as the duty free franchise or now we are trying to do partnership with the airlines so we can maybe have an aircraft leased out. Saving cost also we can consider (30)*

Timelines

A stakeholder who considers himself a schedule specialist cited that the subject that he raises and is eventually taken up in planning are timelines:

- *I think one of the key elements that I am looking for are timelines. Both internal and external. Obviously with the pressure we have internally at the moment because of the growth, I think everyone has to be very clear on the key timelines that we're trying to achieve here, the criticality of these things. So, highlighting something is low importance, medium importance, or high importance to help people assist to go through and say, "Okay. Maybe there's three things due today. I've only got time to do one which is the highest importance." and then work to delivering the other ones. It's one of the things that we're trying to do. One of the other areas that we work on is with the new station start-up. Again, I think we have six or seven on the go so it's very critical for people to understand what the timelines are, what the delivery dates we expect for each of these items, and potentially what the impact is if these timelines aren't met. (48).*

Another topic identified by a stakeholder in relation to timeliness is on-time performance.

He went on to explain that:

- *On-time performance is the key subject in strategic planning. In relation to my area we have always seen the volumes of passengers we move. In this case, on-time performance. These are the key subjects from my area. In relation to this, we discuss rotationary problems, late incoming aircraft, what is impact to the operations on a day-by-day basis? If we have aircrafts which are technical at an out station or departed late to its destination, what are the impacts? What are the connection issues? These are the key subjects which we talked about every single day. We breathe and we live these topics every day, and we plan around them. It's for short term. (12)*

Feedback

Stakeholders have likewise identified feedback as a subject taken up during strategic planning:

- *It's two fold actually. Yes it is. It's definitely feedback on what it is today and then it's also driving suggestions. It's going a step further. We do have a shortfalls in almost everything we do today because we're not perfect and we're still on that path to attaining perfection. In the build up to getting there, we need to start practicing different approaches to pick on better on what we do. As a business, we're always going to evolve. Part of that exercise was my area having to give suggestions about doing things differently, linking in with other expertise around the table within the stakeholder unit to see what can we test, what functionality needs to be changed, and what can we start doing effectively? (37)*

Another corroborates the foregoing:

- *Last week, we did some live test and production and we've got a solution. Why? Because we discussed the feedback from the test. We examined it and came up with the best solution. Because we said, we need to change the process. What we*

are doing today, there's nothing wrong with it but the steps that we do, the 1-3 needs to change. We need to flip the order for it to work... from feedbacks we did that and it works. It's feedback as well as suggestion implementation and looking at ideas that will bring about change. (18)

Deliverables

For the more output-oriented stakeholders, the topic on deliverables is constantly raised:

- *In planning, you're looking at your key deliverables. If I took for example the cargo terminal. The first one was where is it gonna go? What are the links around it? How do we physically get to it? How do we physically fit the aircraft? Where is it gonna be on the air field? How much is it gonna cost? How long is it gonna take to build? And then you start going down into smaller, more granular subjects, so customs. Where is the custom's area gonna be? Are they gonna agree to it? Knowing your deliverables also will tell you who the important connections are. In my case, I'm not too involved it in too much and I am lucky that I know who to talk to in the government so that's quite good for me. As you said, it comes from own experience but know your deliverables first. (44)*

It can be observed from the foregoing that the topics taken up during strategic planning are quite diversified, reflecting on a variety of company concerns. As such, it affords the participants the opportunity to exercise their expertise in dealing with these concerns in relation to other stakeholders. Moreover, the diversity of topics taken up also shows how strategic planning serves as a dynamic platform that motivates discussions and interactions among stakeholders during the planning process. The topics taken up during strategic planning henceforth drive the participation and involvement of the stakeholders and draw them to interrelate with each other during the actual process of planning.

4.4. Coordination among Stakeholders

The phenomenal growth that has been experienced by the airline has ramifications for its relationship with the airport, which is also trying to cope with the growth phenomenon. To accommodate demands, the airline has planned a line-up of orders to augment its current fleet coupled with an increasing number for code shares with other airline companies. This to a certain extent has an effect on the relationship and coordination between the airline and the airport. To this effect, the researcher came up with the theoretical situation of buying a luxury car. In the interview, he asked the interviewees what they would do if they were planning to buy a new high-end luxury car but the road leading to their house parking were damaged or dilapidated. It turned out that only a handful said they would buy the car. The majority said that they had to wait until the roads were fixed before buying the car. In terms of the airline, it is just like asking whether it is worthwhile to invest in new aircraft if the airport is not yet ready to accommodate an increased airline capacity. This led to the question of whether the stakeholders perceived that there is adequate coordination between the airline and the airport. In the context of strategic planning, does the airline involve the airport in the process and vice versa?

From the response of the participants, the relationship of the airline and the airport drives the coordination that happens between these two entities, which is going well in the perception of some of the stakeholders. One of the stakeholders traces the root of the relationship, to wit:

- *To be honest to you, I'm going to have to say, as early as 2006, even we started engaging, this relationship is not something new. It's been happening from the time I've started. We have been engaging with the airport authorities from 2004. The relationship has gotten stronger and I've seen more interaction towards the*

middle half of our operations where the fleet was growing, the network was growing, therefore the pressure was building. With the increase in pressure, it brought these two big players closer together because then you start talking more. I've got these many aircrafts coming in, what can you do? That's when the relationship started growing in my opinion. (27)

Some stakeholders perceive that this relationship became the foundation of coordination between the airport and airlines from the beginning. As expressed by a stakeholder:

- *From day 1. Well, I think you must always maintain the open line of communication where you know your airport colleague very well. You can pick up the phone any time, day or night, and ring them. It is a friendly professional arrangement fully understanding each other's challenges and what we can bring to the table and over time, you develop this sort of professional intelligence with each other. You understand their business, they understand yours and at the end of the day, you are all trying to do the same thing. In our area, we are trying to help our guests who have been to a tragedy and we know the limitations of that. We know that after a period of time, these guests are not the airport's responsibility, they are the airline's responsibility. So the airport is there to help us deliver on what we have to do. We actually the bigger job after an accident, not the airport. Their job lasts about less than 8 hours when it comes to processing the survivors and the friends and family and then we have to take them off the property. Runway closure due to an accident or something that could be many, many hours or days even before they can clear the runways, that is the challenge for the airport and for the for airline because we do not run the runway, but generally speaking, there is a limited timeframe where the airport itself is involved other than perhaps the investigation. But actively involved, the airline takes it from there. So this relationship we have developed is very solid. We understand each other's needs and challenges. (23)*

Some stakeholders use logical reasoning to establish that there has to be coordination between the airlines with the airport. One of the participants responded that:

- *I think if we don't involve them, then we will be delayed. And then, I don't think we can run a very smooth operation. Because without our stakeholders, as an airline we cannot run the airport. Because we need to have the stakeholders, we need to have security, we need to have ADAC, we need to have immigration, we need to have customs, we need to have all these people. Conversely, if they didn't involve us, they will also not be able to run because they have an airport. And if there's no airline, then what business are they gonna do. So they need us. Exactly. So both of us need each other to make sure we have a smooth business and we run a smooth operation. So obviously, I think, it's a hand-in-hand kind of a deal. (14)*

In line with this logic, a stakeholder responded that:

- *If there's no coordination in this, the side effects would be major. Imagine we have the 380 coming and we have the stand where to park it, we don't have bridges, we have the tarmac prepared for the 380, it's major implications and that's only one example. And I believe that Midfield terminal is more complex than that. And our implication is I think it's actually very beneficial for the airport. (43)*

The coordination is also deemed because of the relationship of the airport and airlines with the executive council. As one participant expressed:

- *The first question that that executive council would ask the airport authority is, "What does the airline say?" So therefore, there has to be that very high-level of cooperation and understanding that we are all heading to the same place at the same rate. So there is tremendous cooperation even from executives of both entities. Even they, are called to top-to-top meetings. So yes, the cooperation is really fantastic now that we have engaged and we know it is in line with the 2030 vision on a less reliance on all the revenues and to diversify the economy. Then we know that this is for Abu Dhabi Inc. that we are doing this. What happily has gone away was the log ahead confrontation between the airport and the airline. Before, it was a question of, "Look it is our airport. We build it and then when we finish it, we move in." Now, it is not like that. It is, "Let us go together. How big does it*

need to be? When do we need to?" The satellite is fantastic. We are already together working on the size of it and that is because top-to-top, they have agreed the forecast and the growth rates going forward all the way to 2042. (30)

One stakeholder illustrates the point:

- *Well, there's an increase of coordination between us (airline) now and the airport especially after the ground services department has been actually merged in to the airline. And that it's more of a collaboration now than it was before when we were two different entities, now it's more of collaboration. But again, I don't have an example to say that we've been asked how can we do this. It's more of a collaboration and cooperation in my opinion. (15)*

Another stakeholder simply encapsulates the coordination when he declared that:

- *I love the airport. No, I think to be frank with you, the coordination is fantastic with regards to our airline and the airport. I think it's brilliant. (15)*

Because of this coordination, the relationship between the airline and the airport is also perceived to be good. As expressed by one of the stakeholders:

- *I perfectly think the relationship is quite good. It is quite open between ourselves and our airport colleagues. They are very receptive and very responsive to any of our requests. As you suggests, there are infrastructure challenges there. We have well and truly outgrown what currently exists. We see what is coming in 2017 and we are excited to move in there, but equally, getting between here from a year ago because we have already outgrown in a year ago, the 2017 is our greatest concern. In terms of individuals, the guys that we are working with, I think I understand and I think they work with us. However, there are infrastructure challenges that our decisions, as we say, could have been made years ago to have us in a better position at the moment that unfortunately have left us in this current position. (21)*

Another stakeholder illustrated this based on a specific plan:

- *The coordination, the security processes, protocols, if you have the same staff which is beyond our control, it changes, it's very dynamic. What we did was we have always participated in the emergency exercises conducted by the airport. That is a way of updating ourselves and meeting the right person who would be there in the event of an accident. That brings us the chance to share with them what our thoughts, to give them feedback from an airline perspective. (6)*

There are some stakeholders however who do not coordinate with the airport authorities directly but still consider the coordination to be amazing. One of the participants expressed that:

- *The airport, as I said, we don't get in touch with them but our guys there at hub, will be able to tell you that the coordination is amazing. If there's any changes to be done out here for example. If there's any passenger who's off loaded, if there's any ... a quick call is made, I do load control and they've been informed of that immediately at that point of time. So the connections and the communication is very fluent. (19).*

Similarly, other participants expressed that they did not know much about the coordination but still see it as a positive one. One of them perceived that:

- *I do not know how much the coordination was between two things, but I mean, for instance, when they were building the second runway, they were very responsive to the airline and if we have problems or issues or if we have fog and we had disruption due to that, they are very accommodating. In comparison with other places in the world, it is family. The airport and the airline are family. It is not a negative relationship. It is a very positive relationship. I think now, they are communicating more and more, but that is also partly because the airline is providing staff to work with them. (28)*

It is quite evident from the narratives of the stakeholders that there is coordination between the airport authorities and the airline, or put another way around, that there has to be coordination between these two entities. How well this perceived coordination is serving the airline or the airport has also been the subject to the comments of some stakeholders. One stakeholder expressed that:

- *I think good coordination is a stretch. We have led the way in terms of managing the risk almost on behalf of the airport associated with introducing the A380 to Abu Dhabi. An extraordinary amount of work has gone into multiple risk assessments and reviewing the air field, ensuring that components of risk were removed. These were all driven by airline though, not by the airport. The airport is actually responding as opposed to taking the lead or taking the initiative on something that is absolutely their responsibility. Also, getting a bit to micro here, I know; but when they write a safety case, they really look for us almost to give it a blessing, to say that it is okay to make changes to it. (2)*

One of the stakeholders expressed a similar view:

- *I believe we provide a lot of direction to the airport. But getting the airport to actually buy in to the leadership that were providing or the guidance that we're giving them and actually implement is a much more difficult journey. So we work with them. We talk with the airport a lot within the safety and air side operations piece, bringing the airport on the journey that we want them to be on is very difficult. I think if I have had the opportunity to take on the airport piece, I would have wanted to build a team that was very technically competent, very capable, and able to think beyond the current. At the moment, my impression of the airport is that they work very much in the current space. So they're dealing with it today, but they don't deal with tomorrow. I would be looking to build a team who are both looking ahead and working very closely with their key team, the airline. It's the logical thing to do. (26)*

Another participant corroborated the need for buy-in relative to the airport:

- *We're looking for buy-in to the concepts that we're referring to and getting the support and traction with the airport has been again, it's not been an easy journey. One sense is that there is a resistance to being open and feeling that they're being blamed. . We need to get away from that. (1)*

Instead of resorting to finger-pointing regarding the coordination between the airline and the airport, one of the participants suggested that:

- *The culture needs to go entirely. We have a common interest. In the event of a serious incident at Abu Dhabi Airport, it's embarrassing for the airport, it's terrible for the airline, it's embarrassing for the country. But if you get away from all of those things, we have a common interest here. We need to ensure that those common interests are being applied. So right now from a simple component of mitigating risk, we need the airport to be actually working very closely with us on providing us with an indication of where the risks exist and working with us to mitigate that risk. At the moment, it seems to be a bit the other way around. We tell them where the risk exists and we tell them how to mitigate the risk, and then getting them to mitigate the risk is the challenge (3).*

To illustrate the emergence of issues despite the coordination, one stakeholder intimated that:

- *Yes. We set meetings and everything. There were lots of correspondence, lots of meetings, lots of so and so. And that discussion resulted in the project of Terminal 3 which we did. That was, the Terminal 3 was a result of the airline operating out of Abu Dhabi. If the airline never operated, there was no need for a terminal. The problem was that we had a plan and they had a plan. And then, beyond 2005 and 2008, there was supposed to be a new bigger airport. So the Terminal 3 was a mid-term solution, and a new airport was a long-term solution. So we all knew about it, everybody knew about it. (13)*

One of the stakeholders was quick to pinpoint how problems emerged despite the coordination between the two entities:

- *The problem how it came, the airline went with its plan as per it's planned. It sticks to this plan because its plan buying aircraft and the aircraft will come on their time. The airport had delays in constructing all of those. So this is where it failed. It is basically it. Not that it's not understanding it, all understood it, everybody understood it. It was which pace the two worked. So you had a plan here and they had a plan to support it, right. We had a plan of our growth, and they had a plan on how to support it and those two went hand in hand. But we went with our plan as planned, they didn't, for many reasons. I can't say on their behalf what was the reason but there must have been valid reasons. (22)*

Another stakeholder rationalized that relationships between the airline and the airport vary in different airport settings:

- *I would say the relation between an airport authority, it could vary in different airports. Airport authority and airline is very, very critical because it is definite, you need their support to move forward, whatever you do. So I haven't worked at a hub like this before. I've worked with the airlines in an authority which is not a challenging job. You're just meeting them to make sure the check-in counters have the right facilities in place. You have the boarding gates, you get the right boarding gates, and landing approvals for the right of aircraft. So that's kind of level of interaction I've had until now. And if you don't have their support, I think whatever customer service you provide it does affect because you don't have the right infrastructure in place. So that's a very low level but with regards to the airport. (16)*

Another participant expressed that coordination is not working:

- *Exactly. To be honest with you and up to now, it is not a coordination and it's not, not understanding each other, this was very clear and still clear now. It is the pace of both parties, how did they do the plan, how did they implement the plan. Our*

implementation is having those aircraft coming and operating the rules. Their plan was to make those infrastructure ready for you but they went slow. (22)

Apparently, the previous stakeholder is implying that the two entities just go on with their plans without consulting each other. To this effect, one stakeholder expressed the need for transparency:

- *We need transparency. We need the airport to invest. We need to commit to resources and time for testing. In terms of timelines, I would expect to get this in and I hope to by mid this year depending on how quickly the airport can get the chosen provider decided, signed off, and then we can begin the process of connecting systems and languages between the communication. It is very much a partnership. I will be heavily dependent on the airport as the chosen supplier, my suppliers, and then organizing the projects. (3)*

Another stakeholder corroborates this with an illustration:

- *I guess, maybe the 380 introduction last year. It could've probably been handled a little better from an airport's perspective. We worked as in terms of the airline, we worked very close ourselves and technical to make sure that we'd prepared this far as possible as early as possible prior to the type's introduction. I still personally didn't have the confidence in the airport that we where needed to be prior to the type of introduction.. And it was often quite difficult to get the airport to engage in that process. Although, you know, we started the weekly meetings back in August of 2014. And I still think it was, because the guys are very, very busy in the airport. They've got multiple roles to perform. (5)*

Despite these perceptions, there were some participants who were uncertain of the effects on the business. One stakeholder expressed that:

- *I would not be able to say exactly to what extent it has limited our growth, and it had affected our operation. As you know, since we also started, there had been*

some adjustment made at the airport to give us more room for our operation more than, you know, the terminal state is an added terminal which was not there before. I believe there are some more gains that have been put in place. The airport has been trying to cope up with the growth of the airline. And yet, the airline could grow much faster than what we're seeing today had the capacity allowed it, and that may happen when this airport is complete in 2017. (4)

Other stakeholders are more prescriptive in their outlook towards coordination. As expressed by a stakeholder:

- *I believe it's a must that there is a good relationship between the airline and the airport basically because whatever the airline needs to implement inside the airport needs airport support. The airline doesn't control the infrastructure itself. The airline doesn't control configurations, regulations, and standards within the airport, so if we do want something inside of that airport, we need to follow their standards. We need to coordinate everything in a clear manner so that the airport won't reject or won't ask more staff from the airline itself. (9)*

Another prescribed looking back at how the entities operate:

- *It is my perspective, I. I realize that the airport has a different interest to what the airline does but at the same time I think from a coordination and operational perspective, they need to have a greater understanding of the requirements of its main client, the airline. We both work for the same organization, the government. The amount of barriers and petty issues that they put up, I find frustrating. I'd rather have the whole airport with no shops and plenty of seats than an airport full of shops and nowhere to sit (9).*

In a similar tone of sentiment, another stakeholder corroborates this with an illustration:

- *I think things like gate planning, gate stand planning, I think the airline has a high interest in that from a strategic perspective and a guest experience perspective than the airport. I know there's a lot of chest beating when it comes towards our*

airport, we decide which plans go where, but for the airport operator doesn't really matter which plane goes where. As long as the plane lands, they get their landing charges or whatever it may be, whether Qatar park there or we park there or whatever it is, it doesn't really matter in the scheme of things; but it's such as this stranglehold on wanting to just dictate where we can park and how we operate our airplanes. That's got to be changed. (12)

Based on a current situation, one stakeholder has this to say:

- *I mean, obviously, I don't know what is the background with the delay of the new terminal building, right? But if you look at the history, this terminal building was supposed to be handed over to us maybe somewhere in 2012 or 2013--2011, right? And then it moved to 2013. So even if we have got it in 2013, I think, as an organization, as a terminal we would have been able to cope up. But because of the delay in the construction of this new terminal, and the rapid growth of the airline, what happened is that the current infrastructure is not supporting the growth and because of that we are struggling. Whether it's with stands or whether it's the volume of guest that we carry, whether it's the parking base, whether it's the transit area, whether it's hotel inside, whether it's the duty free area, irrespective. So we are struggling overall because obviously, the growth was planned according to the new airport. Being delivered maybe in 2011 or 2013. But obviously, now it's going to be delivered to us in 2017. So we already outgrown the current airport. Now if you remember that when Terminal 3 was built, it was only built as a back-up, as a temporary phase before we move into the mid-field Terminal. (14)*

Other stakeholders take the middle view by looking at the situation of both the airline and the airport:

- *I think I would be out of my depth in saying, "This is my opinion and my view." I know the airport has its limitation. I know the airport is still evolving. Both of us, we both got off the blocks pretty much around the same time. I reflect back to when I started with the airline, the airport wasn't an issue. We did fewer flights.*

We had smaller fleet? But then, the rate of acceleration of growth has been so tremendous for the airline whereas the airport has staggered in their growth. Maybe their own personal challenges. At the same time, we know we have a deficit in airport infrastructure. We know we have a shortfall with the handling of our operations at an airport level. I think the most important thing is how do you get two big players like the airport – without which, we can't run an operation and the airline – without which, the airport wouldn't really exist. These two players have to come together and they have to come to some kind of a middle ground and that middle ground is very essential to see the future of the airline, the future of this city, this country, and how we can bring tourism to our doorstep. (27)

On the opposite side, fewer participants expressed their perception that coordination has failed. One expressed his perception that:

- *Here, basically we failed. We failed to meet what the airlines' vision was. I don't know whether that was clearly put across the airport. The airport and the airline are linked completely together because it's the same man that runs the airport and that runs the airlines. He was lucky that he could say, "Right, I want this. You have a date and you can do this." If you didn't meet it, there's financial penalties, whatever you got. Here is slightly different and we're all playing catch-up. At the moment, if you think the mid-field terminal, we need that now because we are expanding and expanding and we've broken the boundaries that we had before where we said we're gonna earn this amount of money and we're gonna have this fleet. The strategic vision has gone beyond that. (31)*

In a similar vein, another stakeholder intimated that:

- *For me, I see elements where for me the Abu Dhabi Airport is not developed to this stage that we need to be at for the size of airline that we have. So, obviously that has a huge effect on us. Even the least like the fact that the airline office is not big enough for the airline, and that now we are strung out between Masdar City and airline center. So in terms of strategic plan, there is a definite focus of*

where the airline wants to be, the product of the airline, the identity and those themselves are helping us. (28)

Still other participants perceived the coordination issues as a challenge. As one stakeholder expressed:

- *I think the biggest challenge has been that, the airline plus the home-based carrier plus the non-home-based carrier has significantly increased beyond the infrastructure. If you look today the airline itself, the home-based carrier from one to two million passengers to carrying now alone 11 million and the same infrastructure pretty much what it was 10 years ago. Some growth have been to the airport – terminal 3. But if you look at other airlines who have moved their hubs into Abu Dhabi, our partners have moved their hubs like Jet Airways, the hub is Abu Dhabi. If you look today the number of airlines operating out of Abu Dhabi have significantly geometrically increased and the infrastructure is struggling with that because as you know the mid-field terminal is three years behind. So everything including the home-based carrier has to deal with that. But it is a challenge that we have to manage somehow until 2017, but I think that with the new management in the airport. I think that we have a great understanding. We have better cooperation. Because the airports are a key vital infrastructure for the airline business anywhere in the world – catering, control of aircraft, and other services. If that doesn't come through, no matter what you do as a home-based carrier, people will judge you through its experience by what they get on the ground. (33)*

This is similarly perceived by another stakeholder:

- *I mean, the ideal coordination is really what is happening today with the airline and as the same as with other carriers in the home base. The infrastructure is being built to look at the needs of the airline from day 1 taking in consideration its growth for example if you look at the mid-field terminal the airline areas and its requirements are being built in. That's the best way to do it. You don't build an infrastructure and then you ask the airline to come and accommodate itself. Not at*

the sake of saying that we as a home-based carrier have to have the advantage than third party carriers. It is just that the logistics for us because we are home-based, we need to have specific special requirement that need to be catered and built in to the airport requirements because other carriers are just turn around coming overnight and then departing. We are not the case. At any given time, you will have over 100 aircraft at the airport for the home-based carrier whereas other carriers will be only 1 or 2 aircraft. So when you have that kind of logistics, obviously the infrastructure needs to be influenced. (21)

Stakeholders, however, express optimism in the midst of these challenges:

- *How we get through all of our challenges? We try to identify what those risks are and we try and mitigate those both with the airport and internally. With the airport, we identify where our bottle mix out through the terminal and whether there is low visibility, whether there are physical terminal restrictions, security searches, immigration, etc., and work with them to make sure that they are manned and there is sufficient facility at the appropriate times. As I mentioned, we can do things internally, well we can try and smooth out our schedule a bit so we do not dump a lot of passengers. I do not mean that literally, but push too many passengers through the airport which restricted infrastructure at the times when we know that it cannot cope with it. We got a capacity limitation and if we go over the top of that, then we are doing ourselves... (16)*
- *Generally, they should work together because both of them relied on each other, okay. Airline company, if they are based in that airport especially particularly if their hub or the base is in that airport which means their fleet will be parked there, their service will be there. So airport has to be prepared to provide the service required by that airline company especially if it's national carrier, right. (58)*

The diversity of perspectives on the coordination of stakeholders also reflects the diversity of their roles and experiences in the company. Whereas there were stakeholders who affirmed that good coordination is in place, others expressed the opposite. In between are those who more or less have an open and critical outlook towards it. What is clear from

the perception of the stakeholders is that their perception of coordination depends on the specific context in the organization. It also reflects the variety of understanding of stakeholders of what coordination means to them. While others have a totalizing view of coordination, some anchor their understanding on activity-specific aspects for which they find coordination a critical requirement. What is positive about the response of the participants is their expressed optimism on the improvement of their coordination and the challenges that they face in coordinating with each other. This can become a motivating force that will inherently draw them towards each other for the greater success of the company.

4.5. The Role of Communication in Strategic Planning

The respondents gave an overwhelmingly positive response when asked about the role of communication in strategic planning. The important role of communication has even been quantified by two stakeholders who respectively expressed that:

- *If you have good communication skills, you will reach to your target by 60 percent or 70 percent maybe? (3)*
- *An effective communication solves 80 percent of your problem. I would rate it that way. (21)*

Others invoke the logical argument to justify the important role that communication plays in strategic planning:

- *If there is no communication, everything doesn't go forward, right? In my, I think in anybody's role, I think communication plays a very, very important role. If I just keep planning by myself and not communicating, it's not gonna move forward, and people wouldn't know. So if I'm saying that, "okay this is the target date and this is*

my planning, " I need to communicate to the right stakeholders to say "this is my planning, what do you think? Are you in the same level of understanding with me or not." So it's very, very important to have communication, not only with the stakeholders but with the internal stakeholders and revenue team. (2)

- *Well I think communication is the most important tool you have. If you do not communicate, your stakeholders will not know about the milestones, will not know about the plans, will not know about the challenges and I think communication is the best tool to complete a project successfully. Communication also in my experience is if you don't communicate properly, you might overrun your project schedule; you might overrun your budget because you're duplicating work, you're duplicating finances, etcetera and that's what we're trying to achieve to keep the budget within the limit and complete the projects ahead of schedule. It's not always possible but at least ahead of schedule. (59)*

In the same logical vein, a stakeholder expressed that:

- *I think communication is one of the key aspects, a key role, very important, very, very, very top level of understanding. If there is no communication of what you are planning and what you are doing with the stakeholders, everything falls or a mess. (19)*

What is striking about the response of the participants are the superlatives such as *vital, absolutely essential, absolutely critical, extremely important, very significant*, and the like which they used to describe the role of communication in strategic planning. Also, there is a general tendency of the respondents to equate the role of communication with gaining *understanding* of something. One of this is the role of communication in understanding the company vision:

- *Well, I guess strategic planning is about the long term and the communication part of it I guess, the fact that you are planning something, a long-term thing, means there needs to be some kind of vision. There is a reason to do something. So the*

communication has to come from whoever is running the show, what the vision is. So that everybody involved in the strategic planning process knows the big picture of what is it that we are trying to choose and why. So everyone needs to know the big picture and aspiration and the vision so that they can get their minds thinking about okay. So to make that happen, to set the strategic plan in place, I need to understand all that. In some stages, you just got to have some people who do the initial draft of the strategic plan. . Well, those people might do some communication to the stakeholders just to get the initial feelings of what is required to make this vision happen, then they can be on closed doors just do a base strategic plan, but then the communication goes again to roll it out. So that sort of communication will get people thinking about what is realistic rather than what is behind the sky. And eventually it is just a matter the communication is a continuous loop until what started as a base draft strategic plan gets pitched and pulled and ends up being an edited version that all of the stakeholders have finally signed off on because of the communication. (1)

This was corroborated by another stakeholder who expressed that:

- *I think communication is absolutely critical. Because it enables people really to give direction, and for people to understand the strategic vision going forward. I mean, I'll give you an example from the airport's perspective in terms of the safety management system. And every year, what I always find important for me is to issue a communication to the network. It could be just an email and a couple of power graphs, say we're now through 2014, this is what we've achieved and this is what my intention are, my strategy for 2015 which I did about three or four weeks ago. (6)*

In the context of strategic planning, communication is essential to understanding the plan itself when this is communicated to other stakeholders:

- *Okay. I think there are two aspects to it. Strategic planning is one thing. I think having a clear plan is critical, but I think the more important aspect of it is being able to communicate appropriately to the stakeholders or to the people involved. I*

think they're separate things but I think they're integral to each other. The success of the plan is based around how well the plan is thought out and developed and how well it's communicated from start to finish. I think if the communication is not delivered properly, the plan won't come together. I think that is the key aspect of success and personally I try very hard to deliver plans, communicate my plans and my ideas clearly to both external and internal stakeholders because you have a different level of control with external people because you don't have the same ability to react with an external stakeholder as you do with an internal stakeholder. I think you can't afford to miscommunicate your plans to external stakeholders. (12)

In the same manner of importance, another stakeholder expressed that:

- *Again, it's the way you set up, somehow your road map for a department or for any project. It's something that needs to be explained to all of your staff or all your other partners in any project that you do. By creating a perfect plan and not explaining it and not communicating it correctly to your partners, you failed that plan. I believe that communication has a very important role when it comes to implementing the plan that you set up or you and your partner set up. Communication place the second most important role in strategic planning. (32)*

Another stakeholder further elaborated that:

- *It's critical. I think it becomes very difficult to deliver a strategic plan if you don't communicate it effectively. I think the better and the clearer it can be communicated to everyone involved, the more chance you have of actually delivering it. In some places, I've seen in the past where strategy is being partially explained. Say, someone is trying to explain it in a almost a need-to-know basis so they said, "This is the part that you need to deliver. This is what needs to be done." not really explaining why it needs to be done and what the bigger picture is. Obviously, there are some reasons sometimes why that may not be done – Confidentiality or the impact to it – but it does make it very difficult to deliver for someone if they don't understand the big picture that they're filling into. When possible, it's always best to insure clear and concise lines of communication. (22)*

Other stakeholders perceive the role played by communication in terms of understanding objectives and targets, to wit:

- *Well, communication is very important because all of the information that is required to complete any objective must be clearly defined, must be complete. It must be thorough and it must be directed to the correct person. If you want something done and you are communicating to the wrong person, nothing will happen. (9)*
- *Like everything in life, you need to have a direction, a target. Something to work towards. If you do not have a direction on where you are going, then you will get lost. You need to be very focused on things and the way to be focused is to have a clear target. This has to be communicated to team members. Also, you need to be able to modify that target if circumstances fit. So you are continually working towards the goal and you are continually reassessing and deciding what is going to be best for the aircraft. I think we should use the three primary methods of communication which are available to us. I allow telephone calls and conversations to continually update. So we should have continuous communication verbally. For key matters and matters of clarification, we need to have written communication that needs to be via email. Finally, you need to have regular meetings in order to make sure that anything that has not been resolved via emails, instead of continuing to have emails back and forth, that you can resolve it by having direct face-to-face meetings. (54)*
- *Well, the general role is absolutely essential because unless people are given a clear vision of what to aim for, it just becomes an individual sort of meandering around and not going for the target. So communication is absolutely everything. Making a clear vision of the top, but not communicating is useless because people lower down do not understand what the vision is. Having a relatively unclear vision and then communicating that is equally bad because people then have the wrong view of where to head. So I am pretty comfortable, well actually, it is one of the best organizations I have ever worked in and I have worked in a number. The vision is clear, but the communication is absolutely very clear. So it is the most important*

part because every individual in the business when asked the question what does Etihad stand for, where is it going, has to have a clear view because that then has to filter into every interaction they have in their job, and if you do not have that clear vision then you are not optimizing the people in the business. You are not getting the most out of them and quite often, they will go down and do the wrong things. (51)

Quite related to understanding targets and objectives is that communication is important in strategic planning because it gives an understanding of directions:

- *Okay. So communication is hugely important. It gives people direction. It makes them have an understanding of our concept of why we are doing some things, so why do we have the SMS, what value does it bring to the business, why do they need to perform these quarterly safety activities for example. So it's all about understanding that concept, the objective where we need to get to with it. And understand the core strategy really. And like you say, having a communication chain go out, makes them think "Oh, I understand where are we going with this now, that is our direction, that's our goal, that's our objective." (8)*
- *Internal strategic planning communication is fundamental. We can really only understand the direction the business is moving in by communicating it all levels of the business. It's fundamentally important. Externally, I think again, it's a fundamental importance to us but there are blockers to communication such as that you mentioned a moment ago there's a cultural imperative at play, a resistance to change and to move together. There are people from the old school that are still in place who want to manage a huge operation in old school ways. (1)*

Other participants perceive the role of communication in strategic planning in relation to stakeholders:

- *Vital role. Communication in strategic planning is very important because if you do not communicate your views and we've seen this with our approach in the last couple of years as well. We might as a group think that doing certain things differently is good for the business, but if that's not communicated to the different*

stakeholders, it will only be within the operations unit and that's where it's gonna start and end. If you communicate your ideas, your visions, and your views across a larger spectrum, then we have to buy it and we have the support from a larger group which will definitely improve your efficiencies as a business and as an organization. Therefore, communication is very important. (27)

Another role perceived by stakeholders is related to information sharing which is expressed in different context by stakeholders, to wit:

- *Communication is key to any operational area. Any change has to be communicated. Any problem has to be communicated. Where it's necessary, we have workshops with the airport and more so with my colleagues that run the hub. Our hub operation has many external stakeholders – police, immigration, catering, airport operations, planning, etc. They have many stakeholders. It's important for them under the leadership that they have that good relationship. They do. Because we're a strong dominant partner there, we work with those identities as partners. We don't say you're immigration so you're separate to us. We say you're our partner in this. We are all working together. Because the airport is growing so big, it doesn't matter who you are. You know you're part of the machine. It will go to work together. (7)*
- *So we said, you know, for example, in my area, my job is to create this virtual network, to support the airline network. Now this needs to be communicated to the entire company. People have to know why we're doing this, why we're creating this, why we're doing this code share arrangements, why we're doing these agreements. If they understand, then they can support it. If they don't understand, then they will never support it. If we don't communicate those things, then they will not support it. For example, this network that we create, this virtual network, it depends on our sales people to sell it. If we don't communicate with them, they will not sell it. So we have an agreement but we do not realize the benefit because we're not selling it. Because our sellers, our sales don't know anything about it. So that's where the power comes. You want to be supported, then we'll have to let*

you know what I'm doing. If I don't let you know, then you don't support it, and if you don't support... (22)

- *Extremely important. As you well know media especially social media, it runs very fast. Three minutes after an accident, it's already in Twitter and Facebook. With that being said, I am happy to share with you that the most exercised department in the airlines is corporate communications. We exercise with them, we exercise with our code share partners, we exercise with our equity partners on communication. Again as I said, when we opened the airline and when I joined, we didn't have a plan on social media back then because back then, I don't know how to do Facebook. As the plan evolved, it is now included. We have already included social media. (41)*
- *It's like this, from an ERP perspective, giving out the statement is a thing that you just don't do because any accident for that matter is controlled by the state of occurrence. Now, the communication or the statement should be aligned with what the investigator in charge would say so that you're not saying different tunes. But, you have to be proactive in a way that you communicate directly with the public, give them the facts, give them a number where they can call, so that we could attend to their questions and we have a designated medial call center because we know that media plays a fighter role and communication is extremely important. For an ERP perspective, effective communication solves 80 percent problem. (6)*
- *Now, most of the communication is via phones or via emails. I prefer, the best mix of it is the mix of meetings, regular meetings where information can be actually more clear and actually flowing around the room. Whereas in a enclosed phone conversation or phone conference, there are some elements that you don't gain by being in a room at a table. Other thing is I believe that meetings should be extended as time wise to permit the whole subject finalized somehow. I mean, the meeting management, time of management should be addressed as well. (15)*
- *Apart from the basics of using email, we also have meetings with airport IT. Where necessary, we will have a workshop with them as well. Sometimes, we even have the advantage of not only talking to them but we can also get involved in supply*

meetings. The self-service boarding gate as an example is from a company who is contracted by the airport and we have discussions with them to talk about improvements to help the airline's operation. Again, it's communication and there's many options. As I mentioned, workshops. With Sabre as an example, I go over and see Sabre and in fact I'm supposed to be going over in April where we have a conference where I meet up with other airlines that use the system and we exchange information and we network to understand how to better our environment. (3)

Some stakeholders perceive the role of communication in strategic planning in terms of promoting team synergy:

- *Well, communication is absolutely essential. Within our team, we're not a very large team, quite a small team. By the virtue of being small, it's also very easy to communicate with each other. So with all communication mediums, everybody knows what the other person is doing. So we work as a team. We have a synergy, we work collectively. The email starts exchanging, everybody would be in the email circulations. The meetings that we have on a monthly basis or daily basis, everybody knows what's the involvement of each person. So we all have our own task, our own responsibilities. And once we fulfilled it, each person fulfilling each responsibilities will give a complete picture of what is expected of the departments. Communication not only with us, but again, communication with our internal partners and stakeholders, communication with external partners, these are open line which we always maintain, then we use that very, very effectively. (4)*

This was supported by one stakeholder who expressed that:

- *I guess it is exactly the same. I have spent all the time with my team making sure that they understand what they are doing now and how that contributes to the divisional goal. So my team has clear deliverables to deliver against the area, deliver against the department, and the airline has their own strategic plan. Everyone needs to know how they contribute to the bigger picture, so we spend a lot of time. I have a weekly meeting and monthly meeting where we talk about where are we, where are we going, how are we going to get there, what are the*

plans in place, what is the way, which way, what are the objectives of the division, and how are we delivering against those objectives. We do that on a weekly and monthly basis. Weekly is more informal. (26)

Other stakeholders perceive that communication is necessary in order to be proactive:

- *I think for me, it's about how communications make stakeholders being more proactive I suppose. And what I mean by that is for example in the entry to service of a new aircraft type or the opening of new parking stands, this should be driven by proactive thinking that is supported by excellent communications. It's not simply having meeting or more meetings, and having it formally. It should be communicating proactively so we can have a forward mentality in dealing with the plan. (5)*

In another instance, stakeholders also mentioned the role of communications in fostering collaboration:

- *Oh, okay! I think there is where improvements can be made is just further collaboration because you can never have too much. There is a natural tendency when there are two organizations involved for silos to develop and it becomes vertical, top, down, and there is no point of going crossways at the various levels. So my thought on improvement would be continually and insuring there is enough focus on crossways communication between the various organizations at every level and coordinating it as well, but not allowing those silos to develop because I think with two organizations, silos is a natural and you have to make a concerted effort to avoid it. (17)*

Stakeholders also view the role of communication in terms of alignment:

- *Make sure that you are aligned. The first thing is make sure in planning that you gather the information ensuring that in all partners. When you look at the strategy, one is for the airline, but as I said earlier, we need to think outside that square. It is not just the airline now. It is airline and others. It is a group. So we need to ensure that all the partners, all the key stakeholders as in the end users which*

could be the airlines that they are aligned. Again, first we identify the possible synergies and the alliances that we could work with. Then may get the airlines together and we say, "Can this be done?" This is done through a series of meetings so we meet every quarter as an airport division with all the partner airlines. This could be Air Berlin, Jet Airways, and all those airlines. We sit with them and we go through it. It is the steering committee that we run through the point, working committee. We say this can be done and then we try to identify what are the other reasons that we cannot do it because I think we need to focus on – if it can be done, it is fine. If it cannot be done, why not? It is certain ___ because maybe it could have a legal reason or because of a logistics problem, have we further investigated that for it to be done. (18)

Lastly, continuous communications can serve to attain the necessary buy-in relative to other stakeholders:

- *If you do not have continuous communication, like you do listen to all feedback, but then you do not act on all feedbacks, but when you do not respond to someone's feedback and make changes then you have to let them know why. Eventually at the end of all that, the strategic plan is something that people will sign up to where they buy in. People are not going to believe in the plan and deliver the plan well if they feel like they told you what was wrong you did not listen. They will only follow it if you cannot listen and not change it, but you have to explain to them why it was not possible. So I think you know that is pretty much how I see it. You do have to just make big decisions without listening to everything everyone has to say. You do have to listen, but you do not have to act on it all, but if you do not have continuous engagement... (20)*

On the whole, there is no doubt that the stakeholders perceived the vital role of communication in strategic planning. They mostly perceive its role in terms of having a common ear for the plan and in speaking in one voice among stakeholders. Other than this, they also perceive the role of communication in strategic planning as this relates to other operational functionalities that are either short term or long term. Their perceptions

reinforce the notion that indeed communication is the bloodline of the organization that facilitates the linkage of different elements of the company whether conducted in real time or in a virtual mode. In the context of the study, the basic nature of communication is inherent to individuals and hence is a factor that draws stakeholders to interact and relate with others.

4.6. Perceived Changes needed in the Plan

The respondents were asked what they would like to see changed in the strategic plan or what new changes would they like to see in the plan. The findings indicate that most of the changes aspired for are in the process of doing things. There are also changes wished for in terms of technology and infrastructure, strategy, product, capability, and partnership.

Strategy

From the perspective of strategy, changes in the plan aspired by the stakeholders include:

- *I think at a personal level, we are very clear on our reason for alliances. I think we are clear on what and what we are not clear on. So, we have decided as a company that we cannot grow organically just by buying airplanes and opening stations. We need to grow so we need to buy other businesses. So organically we are growing and we are buying other companies. (2)*
- *I mean we need to look at where we are going to be with the aircrafts in the next couple of years. I think our strategy in terms of what we are going to do. We have a multi-fleet. For the airline itself, they need to relook at where they want to be at that multi-fleet because having five of this and three of this and four of this. As an airline, we should have narrow body and wide body mixed. We need to have 75 percent wide body and 25 percent narrow bodies as a natural breakup because we*

need to service ports that are local to us here obviously the likes of your Bahrain, your Oman, and your Qatar, as well as the other GCC ports that are reachable, but those are being fed and unfed by the Indian subcontinent. The Indian subcontinent is going to have to go wide body. The demand is just there and again, by having wide bodies on the Indian subcontinent, you are going to have a lot of variance of traffic to fill our longer haul flights and medium haul flights. In terms of break down, we need to get more aircraft, but if we could reduce the number of aircraft types... (7)

- *Well, I guess if we would look at what is the current strategic plan, it has the organic growth of the airline, the airport trying to keep up. We have got stakes in other airlines to help extend their network and the other problem to this strategy is broadening our interest into travel in general, not just flying. So our holiday packaging, events management. So I guess that is the current strategy, what changes would you make to that kind of strategy?(28)*

Changes in terms of **process** aspired for by the stakeholders were particularly situated a broad range of contexts according to their areas of concern. This includes process changes in the following areas:

Responsiveness

- *I think that one of the things that we have been within the airports business and within the airline quite frankly is we're quite event driven in terms of if something goes wrong, we will respond to that event. Something else goes wrong, we will respond to that event. Something else comes along, we will respond to that event. The problem with working that way is that the previous events have lost some momentum. I think we need to understand when an event of a significant nature takes place that we must understand the historical context of previous events to ensure that the visibility associated with the previous event and the momentum behind repairing or mitigating any risk that existed previously is implemented. I think just the greater ability to influence change but in order to actually changing, you need to understand. Certainly within the external piece of the business, I*

would love to be in a position to be able to lead change and ensure that change takes place to implement change rather than the current process we have. (1)

Readiness

- *For our strategic plans and again, spiraling out of most recent incidents on the 3rd of January where our operations were impacted largely because of the outage runway lights, fog, we had a major impact to our operations, we've been discussing since the 3rd of January our strategy for events such as fog and how we can mention with the airport to make things better. What I would like to say is a more robust process whereby we check all the boxes in this situations. For example, if we know we have forecasted fog, what is the airport doing pre-emptively to support this period of forecasted fog, do we have all our lights checked? Do we need to necessarily switch them off and switch them on after 30 minutes to see that they work? Do we have the right support from across the business to come and help the division when we have major disruptions and we need to recover thousands of passengers. (13)*

Coordination

- *Well, you know, the thing is the airline has significantly changed its business model. As you know, we have now equity partners and a number of airlines that obviously requires each and every department to see strategically its business plan differently. We are not only planning for the airline only, we also have to plan in coordination and in harmony with the other airlines which we have significant interest. So that is the challenge and that is what each department is working out. Of course we are working on that. And now, we are seeing that whatever we plan, we plan it in coordination with other airlines also. We work with the other airlines very closely. So those are the kind of areas that we need to strengthen, we need to have that vision. (34)*
- *I think the airport and airlines they are on the best way to achieve this. It's the only challenge that we face is that it takes longer or it doesn't take longer, it's over a long period that you can achieve it in a year or two or in one day as you*

say. As we always say, rum was not made in one day as you know. I think that maybe from my personal experience is that we need to avoid the one entity is expanding its operation without taking into consideration of the bottlenecks that might be created when other facilities are not ready. It appears that the airlines is expanding much faster than the airport can keep up with. (59)

Communication

- *That's a good question, that's to be updated... Key change, I think, it's got to be communication. It is the key. We discuss communication already certainly, a more robust approach to communication. And I would say, if it's gonna be a new look strategy, it's got involve engagement from all appropriate stakeholders. (9)*
- *Obviously, for me, the key thing would be the communication in regards to our growth with the airport. As the business's strategic direction changes in regards to the network in the fleet growth, it needs to be communicated directly almost on a daily basis within the airport to understand the impact on that organization because it is out of point now where it's critical all the changes that we make – the impact that it has on the airport and also on Abu Dhabi as a whole. Any changes that we make, we're going into the summer season now, we should be communicating these directly with the airport. Now, I understand obviously the confidentiality around a lot of these things. In a modern world, you can work around these things. (33)*
- *The answer to that is constant communication between the two. Another example is a lot of the space allocation and everything like that, "We'll do that, but how much is it gonna cost us?" (31)*

Partnership

- *The process is there but somebody has to focus on our equity partners because me, I am already focusing on the entire stations that's close to 100, more than, including freight. I am not saying that I cannot do it, but we need more arms and legs to look at the equity partners. We exercise with them. I did conduct an audit with Jet Airways with Seychelles and I have audited also Etihad Regional on ERP to*

make sure that they are aligned to our plan. That is part of the strategic planning but my wish list is for somebody to allocate it. (16)

Meetings

- *More meetings. That's one. The main reason for that is, no single person can consume so many knowledge. More productive meetings. Because I have been to meetings wherein they have a subject, when you come into the meeting, you find out that it's not completely what you think it is. It's half-hearted subjects. (40)*

Procedures

- *I think from the airport side, there are lots can be done but the problem is, whatever I tell you, it will be the surface. We say in Arabic, the one hand in the water is not the same hand in the fire. So what I see is from the outside, but there could be lots of complications. I think there are certain procedures which could be checked on the airport, and could help this further. One of the areas I'm talking about is X-ray machines. We duplicate X-ray machines. We X-ray passengers twice. And the question is, is that a requirement because it delays the process? So we X-ray a passenger when he gets to the airport and we X-ray him before he'll go and board the flight, twice, right? Because it delays the process of passenger flow. (12)*

Transparency

- *... would personally prefer to have transparency between departments if in case they have issues or they have more requirements to be immediately transferred or immediately communicate to the people. They should not wait for the weekly or bimonthly meeting. They just have to go ask, talk, send an email, pick up the phone, or talk to the people because that gets the things solved quicker for the company. (33)*
- *Transparency between airport and airlines when it comes to projects. Everybody keeps his opinion to the last minute when the time is right. Take this example. Maybe they've discussed that one already. As from what I see now, Etihad has problem with their connection, they will be a lot of left back passengers.*

percentage will be doubled or maybe tripled to what they have now. Hasn't anybody said and discussed that and what the consequence is based on that one before we go and send variation with the contractor? (48)

Alignment

- *Yes. For many years in a row, we are leading that for seven years. Unfortunately, the surroundings, the environment, it's putting us a great deal of challenge into implementing it. So strategic wise, my opinion is, it should be more aligned with where the environment can support at the time being. It is more of operation. I am going probably too more in depth when it comes to the environment, when it comes to the airport operations. Infrastructure environment. Mainly, as you said, the Midfield terminal is not ready. We're expanding at a high rate and the visibility of our expansion is there. We know where we wanna be in 2016; however, I'm not sure where the stakeholders will be at that time and that should be updated and aligned with that. (50)*
- *Well, it is very much the alignment in terms of the corporate strategy and we are one part of the big business and so our strategy must be aligned with which way we are going. Whether it is equity partners. Whether it is development and continual enhancement of the airline itself. (38)*
- *It is a challenge, but obviously it is to get the most out of our equity partners, what we are supposed to get out of them and what we should getting of them is the synergy in this alignment. Looking for best practice. Looking for who does the best and let us leverage that that or is there a function that we can perform for all of our equity partners such that they do not have to have as many systems or people, etc. So we are always on the lookout at the most basic level of sharing information, at the most strategic level of finding better practice and then working towards that across all of our partners. (4)*

Re-accommodation

- *With regards to my area, re-accommodation of passengers, with the volume of flights that are coming in, the volume of destinations that have been introduced by*

our CEO, and with the volume of equity partners that we had, I would consider to have a big division for passenger re-accommodation handling. Increase manpower. Yes, that's one of the key resources. I think we can deliver the best only if we have the resources with us to deliver the best. Like what we have for the fog, right? We have 15 staffs at the airport just manning phone calls. It was like a call centers, just handling all the passengers. I'm not saying involving call center, I'm just saying having a defense force for handling only re-accommodation of passengers.
(19)

The stakeholders also aspire for changes in **technology and infrastructure** to be factored into the plan:

- *I wanted, always an airline, as an airport operations person because the focus is on disruption and system failures, my dream was that the airline should have a back-up system. Saying, if the system goes off, there should be a live feed into a system where we can pick it up, either a back-up system or an IT tool where we get the passenger details immediately as the flight goes and we prepare ourselves moving forward, and that was one of the big things which was lacking with the airline. So today, the system Sabre is out at the airport, we don't have any tool. So we just wait. And most of the airline actually don't. So they wait for the system, like Abu Dhabi, you know, we cannot cope up. So what is happening now is there is a system, with this approval, things are moving. There are vendors who have come across. They've given us demo how our systems work. So we don't know which is gonna be the system that will come up, but there might be something coming in. (2)*
- *I would like to see more automation within the airport. I would like to improve the guest journey. I would like to improve the operation through automation. That could be anything from upgrading the fits. It could be which is part of the way-finding proposition. It could be that we do need to make change fundamental improvements with systems from the baggage below wing operation and potentially the above wing operation. I'd like to see more self-service devices made available that actually work for the guest that fit the guest requirements. We're*

living in a very small space in the airport at the moment which is going to vastly expand with the mid-field. But until that time, we need to squeeze everything out of what we've got and it's clear to me that one area that can make a big difference is automation. Automation that supports disruption, automation that supports communication, way-finding as I mentioned, and different opportunities for the guests to continue their journey. We should have the ability to tell the guest no matter where they are what is happening, has your journey changed has your journey been delayed, are there places that you can go and visit within the terminal that will your experience greater, spend some money at duty free, go and see around. This is all through communication. I think that's where there needs to be a lot of work. (11)

- *I would love to incorporate a better use of technology into the operations. It's the technology. We got a bit here, a bit there, nothing interlinked. I think an all-encompassing link and technology platform where it's computer-based or communications solution or something like that, I want to do it. I'm super keen to implement an overarching hub communication system or solution with voice and data for the staff for above wing, below wing, catering, cargo. (14)*
- *Part of my wish list is coming through. I'm getting a new cargo terminal. That's one of the things ever since I joined the airline was a problem. It's the actual infrastructure on the cargo side, it's very old. The problem that is the fact that we can't stop our operations to rebuild it. You have to do it piece by piece. The fact that we're getting the new cargo terminal, that's part of my wish list. If I was to take a step further back and look at it as I've then, the airport needs to be bigger. It needs to be much, much bigger for what we get. The vision of the airline to be the best airline in the world – not the biggest but the best. We're gonna integrate with more partners. We're gonna have more flights. We want the capital of UAE, Abu Dhabi, to shine as brightly as Dubai has because everybody in the world knows Dubai, but not everybody in the world knows Abu Dhabi, so we're gonna bring it right up. My wish list would be another runway, another terminal that's three or four times the size of what we're building now. That would be the perfect wish list. (6)*

Other participants aspire for changes in the strategic plan that focus on **partnership**:

- *I think the good thing about being the leader in airline partners is that we can look and choose what we like and what we do not like. Equally, we can assist where we want to assist. What I mean by that is if we form a function in a certain way and we look at one of our equity partners and they have a really great system or they have a really smart way of doing it, we can borrow that. We can actually use that and apply it here. Equally, if they do not have any capability at all, we can actually do it for them. We can support them. So it is not imposed on us. It is more that we can view, we can learn, and we can assist. (26)*
- *Actually, I wouldn't want to change. I think at the moment I feel that our strategy planning is very good. We look at all opportunities. It is very clear with the airlines. I think what would like to see to further develop is that we are focusing on the alliance partnership in terms of ground handling, airport offices, and other opportunities in relation to the operation. But from a ground handling point of view as a ground handling operator, we have actually bought into airlines or we have got a share of airlines who actually have their own ground the handling. Air Serbia has a ground handling unit. Alitalia has a ground handling unit. The airline has its own ground handling unit. Air Seychelles has its own ground handling unit. So whether we look at other strategy, we say "Do we take all these airlines we are ground handling? Do we try to merge and bring them together as part of a group and then develop an EASG global network of handling agents and we look at parts throughout the world where we would benefit to buy or invest into a ground handling company which could then service our airline as a group?"(43)*

Lastly, stakeholders aspire for changes in the plan that highlight profitability:

- *Quite often, what happens with us is that we get carried away because we feel that this is the airline, this is Abu Dhabi our vision is to be the best, not the biggest but the best in the world and we have this image to portray that we would like people to think we are in a five-star hotel coming in with all butler services and the best of everything. The challenge quite often is to put that in relation to cost and profitability. Because at the end of the day, regardless of what we are creating, we*

have to be profitable. Because only a profitable company can be measured as successful. If you can spend as much money, you can create whatever you want. But if you're not profitable, people will say, "Well you know, you'll just get a blank check to create what you want, it's not a big deal." So to create all of that and be still profitable and still be successful and still have transparency in working and have the leadership, that's what this business is all about. And quite often, we have to struggle with that always. (45)

On the whole, the participants' wish list for the strategic plan involves a wide range of changes in terms of the attributes, processes, products, and values of both the airline and the airport. This is an affirmation that no plan is perfect in covering all of the issues that beset the company. However, it also shows the dynamism of the planning process in accommodating changes in future plans. The perceptions of the stakeholders on the changes needed in the plan indicates that these are potential drivers for them to look forward to strategic planning as an avenue for introducing changes. More significantly, the expectations on coordination, communication, and partnerships imply that these are factors that would significantly matter in improving their relations during strategic planning.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter extends the previous chapter by way of analyzing and discussing the implications of the findings in the light of the research questions. As such, the themes discussed in this chapter are organized in a one-to-one correspondence with the findings. Hence, the chapter is structured covering the discussion of the findings on: (1) responsibilities of stakeholders in strategic planning, (2) perceived significance of strategic planning, (3) subjects taken up during strategic planning, (4) coordination among stakeholders, (5) the role of communication in strategic planning, and (6) perceived changes needed in the strategic plan.

The chapter also presents a model which was derived from the discussion of findings. At this point a distinction between the framework and the model is in order. As stated earlier, the framework presented in Chapter 2 resulted from the researcher's synthesis of major ideas presented in the literature review, and hence is literature-grounded or a bench-generated framework based on ideas salient to the topic. Since the inherent nature of qualitative research is inductive and not deductive, the theoretical framework served its purpose as an initial guide and not as the basis for affirming the results of the study. In faithfulness to the phenomenological tenet, 'let the thing appear as itself,' the resulting model was inductively generated using the findings of the study as the building blocks for constructing the model, and hence is an emergent modification of the framework as a result of the findings.

5.1. Responsibilities of Stakeholders in Strategic Planning

Participation of executives, senior managers, and junior management in strategic planning is essential to move the process ahead quickly and to attain full employee commitment and acceptance. But an organizational factor that is critical to the success of the plan depends on how the planners share responsibilities during the process (Kerzner, 2001). In UAE organizations the participants can involve the CEO or managing director, board of directors, planning committees, senior managers, and junior managers. The participation of these stakeholders is stronger in large organizations compared to smaller ones (Elbanna, 2010). Similarly, it was found that the responsibilities of stakeholders during strategic planning vary according to the nature, size, and complexity of the organization (Schaffer & Willauer, 2003) as well as the slack resources (Elbanna, 2012). Accordingly, the company in focus in the study is a multi-business corporation which is large and complex, which gives it the tendency to maintain slack resources. As a result roles of stakeholders come in varied forms, hence the corresponding multiplicity of responsibilities expressed during strategic planning.

Roles define a person's position in the organization and responsibilities define the functions of that position. The participants in the study identified different roles that they play in the company and with these come a multiplicity of responsibilities that they have in strategic planning. From the interviews, it was observed that none of the participants referred to his responsibility in definitional terms corresponding to something written in a job description or from a menu in a planning manual of sorts. Hence, the participants' expressed responsibilities that have a high degree of personal authoring which derives

from their subjective experiences during the strategic planning process in the company in focus. Their responsibilities also reflect broad and specific concerns across the company landscape ranging from operational to strategic; short-term to long-term time horizon; or ad hoc to continuous involvement.

The results also point out that the stakeholders interviewed are definitive stakeholders (Mitchell, et.al., 1997) by virtue of their power and legitimacy in the organization and can either be promoters or defenders depending on their interest and influence. Promoters have high interest and influence while defenders have interest but low influence (Florea & Florea, 2013). Those who disclosed that they were implementers and had no responsibilities in strategic planning may as well be classified as discretionary stakeholders by virtue of their legitimacy and interest (Mitchell, et al., 1997). Accordingly, the researcher derived the thematic perspectives on the responsibilities of stakeholders during strategic planning based on the categorised codes. These are correspondingly discussed as follows.

5.1.1. Facilitating adaptability

One group of responsibilities of the stakeholders is facilitating adaptability. This is generally in line with understanding the business-drivers and ensuring that the plan fits with the strategy of business. This has an orientation towards fitting the trajectory of business with a planned future. Based on the results, three broad groups of responsibilities come under this theme: the responsibilities of fostering survival, sustaining momentum coupled with normative-competitive responsibilities.

Fostering survival in the context of the participants is seen in terms of their responsibility to make large changes and to protect the company during strategic planning. For instance, a large change identified has something to do with the relationship of the airport and the airline, which was perceived to be stubborn, resistant, and somewhat separated. These are two entities under the government but the airline cannot get the airport to do what it thinks is sensible. It is perceived that this would undermine the operation of both entities and that would affect their survival. Some stakeholders from the airport side are, however, in apparent agreement with this view and see their responsibility as supporting the change initiatives that need to be rolled out. They work on a similar logic that a strained relationship between the two entities would have negative consequences on survival. According to them, supporting the initiatives has to be taken up during strategic planning otherwise it would simple remain a discussion thing.

Protecting the company is as important as making big changes to foster survival. As an expressed responsibility, protecting the company is more along the aspect of physical protection and security. As articulated by a participant, the airline has to survive at all costs, hence all business has to be protected from potential threats that can undermine the brand; hence some stakeholders take this as their responsibility to see to it that the plan strongly reflects the aspect of safety.

The second category of expressed responsibilities that facilitates adaptability is sustaining momentum. Momentum is simply the compound effect of a plan executed over a period of time (Chambless, 2011). Accordingly, some of the stakeholders expressed that their responsibility during strategic planning is to see to it that the strategic vision of the plan

gets moving on the ground and gains momentum in the process. One of the stakeholders specifically cited the momentum of the partner system which is a priority in the company vision. As a corollary, stakeholders from the airport side perceive that the vision is the main thing and their responsibility during strategic planning is to support the vision to do the best for the airline and partners. As expressed by a stakeholder, it is his primary responsibility to support the strategic plan because it is the source of all plans and it would be disastrous to change the rules in the middle of the game. In view of this responsibility, stakeholders must work within the parameters of the plan.

The last category of responsibilities relative to facilitating adaptability that stakeholders attribute to themselves is normative-competitive responsibilities. Normative in the sense that these responsibilities are normally performed in strategic and competitive because of a strategy-driven future outlook (Rothaermel, 2008). It is quite normative for stakeholders to assume the normal responsibility of looking into current strategic directions, forecasting the future scenario, and planning what needs to be done (Mietzner & Reger, 2005). Stakeholders articulate that their responsibilities are derived from a higher level strategic perspective. Hence, they first look into the strategic plan then look ahead within their portfolio to see where they can take their respective teams. Others take the related responsibility of focusing on the aspect of future growth and planning around this forecasted growth.

5.1.2. Championing alternatives

This thematic classification of responsibilities derives from the challenge of bringing about innovations or innovative solutions to the organization (Floyd & Lane, 2000). From the perspective of the stakeholders in the study, the responsibilities fall within the categories

of dealing with contingencies and coming up with innovative solutions. To deal with contingencies, stakeholders build business cases and justify the needs for these during strategic planning. One stakeholder specifically linked this to fleet planning and its ramifications in terms of both material and manpower requirements considering that growth is sometimes not planned but just happens. Planning for contingencies like growth would make the organization better prepared and not caught unaware of what is to come. Likewise, response to physical contingencies have to be planned for. According to a stakeholder, these need to be factored into the master plan so that people will have an idea to start with whenever physical contingencies occur.

Championing alternatives is oriented towards the responsibilities of creating innovations and novel solutions during strategic planning. The stakeholders expressed their responsibilities along this aspect in terms of new designs or new enhancements to existing designs. Related to this is customization of existing structures or products to suit it to the context. The stakeholders looked at innovation and novelty as adaptations to disruptive changes brought about by technology itself. They particularly cite the Sabre system as an example and to designs that suits partners and other stakeholders alike.

5.1.3. Translating strategy

Stakeholders perceive that their responsibilities during strategic planning are to translate vision to action in a way that people in the organization can relate to. Strategies discussed during strategic planning are often at the level of parent statements that need an actionable element in order that it can be implemented when cascaded to the ground level. In the context of the expressed responsibilities of stakeholders, this can either be

seen in terms of a strong orientation to the process and people elements planning. Stakeholders perceive that their responsibilities as facilitators of the process by working closely with the people involved in the planning process. A stakeholder even attempted to quantify this responsibility by categorically stating that it is his responsibility to get 80 percent involved with colleagues during the planning process. Stakeholders whose perceived responsibility as facilitation have a strong team-orientation. They expressed their responsibilities relative to working with colleagues or planning teams by providing direction and leadership in the process.

A stakeholder expressed that one advantage of working closely with teams in planning is learning what is required by clients and partners. Accordingly, planning sessions this stakeholder is involved in revolve around these requirements. Another view of facilitating the process is providing the necessary leadership and direction because not all are involved in strategic planning but they are involved in implementation. In which case, the plan should contain what the stakeholder refers to as actionable elements that serve as the basis for guiding the team and the provision of resources therein so that implementation would be successful. The responsibilities of stakeholders in this context are founded on their expressed belief that the right mix of motivation and process is essential for the accomplishment of tasks in the plan.

A corollary to facilitation is the orientation to process or the responsibility of seeing that the steps in the planning are done adequately and efficiently. Accordingly, stakeholders take it as their responsibility to check the KPIs, analyze and evaluate data, identify root causes of issues, come up with sound decisions, come up with corrective action, and align

the plan. One stakeholder associates delivering of good services and caring about details to well-defined KPIs, hence, during planning, his responsibilities fall within the purview of making KPI checks to determine whether these lead to the desired results once performed. Other stakeholders focus their responsibilities on what they call analysis work. To them analysis is an enabler of planning. This means that through analysis they can enable the business to drive and improve performance. Quite related to this is the responsibility of evaluating the data that are used in planning. Data serve as planning inputs but not all data may serve that purpose depending on the agenda being planned for. Hence, some stakeholders direct their attention to validating and prioritizing the data that is helpful for the purpose at hand. Planning, per se, is predictive. As such, stakeholders align their responsibilities to this element of the plan. One stakeholder opined that the predictive role is the end goal. In which case, his responsibility is to see that planning moves from a reactive to a proactive mode. He specifically cited his success with this in the SMS phase 2 strategy launched in 2014 which significantly enhanced reporting and elevated awareness.

Some stakeholders perceive the strategic planning sessions as an opportunity for exercising their responsibility of strategizing and decision-making. Based on the former, conducting research in order to know what needs to change in strategy is the starting point. From here on, they carefully craft the needed strategy. A corollary responsibility is decision-making. One stakeholder pointed out that the most important responsibility during strategic planning is decision-making. To him, it is the high-level of decision-making that gets the support of partners. Stakeholders also see that implemented projects and processes are vast. Hence, it is necessary to evaluate the response level of each station

concerned in the airline or airport. In this respect, the stakeholders' responsibilities are aligned with coming up with corrective actions based on these response levels. Accordingly, this involves identifying root causes to come up with corrective actions plotted against a time line so that the issue will not linger on. Finally, there are stakeholders who see that their responsibility is aligning requirements to the plan and the plan with equity partners. This is for the purpose of attaining the necessary support to the plan in terms of resource provision as well as getting the necessary buy-in from partners.

5.1.4. Bargaining and negotiations

The political aspect of the stakeholders can be seen in the extent to which they perform bargaining and negotiating functions in bridging relationships with stakeholders. In the context of the stakeholders in the study, the expressed responsibilities in this category involve sustaining good relations and synergies, as well as sharing knowledge and opportunity through the discussion of various issues.

From the perspective of stakeholders, the airline and the airport is a group and the mindset of separation has to change. Accordingly, they take it as their responsibility during planning to change the mindset by developing synergy with partners and other stakeholders. This will mean working closely with them and maintaining good relations in the process. As expressed by one stakeholder from the airport side, knowing what and how to build the airport and operate it successfully depends largely on good working relations with the airline. He observed that this worked well in the past and despite the issues that have emerged because of the growth of the airline vis-à-vis the capacity of the airport, this should not deter but strengthen working relations.

Other stakeholders perceived that the bridge in the relationship with other stakeholders is the extent to which information and resources are shared between them. Hence, some stakeholders expressed that their responsibility during strategic planning is to create the opportunity for sharing knowledge, resources, cost and opportunities. This would not only be good for enhancing relations but will also be an opportunity to understand the ebbs and flows of business which involve both the airline and the airport.

5.1.5. Attaining cost-effectiveness

The rational–analytical aspect of the stakeholders’ responsibilities is perceived as attaining cost-effectiveness. This in the perception of the participants can be achieved by enhancing efficiency. In the context of the stakeholders, enhancing efficiency is the motivation behind their responsibilities in reducing cost and loss, as well as improving timeliness and ensuring efficiency during strategic planning.

Stakeholders take it as their responsibility during the planning sessions to look into data to see how cost can be reduced in all aspects of operation from passenger check-in to the handling of baggage. They later develop the right strategies for these to minimize cost of inefficiency. Going hand in hand with reducing inefficiency is the timeliness of doing things. According to a stakeholder, getting the right things done at the right time is essential for efficient service delivery because it lessens dissatisfaction among customers. He particularly cites the case of customer dissatisfaction when queuing to be served. The longer the line, the more the airport loses in terms of service momentum. Hence, as a schedule specialist, his responsibility during strategic planning is to focus on how well time

is spent in serving the customers. According to one stakeholder, overall operational efficiency should not be sacrificed at the expense of enhancing the efficiency of certain units only. Hence his responsibility during strategic planning is to look into how potentials of all operational units can be optimized and come up with the strategies to leverage these potentials to attain efficiency.

On the whole, the responsibilities of stakeholders during strategic planning span the whole organizational landscape in scope and are distributed all over the different aspects of the strategic planning process. Distributive responsibilities imply that stakeholders are not just focused on a single concern but are as heterogeneous as the diversity of roles played by the stakeholders in the organization. These also show a significant overlap and are not isolated but are rather complementary. Generically, these responsibilities include (a) understanding what drives business, such as looking inwardly into potentials, outwardly at partnerships, and at the long haul by focusing on the future; (b) fitting the strategy with business areas, such as aligning the operational plans and projects with the master plan or cascading the vision to operational units; (c) providing detailed requirements, such as operational and financial data bases from the prioritization of data and feedback or well-analyzed project requirements; (d) providing the necessary commitment to the plan by involvement and participation, as well as committing resources to the plan depending on their capacity; (e) keeping abreast with the progress of the plan by examining KPIs and other performance indicators; (f) contributing to the process by performing specific functions endemic to the planning process; (g) resolving issues as in the case of focusing on innovations and creative solutions; (h) ensuring support by exercising the necessary leadership, and giving directions to the team; (i) taking ownership of deliverables by

making sure that they work against a number of key elements, such as mirroring the requirements, process compatibility, usability and performance efficiency; and (j) communicating throughout the planning cycle with colleagues and partners to maintain good working relations and strengthen alliances.

The results also reflect stakeholder activity in the strategy process. A tripartite relationship exists between strategy, top managers, and the organizational community. The organizational community consists of managers, partners, and other significant stakeholders. Their role is significant because they mediate between top management and the rest of the organizational community. The mediation process in organizational life is structured by role expectations or responsibilities (Jarabkowski, 2005). Since the responsibilities of the stakeholders in the study were not "out of the book," some degree of personal autonomy came into expressing these. These autonomous behaviours initiated outside top management by the stakeholders are important because it reflects their crucial roles in formulating new strategy and informing top management of these (Burgelman, 1983).

Since most of the stakeholders interviewed are in managerial positions in their company, evidence exists that highlights the importance of these stakeholders as agents of change in contemporary organizations (Bower, 1970), as sources of innovation, and in fostering communication about the company vision and strategy (Quinn, 1985); and creating opportunities for the company's strategic priorities (Burgelman, 1983). All these resonate of the expressed responsibilities of the stakeholders in the study.

Similarly, the responsibilities of the participants in the study also sit well with studies on how stakeholders, especially managers, influence strategy through the selling of strategic issues to top management (Dutton & Ashford, 1993); their integrating role in aligning the planning competencies in the organization (Sayles, 1993); identifying opportunities for business cases (Birkinshaw & Hood, 1998); and integrating activities in strategic planning (Bartlett & Ghosyal, 1993).

The plethora of responsibilities that the stakeholders expressed also indicates that these have significant upward and downward influences. Upward ones have something to do with the responsibilities of stakeholders in looking at future strategies of the organization which influence top management (Nonaka, 1998). Accordingly, stakeholders have the potential to alter the course of strategic course by providing top management with unique interpretations of emerging issues and by proposing new initiatives. Downward influence reflects how stakeholders create an impact by aligning organizational arrangements within the strategic context (Nutt, 1987). Through downward influence stakeholders become change agents, fostering adaptability and implementing deliberate strategy, bringing organizational action in line with deliberate strategy (Nutt, 1987). This downward influence also promotes learning and increases the ability of organizational members to respond to change (Nonaka, 1988).

A more encompassing model that reflects the responsibilities of the managers is the model developed by Floyd and Woolridge (2000). This model describes the behaviours that are expected specifically from middle managers. Their model combines upward and downward influence with integrative and divergent thinking. Floyd and Lane (2000) categorised these roles as top management decision-making roles of ratifying, directing, and recognizing;

middle manager roles in communicating between the operating and top levels of management in the forms of championing, facilitating, synthesizing, and implementing; and operating managers information roles in experimenting, conforming or responding. Accordingly, the expressed responsibilities of stakeholders in the study are highly reflective of these roles. Particularly, the strategic involvement of the stakeholders were evident in their responsibilities of championing alternatives and synthesizing information represent upward forms of involvement, while facilitating adaptability and implementing deliberate strategy are downward forms of influence (Floyd & Woolridge, 1992).

The responsibilities expressed by the stakeholders also fall within the purview of the modes of participation identified by Hart (1992). He speaks of a command mode which is characteristic of top management and is actually minimal in planning. In the symbolic mode, stakeholders discharge responsibilities that are subject to the vision of the company. The transactive mode is engendered responsibilities that foster mutual understanding while the formal mode conforms to responsibilities confined to the formal planning process. Lastly, the generative mode refers to the responsibilities of stakeholders in generating strategy. All these can occur across the strategy process of organizations. Hart and Banbury (1994) explain that the use of more modes leads to better organizational performance.

Based on the foregoing, the responsibilities of managers come in both directions, exist in many forms, and take on several modes. The diversity of responsibilities covers the broad range of process as well as organizational concerns. These are not mutually exclusive but rather complement and supplement the responsibilities of other stakeholders during the

planning process. This indicates that the responsibilities of stakeholders drive their relations within the strategic planning process which is the provided 'space' where it all happens. By all indications, the perceived responsibilities that the stakeholders reported stemmed from their own personal interpretations as none of them categorically referred to defined responsibilities prescribed by the company. Evidently, the responsibilities of the stakeholders were largely based on the roles that they played in the company. Prior to developing a model of stakeholder relations in airports, Schaar and Sherry (2010) had to first identify the internal and external stakeholders and later defined the boundaries of their participation as well as goals in their involvement in the management and service functions of the airport. In this manner, stakeholders who participate in these functions are definite of their responsibilities. Schaar and Sherry's (2010) work was cited as one of the practices in developing effective stakeholder relations by the Airport Cooperation Research Program (ACRP, 2015). One specific publication dealing with strategic planning in the airport industry is *ACRP Report 20*. The report is intended as a practical guideline in airport industry strategic planning. A look at the structure of the report reveals that the guideline incorporates what is already known about the process but is specifically contextualized to the airport setting. It is interesting to note that in the chapter dealing with the creation of a process plan and roadmap, a great deal is devoted to the identification of stakeholders, their expectations, and their roles and responsibilities in the planning process. This activity comes as the first step in the strategic planning sequence (ACRP, 2009).

The apparent absence of a guide that defines the responsibilities of stakeholders during strategic planning in the company investigated is a gap that needs to be addressed as an

essential step towards managing and enabling the participation of the various stakeholder groups.

5.2. Perceived Significance of Strategic Planning

All of the stakeholders including the confessed implementors in the study agree that strategic planning is important and valuable to the company. Based on the content codes, phenomenological reduction reveals that strategic planning is perceived to be of value in enhancing momentum, organizational performance, innovation, and profitability.

5.2.1. Momentum

In physics, momentum is generally understood as the tendency of a moving object to continue moving in the direction that it is moving. This term has also been adopted in organizational studies to denote a tendency to evolve in the same direction (Miller & Friesen, 1982), the persistent pursuit of a goal (Gersick, 1994), or the amount of effort and commitment decision-makers devote to action designed to resolve an issue (Dutton & Duncan, 1987). In planning, momentum is the compound effect of a plan executed over a period of time (Chambless, 2011). Based on the content codes, the perceived value of strategic planning by some stakeholders falls within this conceptualization of momentum.

Accordingly, the participants perceived that strategic planning is valuable because it fosters survival, promotes effectiveness, and generates support, all of which contribute to organizational momentum. The basic logical argument given by stakeholders that relates to survival is that the departments will not exist or be successful without strategic planning. Others perceive that it would be disastrous for the organization if there were no

planning done at all. To a certain point, some stakeholders relate this with personal survival in the sense that it is actually their job, their goal, and the main thing which implies that without planning they would not be relevant in the company at all.

Also related to momentum is the value of strategic planning in meeting the goals of the organization. The participants perceive that strategic planning sets the road map for goal attainment, without which the organization would miss its targets, considering that there are a lot of changes going on in both the airline and the airport. Accordingly, the perceived value of strategic planning is in terms of achieving the right goals. Quite related to goal attainment is the perceived importance of strategic planning in meeting strategic values. In effect, strategic planning integrates the corporate values into the plan and keeps the organization on track in meeting or living up to these values. In support of these views are the perceptions of stakeholders that the value of strategic planning lies in the support that it could generate from top management. This is related to their upward responsibility of influencing top management because it remains clear that without support, planning will not be able to serve its purpose thereby affecting the survival of the company.

5.2.2. Organizational performance

Organizational performance is one of the most popular terms today in strategic management terminology and is the subject of numerous studies (Salem, 2003). In strategic management, planning itself is a determinant for organizational performance, which in most empirical studies is treated as a dependent variable (Kirkman, Lowe, & Young, 1999; Richards, 2008). Though organizational performance is conceptualized

differently by different authors, one of the more competitive views is how an organization is prepared to negotiate its future (Gavrea, Ilies, & Stegorean, 2011). It is in this context that the categories of the participant's response were considered relative to the value of strategic planning to organizational performance.

From the perspectives of the participants, the value of strategic planning is seen in terms of how it enhances adaptability and promotes operational efficiency. The value of strategic planning in enhancing adaptability is perceived in terms of how strategic planning forecasts the future providing a clear focus on where the organization wants to go in order to achieve the needed change. According to the stakeholders, strategic planning allows them to look into future scenarios in the long-term perspective to be better prepared on what to expect. The future outlook of planning also has its value in making stakeholders forward thinkers in looking at the current developments in the airport and the airline. In the long haul, stakeholders perceive that looking at the future also is parallel to thinking and talking about changes. In which case, the value of strategic planning lies in providing the organization with the capacity to make the needed changes.

Another category of response is related to the significance of strategic planning in promoting operational efficiency. In this context, the value of the strategic plan is perceived along equipping the organization with the capacity for better delivery because of better preparedness. Another aspect is the significance of strategic planning in elimination day-to-day problems thereby easing the pressure of day-to-day operations. This is perceived to add value to every single day of work because the objectives or KPIs would be met and in the process, a lot of time would be saved.

5.2.3. Innovation

The categories of response of stakeholders also point to the significance of strategic planning in introducing innovations. Innovation is understood differently by different authors, who associate it with change, invention, design, and creativity. This study however adopts the definition of innovation as 'the process of making changes, large and small, radical and incremental, to products, processes, and services that results in the introduction of something new for the organization that adds value to customers and contributes to the knowledge store of the organization' (O'Sullivan, 2008:5). This implies that innovation also relates to coming up with something new not only in terms of concrete products but of new ideas as well. In this context, stakeholders perceived that the value of strategic planning lies in its capacity to explore solutions and solve problems. These are related to the cognitive aspects of innovation.

Accordingly, some stakeholders see that the real value of strategy lies in the advantage it offers in terms of problem-solving. In fact, one of the participants constantly looks forward to strategic planning because according to him, he gets many inputs and much support in solving emerging operational issues. Allowing participants to explore solutions is also a related value of strategic planning perceived by the participants. This is because during the sessions they are allowed to strategize, hence they have to get their research data right in order that they can contribute to exploring strategies. One related aspect in this category of response in the value of planning is overcoming vulnerabilities. One stakeholder explained that during planning they look at past events and future scenarios and the advantage of this is that they can see their weak points, identify loopholes, and

gaps in operations. Consequently, planning helps them with some stop-gap measures that would equip them overcome their vulnerabilities. It has to be noted that the different participants have various skill sets that they deploy at various touch-points in the airport. This makes the airline industry similar with organizations that deliver advanced services where employees have their own facilities, employ certain processes, and enjoy a large extent of autonomy in dealing with their customers (Baines, Lightfoot, Smart, & Fletcher, 2013). This set-up stimulates innovativeness on the part of the employees in delivering services to various customers.

5.2.4. Profitability

One of the common economic indicators in strategic management is profitability which is a measure of the company's financial performance. In the context of the participants, strategic planning is valuable because it allows them to contribute their share to the overall profitability by sustaining partnerships and promoting economic viability.

Accordingly, stakeholders see the value of partners in the overall growth of the company and one of the advantages of strategic planning which they perceive is that planning sustains the partnership by integrating them into the loop of communications. Similarly, another advantage perceived by the participants is that strategic planning allows them to examine the budget and make budget proposals for future investments that would contribute to increased revenues, profitability, and growth.

On the whole, the value of strategic planning is because of the perceived benefits that it provides. Such benefits can be organizational such as attaining longevity in business;

operational such as establishing targets and directions, making rational decisions, and learning in the process; competitive such as making the future happen and attaining differentiation; economic such as sustaining increased profitability; and personal such as being able to share in the process. What this shows is that the same value of strategic planning espoused by different stakeholders creates an inherent connectivity among them which determines how they relate to each other during strategic planning.

Surfacing these perceived benefits reflects on the strength of the method used in the study since the usual focus of corporate strategic planning tends to be more quantitative. *ARCP Report 20* (ARCP, 2009) cites the use of a focus group in drawing out the benefits of airport strategic planning and the results derived from their focus groups (Large Hub/Gateway International Airports; the Medium Hub, Small Hub, and Non-Hub Airports) yielded a variety of responses that were categorized into organizational benefits, managerial benefits, community benefits, and economic benefits (ACRP, 2009).

5.3. Subjects taken up during Strategic Planning

The perceived themes taken up during the strategic planning sessions are largely context-specific, which reflects the both the interests and/or priorities of the company or the stakeholders. These are also consistent with and reflective of the perceived value of strategic planning and the expressed responsibilities of stakeholders discussed in the foregoing sections.

Strategic outlook. Stakeholders cited that topics taken up during strategic planning have a natural inclination towards a strategy. Stakeholders mentioned that basically, they

discuss company strategy in terms of what the current company response is and what the company is trying to achieve. Accordingly, looking at company strategy covers a broad range of interests, according to the participants, depending on operational areas. In which case, competitive strategies, growth strategies, financial strategies, were commonly noted. Looking at strategy also covers a broad range of scope from global to unit-specific strategies.

Looking for buy-ins. Another subject taken up is how to generate buy-ins with partners and other stakeholders. This comes on the heels of the current issues being faced by the company in terms of its relations with the airport and other airline partners. Apparently, stakeholders perceived there is some resistance among their partners and ultimately, this has to change. In this context, the stakeholders discuss how they can sell their concepts to partners in a way that the other party buys into the plan. For some stakeholders, smooth working relations can be attained if partners can also smoothly buy into the working concepts that they should be sharing.

Projects/ investments. The growth of the company has also opened the doors for diversification in order to be competitive in the global markets. According to some stakeholders, the more important topics discussed along this dimension are the projects and or investments that have to be made to take advantage of these market opportunities. According to stakeholders, they discuss how to invest in partners and what investment opportunities can they create for partners, such as how the airline can invest in the airport and how the airport can invest in the airline. A stakeholder cited that investments are commonly taken up during strategic planning because of the current outlook of the company on investments as drivers for growth.

Constraints and difficulties. Topics typical to most planning sessions are the difficulties and constraints faced. Strategic planning allows the opportunity for constraints and difficulties faced to be raised and discussed. This is consistent with the perceived value of strategic planning in solving problems earlier discussed. Again, the nature, scope, urgency, and extent of the problems discussed during the planning sessions varies according to the roles and concerns of the stakeholders.

Targets and goals and future developments. Consistent with the expressed responsibilities and perceived value of strategic planning, stakeholders mentioned that a topic commonly taken up is targets, goals, and future developments. As one stakeholder mentioned, the topics revolve around looking at the current status, targets, and goals and identifying the resources required, the expertise needed, and the steps to get there. Part of this involves looking at the challenges in reaching the target. The scope of the targets are again diverse including both products and services. Regarding the latter, stakeholders always take into consideration customer satisfaction as an on-going goal. Targets discussed also include investments and revenues.

Having clear direction. Allied to having clear goals, topics pertaining to having clear directions in the plan are discussed during planning sessions; some stakeholders reported that having clarity in the plan is the most important thing discussed. Allied to this is the topic of being consistent because things can be easily misinterpreted in people's minds. Hence being focused on target and consistency are considered key topics discussed in planning. One of the points of focus is the vision because there is the danger that many mini-visions can emerge at operations or senior management levels if the vision is not discussed, clarified, and communicated.

Timelines. A stakeholder who considers himself a schedule specialist cited that the subjects that he is most keen about in strategic planning are schedules. He rationalized that with the current growth experienced by the airline, everyone has to be clear on the key timelines. Related to this is the topic of on-time performance as a key subject in strategic planning. On-time performance lessens the pressure on operations and projects the semblance of efficiency to customers. Timeliness of schedules and performances are considered topics of critical importance by stakeholders whose concerns have to do with service delivery.

Feedback. Stakeholders have likewise identified feedback as a subject taken up during strategic planning. From their responses feedback is sourced out from monitoring data for on-going and long-term processes, from incidents that occur in daily operations, and from results of on-going tests, especially for new designs and enhancement. The stakeholders mentioned that these topics when taken up in the planning sessions have significantly yielded long-term and short-term solutions to issues in various operational units. The momentum that builds up from the discussions of feedback drives suggestions that motivates increased participation among the stakeholders

Deliverables. The strategic planning sessions are also an opportunity to report on deliverables. These may be in the form of processes or services. Hence, in the discussion about deliverables many of the questions are discussed along different aspects of the service spectrum of the airline or the airport. A significant aspect of this topic, according to a stakeholder, is that knowing one's deliverables leads to knowing one's connections in the organization hence can motivate linking and networking of independent units in the company.

It can be observed from the reported topics discussed that these are quite generic in nature, are interrelated, and relate to the broader strategic landscape. These are also consistent with the value of strategic planning described that coincides with the responsibilities expressed by the respondents. The diversity in the topics discussed also implies that not all of these are taken up in a single session but are recalled topics possibly in various sessions attended by the participants. It is noted that the respondents failed to present a common agenda in planning which shows that the company allows the bottom-up flow of information regarding topics for discussion in strategic planning. The variety of topics taken up during strategic planning reinforce the motivation of the stakeholders to be involved relative to their expressed perceived responsibilities hence supporting the drive to get involved and interrelate with other stakeholders with similar or diverse interests.

5.4. Coordination among Stakeholders

The many issues and challenges that businesses face today cannot be tackled by one agency or organization alone. These are complex and require multiple actors in both the organizational and geographical context. It is in this sense that multiple stakeholders need to be engaged by involving them and sustaining their participation. Stakeholder involvement and coordination is an integral part of the strategic planning process that supports the plan objectives. The congruence among stakeholders would more likely support development initiatives of the company. Congruence is largely driven by the extent of coordination and relationships built that are adequately and carefully planned (Blackburn, Chambers, & Gaventa, 2002).

The findings of the study on both groups of airline and airport stakeholders reflect a variety of understanding regarding their coordination with each other. Some stakeholders perceive that the coordination is going well and this has been so since the establishment of the airline. Others see that the on-going relationship between the airport and airline is a reflection of good coordination. Likewise, other stakeholders perceive that the momentum of business could not be possible without coordination between these two entities. One stakeholder mentioned that the absence of coordination would bring about disastrous effects considering the nature of business. One stakeholder is of the view that the nature of the airline and the airport as being dual entities under the government deems that coordination be established and sustained between these two groups of stakeholders. There are other stakeholders whose roles do not put them in direct contact with their external stakeholders but still perceive that the coordination between the airport and the airline is amazing. Similarly, stakeholders who do not know much about the mechanism of coordination between the airline and the airport still perceive the coordination to be a positive one.

What stakeholders perceive is that, without a doubt and by all means, there has to be some kind and amount of coordination in place between the airline and the airport. This being the case, the bone of contention is the extent to which coordination is serving the purpose of both entities. A stakeholder from the airline side aired that there is still a long way to go before good coordination can be established, citing that the airport is not taking the initiative on something that is absolutely their responsibility. Other stakeholders lament the slow or absent buy-in by the airport on the concepts, leadership, or guidance

provided by the airline. Stakeholders perceive that while the airline is focusing on enlarging its future sphere of business, the airport is just contented operating on its current space and does not keep pace with future developments in the airlines. Towards the extreme end, only a few stakeholders pointed out that coordination failed or is not working at all.

Some stakeholders are quick to point out that even with good coordination problems will still emerge hence they see coordination as a big challenge. One of the perceived problems is not the problem related to coordination per se, but the differential pace of development between the airport and the airline which makes the two entities simply continue with their own plans without consulting each other. Other stakeholders from both the airline and the airport rationalize that finger-pointing would not do any good and it is time for this kind of culture to go. Furthermore, they prescribe transparency on both sides and the urgency to relook at and re-think how to come up with perfect coordination. They expressed optimism that a well-designed engagement plan can help overcome issues, challenges, and problems in coordination.

From the findings, the participants are quite clear who their internal and external stakeholders are, ranging from individuals to the whole government itself. Hence the findings reveal how the participants perceive the involvement of their external stakeholders in their plans and in turn how much they are involved in the strategic plans of their external stakeholders. More particularly, the researcher asked participants from the airlines regarding the involvement of the airport in airline planning and to what extent is the airline involved in airport planning. The same was also asked of the participants

from the airport. To provide a general picture, the possible permutation of response was determined from the answers given and the number of participants under each category of response was tallied. The emerging picture of the overall perception of the stakeholders is presented in the Figure 13.

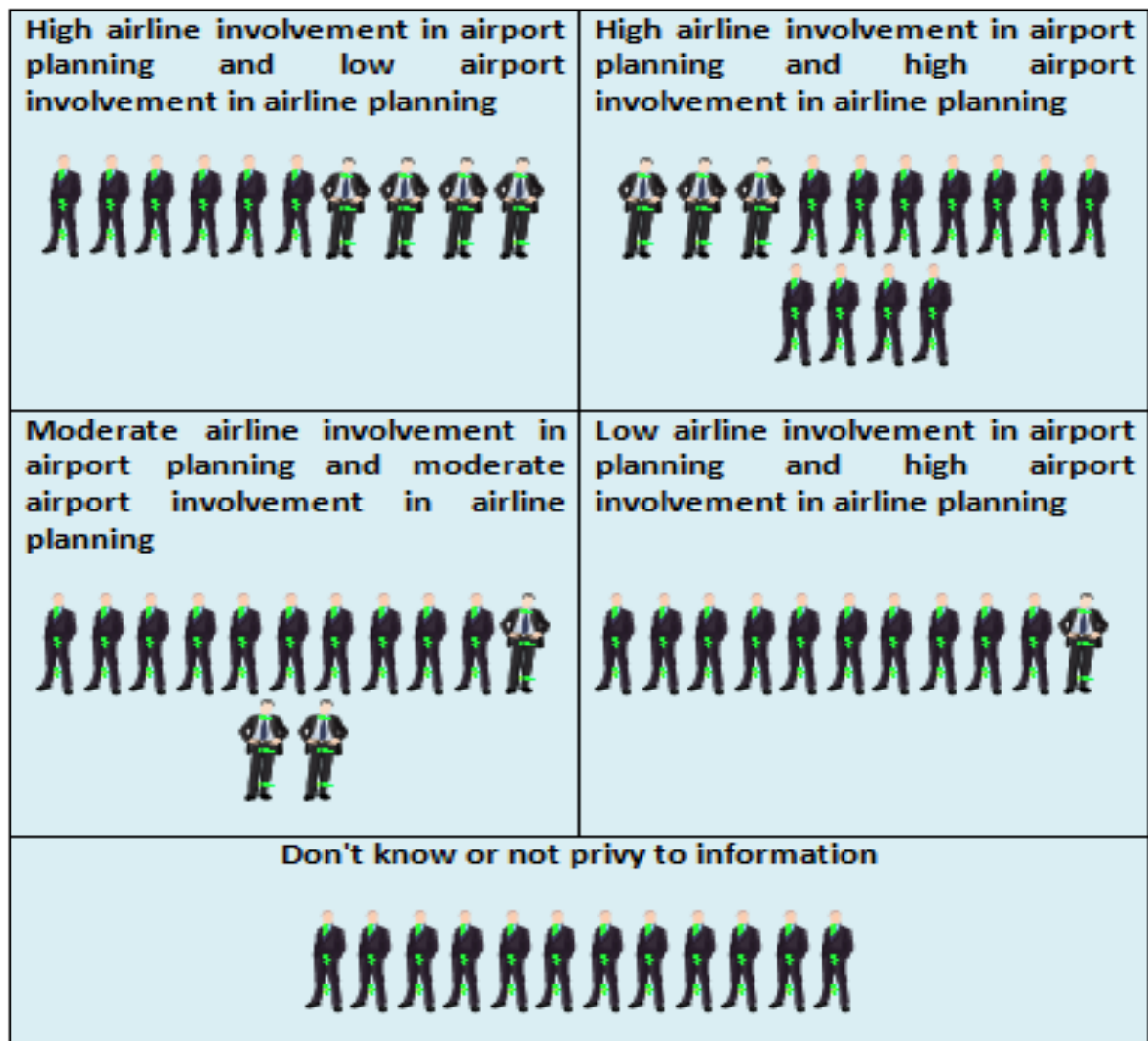


Figure 13. Perceived Coordination Among Stakeholders

From the responses, the figure shows the following permutations derived: (a) stakeholders who perceive that there is high airline involvement in airport planning and low airport

involvement in airline planning; (b) stakeholders who perceive that there is high airline involvement in airport planning and high airport involvement in airline planning; (c) stakeholders who perceive that there is low airline involvement in airline planning and high airport involvement in airline planning; (d) stakeholders who perceive that there is moderate airline involvement in airport planning and moderate airport involvement in airline planning; and (e) stakeholders who are not privy to information or who simply do not know the extent of involvement or coordination. It can be noted that one possible permutation which is the low airline involvement in airport planning and low airport involvement in airline planning was not mentioned in the response of the participants.

It can be noted from the figure that the stakeholders were distributed according to perceived involvement in the range ten to fourteen which means that there is an absence of a dominant perception on the involvement of the two entities in planning. This can also account for the differential perceptions in coordination are earlier discussed. It can also be noted that there are more airport participants who perceive that their involvement in airline planning ranges from low to moderate and more of the airline participants who perceive that their involvement in airport planning ranges from low to moderate.

The ideal of course is to move all stakeholders to the upper right quadrant of the figure. The perception of stakeholders therefore that coordination is a challenge is a valid claim on these grounds. Also, with these findings, the claim of stakeholders on re-thinking, relooking, and facing the challenges and issues regarding coordination makes a lot of sense. Similarly, the need for transparency is highlighted in the light of the above findings.

All the more, as suggested by one stakeholder, that the culture needs to go and the culture needs to change.

Coordination is seen in the study as a frame where the relationship of stakeholders can be viewed from. Based on the findings, it appears that the relationship of stakeholders can come in different levels and in many forms based on how the participants looked at coordination. Coordination is viewed differently by different stakeholders not only in terms of its extent but also in terms of its occurrence. Some referred to coordination occurring before the process, during the process, and after the process of strategic planning. Regardless of the time horizon, it can be inferred that an affirmation of a positive coordination indicates a smooth flow of relation and a negation of smooth coordination indicate that the relationship of stakeholders can remain to be a continuing challenge.

5.5. The Role of Communication in Strategic Planning

Communications plays an important role in organizations as evinced by the success of companies with effective communications strategies compared to others that tend to fall short of optimal performance (Argenti & Forman, 2002). It has been observed though that an imbalance can exist between the perceived importance of communications and the actual attention and resources given towards it, which occur simultaneously (Tourish & Hargie, 2004). Furthermore, it has been pointed out that communications are rarely recognized as a required principal competency. Hence increasing awareness concerning the importance of communications to organizations exists but the knowledge appears to be rarely translated into practice (Oliver, 1997). In the case of the company in focus, all of the stakeholders see the important role played by communications in strategic planning.

Without a doubt, communication is perceived to be an essential necessity in planning. To this effect, the participants perceive a range on importance of communications from the most totalizing to the more exclusive aspects. The findings indicate that the stakeholders perceived the importance of communication as relational manner or in relation to a denoted situation, event, or persons. Accordingly, the perceived importance of communication is related to a couple of things as shown below.

1. Communication and meaning

In its broadest sense, communication is our link to the rest of humanity. It involves the deliberate or accidental transfer of meaning. When one person does or says something they engage in symbolic behaviour which can be given meaning by others who are in observance. Whenever one observes or gives meaning to behaviour, communication is taking place. Everything done as a sender or a receiver has potential message value for the person with whom the communication is directed to in the same way that the same also happens to that person (Gamble & Gamble, 2014). Livingstone (2009) claims that 'everything is mediated.' He was referring to the movement beyond the traditional dualism of mass and interpersonal forms of communication to encompass new, interactive, networked forms of communication whose influence may be traced across multiple spheres of modern life. Hence, there is validity to the claim of stakeholders in the study that meaningful communication is vital to strategic planning. With reference to these respondents, they perceive that strategic planning rises and falls with communication.

2. Communication and understanding

In the response of some of the participants, phenomenological reduction reveals the association of communications with the verbs, 'to know' or 'to understand.' As in, the role of communication is to know or to understand something. Reinsch (1996) distinguishes between what he called the ivory tower approach and the trade school approach in communication. The ivory tower approach involves knowing-why without knowing-how and the trade school approach involves knowing-how without knowing-why. In the explanation of the respondents, they integrate these approaches because the importance of communication is seen in terms of how it promotes the knowledge of hows and whys which are not mutually exclusive.

In terms of knowledge, management communications has the unifying goal of disseminating knowledge that increases the effectiveness or efficiency of people functioning in contemporary business environments (Smeltzer, 1996). Similarly, Miller (2003) cites that organizational communication involves understanding of the context of the organization that influences the communication process itself. In the view of Tourish and Hargie (2004), communication leads to understanding because people ascribe meaning to messages, verbal and non-verbal communication, and communication skills. This domain of understanding contributes to integrated communication by giving it a context (Miller, 2003). The context ascribed to by the participants will be discussed in the following items.

3. Communication and culture change

Stakeholders perceive that communication is vital in bringing about the necessary changes in the existing culture. It has been recognized that effective organizational communication has a propensity for making changes in different areas in the organization. Among these areas are changes in job descriptions and role transition, identity, culture, and information processes (Kanter, 1991). This is easier said than done because management decisions to change and the resulting process of dissemination or implementation are different courses of action. A change in one area of an organization inevitably affects the stability of another area (Schein, 1985). As cited by Tourish and Hargie (1998), sound internal communications are paramount to the overall efficiency and effectiveness of an organization. This becomes more significant among organizations facing a lot of changes. This is validated in a study where the authors concluded that internal symmetrical communications programs are crucial throughout the process of organizational changes (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002).

With the explosion of information technology, today's organizations are involved in a variety of complex communications activities. Hence 'externally directed messages can accordingly become an integral part of the organization's operating discourse' (Cheney & Christensen, 2001:232). Studies indicate that communication has the propensity to bring about changes in organizational identity, culture and image (Cheney & Christensen, 2001). Furthermore, it has been observed that these become focal points in organizations that are faced with many concerns for change (Cheney & Christensen, 2001).

Communication plays a significant role in an organization's determination of a sense of self because this can directly or indirectly influence organizational identity, image, and culture. Similarly, formal and informal communications can play a critical part in building organizational values which may influence organizational decision-making (Ravasi & Rekom, 2003). On the other hand, elements of identity, image and culture have been both credited as instrumental in an organization's ability to weather the uncertainty of change (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). Hence advocates of communication theory see the need for the significant dialogue regarding the notions of organizational identity, organizational image and organizational culture and their influence in organizations themselves (Whetton & Godfrey, 1998). In this respect, Hatch and Schultz (1997) recommend a multidisciplinary approach that combine knowledge from the disciplines of marketing, public relations, communications and organizational studies. The perceptions of the stakeholders on the role of communication in bringing about culture change finds significance in the light of the foregoing explanations.

4. Communication and the team

According to the functionalist perspective, communication is essential to team decision-making and problem-solving. It is a requisite function and the extent to which teams perform in making sound decisions and accurate solutions rest on the communication activity (Hirokawa & Poole, 1996). In the context of the participants, the importance of communication relative to the team is seen in terms of how it promotes tasks and relations when team members communicate with each other.

This hinges on the effectiveness of group communications as well as interpersonal communications in the organization. McLean (2003:14) defines group communication as a dynamic process where a small number of people engage in a conversation. This is quite common in the workplace regardless whether the topic of conversation involves task or non-task related topics. In this regard, communication is largely interpersonal. Interpersonal communications brings about both relations and task benefits. Galanes and Adams (2013) cited that some of the relations benefits of communication include enjoying fellowship and companionship with fellow members of the team; giving and receiving moral and emotional support within the team; members meet the requirement of inclusion, affection, and control; impulsiveness of members is held under control; and development of skills to cultivate ties with people outside the team. The relational advantages of communication create an environment for the smooth flow of work.

Accomplishing tasks constitutes not only the central purpose of work but underpins most of human behaviour (Bruch & Ghoshal, 2004). Some of the task advantages cited (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2014) are that members will likely have access to much more information than any individual member possesses; members can focus multiple attentions and diverse energy on a task; team members can be more thorough in dealing with a task than any individual might because communication propels each other's thinking; the group may harness and exploit conflict to generate new and better ideas than an individual could; when tension and disagreement are resolved constructively, chances of achieving group goals increase; members may attain deeper understanding of the tasks; and lastly, effective communications promote synergy. Synergy is a combined effect greater than the

simple sum total of individual contributions. Synergy can enhance creativity as group members share and build upon each other's strengths and perspectives.

5. Communication and strategy

Success in business depends to a certain extent on a workforce that understands the mission, goals, values, processes, and procedures of their company. This understanding is mediated by effective communication that supports the business strategies of the company with the same message consistently conveyed to the external environment.

In the context of the participants of the study, they see the role of communication along this trend of thought. That communication is important in understanding the mission, vision, and strategy of the company so that employees will have a clear direction of work. Hence, one interest in research reflected in literature is looking into the contribution of corporate communication to a company's ability to create and disseminate its strategy (Forman & Argenti, 2005). Furthermore, Rapert, Velliquette, and Garretson (2002) found that organizations with effective communications out-perform those with restrictive communication. This is because employees in companies with effective communication have easy access to management. Peng and Littlejohn (2001) also found that effective strategy implementation is hinged on effective communication. Hence organizations always strive to eliminate barriers to communication. These points have been particularly raised by the participants in the study, where they perceived that internal and external communication issues that relate to stakeholders have to be dealt with in the planning process to pave the way for smooth interpersonal relations. In this respect, it has been found that communication barriers are more frequent than any other type of barriers, such as organizational structure barriers, learning barriers, personnel management barriers, or

cultural barriers (Heide, Gronhaug, & Johanssen, 2002). To this effect, Rapert, et al. (2002) state that communication and shared understandings play an important role in the formulation and implementation of strategy. In particular, when vertical communication is frequent, strategic consensus or the shared understanding about strategic priorities is enhanced and an organization's performance improves. Effective horizontal communication improves interpersonal communication.

The link between communication and strategy can be seen in terms of communication being used to bring together the best resources for serving future needs with a company. In this context, strategic planning should involve a strategic discussion about the very core of a company: how it operates, what it stands for, what it delivers. If the discourse is robust enough and reflected in the plan then it is expected that everyone related to the company speaks with one voice, one mind, one purpose: a focused, clear, articulate message. Other strategic benefits of communication can include attracting and retaining the best talents; having a strong sense of culture; decreased change resistance; and greater employee commitment and engagement. These have also been brought about by the participants that relate to some issues observed in the company. The bottom line is clear communications engenders a strategic discussion about the company and vision and mission. It also leads to continuous improvement and innovation that anticipates and addresses market needs.

6. Communication and engagement

Employee engagement is understood as the degree to which an individual is attentive and absorbed in the performance of their roles. When employees are engaged, they feel

involved, committed, empowered, emotionally attached to the organization, and excited and proud about being a part of it. A growing number of scholars and professionals have suggested that employee engagement is driven by many factors and common among these factors is the role played by communication (Mishra, Boynton, & Mishra, 2014).

According to studies by Watson Wyatt Worldwide (2009), engaged employees are likely to be top performers who support organizational change, and have lower turnover rates. HR Solutions' (2011) engagement surveys found that employee engagement drives customer satisfaction, which in turn enhances customer loyalty and increases profitability and growth of an organization. It was also found that satisfaction with internal communications was related to employee engagement and organizational commitment (Carriere & Bourque, 2009) and a sense of community that gave employees a feeling of greater responsibility to advocate for the organization at a personal level (White, Vance, & Stafford, 2010). Chen (2008) likewise found that satisfaction with internal communications was related to job satisfaction and that different cultures tend to differ from each other regarding communication channels.

From the results of the study, the participants perceived the role of communication along this line of thought but also emphasized the role of communication in engaging external stakeholders. Organizations no longer have the choice whether they want to engage with stakeholders or not; they only need to decide when and how to engage successfully. Stakeholder engagement is premised on the notion that 'those groups who can affect or are affected by the achievements of an organization's purpose' should be given the

opportunity to comment and input into the development of decisions that affect them. In today's society, if they are not actively sought (Jeffery, 2009:8).

In effect, aspects of communication management include participation of stakeholders in communication to determine its direction and contents. The rationale for the use of communication to engage external stakeholders is pretty much similar to the reasons for engaging internal stakeholders. Effective communication with external stakeholders aims to sustain their commitment by way of involvement and identification with the organization (De Ridder, 2004). Cornelissen (2004) also emphasized the role of communication in bringing about a sense of belongingness in the organization. In this sense, identification is seen as a persuasive strategy used to influence stakeholder relations by communicating and sharing beliefs and values that meet the stakeholder's sense of belongingness. Communication creates the awareness among stakeholders of environmental changes and understanding of how these changes impact the organization in terms of its evolving growth (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002).

On the whole, the purpose is to attain symmetrical communication for organizations to go further than simply explaining their activities in the external environment. They need to communicate opportunities and challenges in the external environment so that employees have a clearer understanding of on-going changes in the organization's environment (Welch & Jackson, 2007:190).

7. Transparency and accountability

Transparency and accountability are essential to promote and sustain stakeholder participation. Transparency refers to the concept that organizations are forthcoming with information which is shared in advance of decision-making, thereby fostering informed decisions during the process of planning (IFC, 2007). On the other hand, accountability can be defined as 'the processes through which an organization makes a commitment to respond to and balance the needs of stakeholders in its decision-making processes and activities, and delivers against this commitment'(Blagescu, dela Casas, & Lloyd, 2005:20).

These ideas are resonated by the participants relative to their perception of the significant role of communication in strategic planning. Accountability and responsibility appear to be interlinked since organizations demonstrate accountability through transparency in providing information on what they are doing, where, and how they are performing. An organization committed to accountability seeks stakeholder input into broader organizational policies and strategies and does not confine engagement merely to operational issues (Blagescu, et al., 2005:22-23). These mechanisms for transparency and accountability are built into every stage of stakeholder engagement (Unwin, 2005). These processes largely involve the flow of information between the organization and stakeholders hence highlight the significant role of communication.

Accountability through transparency strengthens partnership if the partners jointly clarify and set: (i) goals and responsibilities; (ii) performance expectations that are balanced by commensurate resources of each party; (iii) credible reporting mechanisms to

demonstrate performance achieved and what has been learned; and (iv) reasonable review and adjustment systems to ensure that feedback on the performance achieved and difficulties encountered can be recognized and corrected as necessary (World Bank, 1999:28). Accountability is crucial for both the organization and the stakeholders as 'it increases credibility and legitimacy, it strengthens governance structures, and leads to learning and innovation for the agency and ensures that the needs of the stakeholders "are addressed in organizational policies and practices' (Blagescu, et al., 2005:8).

On the whole, transparency and clearly defined accountability motivate stakeholders to help ensure their support. Stakeholders involved in turn contribute information essential to strategic planning and implementation. The bottom line is that transparency and accountability help to generate the necessary trust between all parties involved, which will support a positive working environment and cooperation.

In the airline industry, communication and coordination are vital to meeting contingencies especially during irregular operations (IROS) and this has been aired by some of the participants. This is not only endemic to the study context since this also happens in other airlines according to *ACRP Report 153* (ACRP, 2016). The same report also identified extenuating circumstances that highlight the need for better coordination and communication, to wit:

- Gaps in stakeholder participation that result from omitting a needed stakeholder or an inability to reach a certain stakeholder because contact information is inaccurate and/or because alternate contacts have not been identified;

- Lack of contingency plans for equipment malfunctions that can occur during long-term events involving extreme temperatures;
- Inadequate manual processes in place to maintain business continuity after loss of a technology-dependent service;
- No clear guidance on which stakeholder is responsible for IROS-related expenditures;
- Lack of understanding related to each airport's terminal and/or gate capacity constraints in a region;
- Lack of a fully coordinated public/passenger communication plan using various technologies, including social media; and/or
- No clear directions on how stakeholders should manage an escalating situation (ACRP, 2016:5).

Accordingly, these extenuating circumstances are compounded by trust issues among stakeholders which prevents them from working effectively with each other, hence the need for guidance in timely coordination and communication planning among stakeholders. To this effect, *ACRP Report 153* recommended a six-step IROS planning process to improve coordination and communication among stakeholders, as shown in Figure 14.

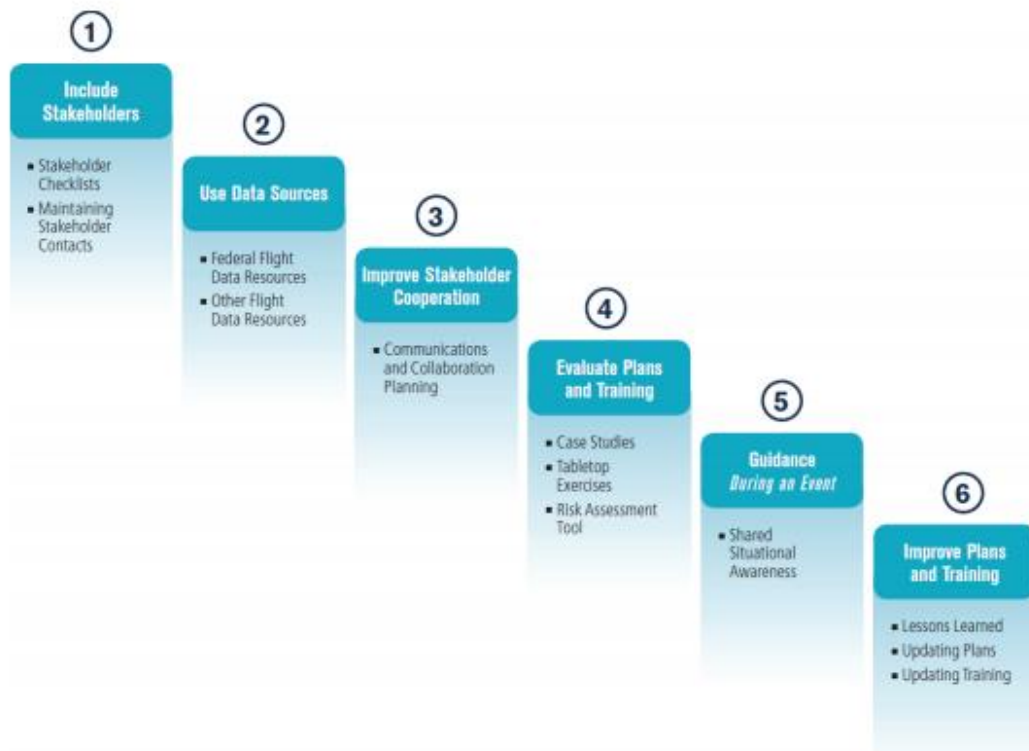


Figure 14: IROS Planning (ACRP, 2016:13)

The various issues raised by the participants as well as the need for communication to serve a number purposes highlight the need for trust and confidence building as well as the institutionalization of platforms and mechanisms for sustained coordination and communication among stakeholders. The whole point is to generate shared situational awareness through coordination, communication, and collaboration.

5.6. Perceived Changes needed in the Strategic Plan

The change wish list of the participants in strategic planning cuts across various aspects of the organization and are largely context-focused. These can be summarized as follows.

1. Change in strategy

The context of strategic change perceived by participants include changes that will make the company cope up with the current growth strategy whose effect will likely snowball in the near future. According to participants, the changes have multiple focuses involving the various aspects as of business and operations. They perceive the disadvantage of just focusing on the growth of just limited aspects of the total operation.

Quite related to these changes are those involving the company's strategic directions. Participants perceive the need for clear strategic directions that go hand in hand with the company's growth strategy. The wish list of the stakeholders range from what to do with the company's multi-fleet to how to create new businesses, develop alliances and grow with the current pace of developments.

2. Change in process

The changes in process wished for by the stakeholders are focused on improving the current processes that are already in place hence are more closely allied to the notion of continuous process improvement.

One of the areas that the stakeholder perceives that needs to change is responsiveness, more particularly the loss of momentum in event-driven responses. Although the company has the capacity to respond to events, this is done piecemeal without looking into the continuity of how these events create a historical continuum. Stakeholders perceive that the readiness to respond to events should be evaluated in a historical context in order to have a proactive and not reactive response to events because these are inevitable.

A related area for change perceived by stakeholders is in terms of readiness. Readiness can significantly overlap with responsiveness but the stakeholders find that being ready is a more robust response. This is because the plan should be perceived to specify not only the steps to undertake in responding but also supports the action with the right tools and technology. In which case, both the material and human elements are in a high state of readiness to respond.

Another perceived need for change is coordination. As presented earlier, the response of the stakeholders on the airline–airport coordination shows that coordination is a potential area for change. The fact is that there is coordination but the stakeholders perceive that there is a need to optimize this so that what the company stands for and where it is going filters into every interaction. According to stakeholders, optimizing coordination generates the most out of people in the company.

External coordination also needs to improve, according to stakeholders, because of the change in the business model of the company where a number of equity partners are involved. In this respect, planning for the airline should also include a strong component of planned coordination with other airlines where there is significant interest involved.

This goes without saying that communication also needs to be improved. As presented earlier, the stakeholders perceived a number of important roles that communication plays, which is not only endemic to the strategic planning process itself but which could be extended to other aspects of organizational life. In the study, the stakeholders find that communication is a key area for change. They perceive that a more robust approach to

communication drives better engagement with appropriate stakeholders. As discussed earlier, improvement in communication will also increase transparency, which is one item in the wish list of the stakeholders.

Some changes in procedures that need to be in place were also perceived by stakeholders, but these cover specific areas of operation and business that the stakeholders are involved in; hence, these range from procedures involving X-ray machines, meetings, and partnerships to review annual company budgets. The bottom line is that current procedures need to be reviewed to identify areas for improvement.

Last among the processes for change that the stakeholders perceive is alignment. In general, the stakeholders perceive the need for change in the alignment of the company with the environment and corporate strategy with the business environment. In particular, stakeholders refer to the need for greater alignment between infrastructure and the operational environment, strategy and operations, and the company with its equity partners. In view of these recommendations for change, stakeholders perceive that a search for best practices for alignment is in order, which is considered a constant challenge in strategic planning.

3. Changes in stakeholder relations

Consistent with the topics in strategic planning and the issues brought forth in coordination, stakeholders also wished for change in relations with stakeholders. In the context of the participants, one area of strengthening relations is in the area of mutual assistance among stakeholders. The participants particularly pointed to assisting equity

partners develop their capabilities in order to keep up with changes and growth in the company. Accordingly, they perceived that changes in relations with equity partners can allow both the airline and the airport to mutually view, learn, and assist each other. Since the company is fast growing, another area of change in stakeholder relations is in mutually looking at opportunities. The stakeholders mentioned that if this is just done by the airline without the airport doing its share then issues can later arise in the process.

The above have implications for both the notion of stakeholder keeping which is different from stakeholder catching, which connotes establishing relations (Touminen, 1995). Once stakeholder relations have been established, this evolves to a higher level of loyalty. Touminen classifies stakeholders into potential, new, regular, supporting, and advocacy and predicted that all stakeholders would move up the ladder to become supportive stakeholders as their relationship with the organization matures.

To bring about changes in stakeholder relations, it is essential to classify their stakeholders based on the different levels of influence that they have. Allied stakeholders are stakeholders with whom the firm shares a cooperative relationship orientation characterized by mutual understanding and welfare promotion. They have common experience that allows them to evaluate their relationship strategically based an identification based form of trust. cooperative Stakeholders behave in the same manner relative to relationship orientation and evaluation modes. In this level, trust is no longer based on identification, but on the profound knowledge that the parties have about each other. This profound knowledge of each other makes the relationship resilient. Neutral stakeholders are those that share individualistic relationship orientation with the

organization. Their relationship is based on the desire to achieve their individual goals, although they perceive their goals as independent of the other party's goals. As such, the relationship is evaluated in an operative mode, such that the assessment is focused more on short-term interactions. Competitive stakeholders relate with the organization in a competitive manner such that they not only try to reach their individual goals, but also strive for outperforming the other. The organization and their competitive stakeholders perceive each other as engaged in a zero sum game. The relationship of threatening stakeholders and the organization is one of a struggle in which only one of them can prevail. Their relationship is characterized by distrust and both try to avoid vulnerability to the other (Polonsky, et al., 2002).

4. Change in infrastructure and technology

Change in infrastructure and technology is inevitable to the company's competitive position in the global market. The company is largely technology-driven but stakeholders perceive that changes are still needed in certain areas. The high dependence on technology can also have its drawbacks in the absence of back-up systems. Accordingly, stakeholders perceive that changes are in order with respect to the use of ICT. The stakeholders specifically mentioned this in relation to disruptions and system failures which can paralyze entire operations.

Another aspect of technology change that the stakeholders wish for is more automation. Accordingly, this could involve fundamental improvements with systems from the baggage below wing operation and potentially the above wing operation. The idea is to have more self-service devices made available that actually work for the guest and that fit the guest's

requirements. Stakeholders cited that the space of the airport is currently very small. So until the time that expansion is accomplished, everything is squeezed in the current space. A big difference can be made if there is more automation that supports disruption or automation that supports communication.

It is not only bringing in new technology where changes can be made, stakeholders also perceive that there is a need for change in the way current technology is being utilized. According to the stakeholders, incorporating a better use of technology into the operations is in order. In this respect, they wished for an all-encompassing link and technology platform which is computer-based, or a communications solution hub with voice and data readily accessible by the staff.

Lastly, the stakeholders perceived that there are still technologies being used in certain aspects of operation that are very old and need to be changed. The infrastructure for cargo was particularly cited as a case in point.

On the whole, the observation that the old culture has to go will be largely driven by the physical, social, technological, and economic changes perceived by the stakeholders that are needed to be factored into the strategic plan of the company.

The perceived changes in the plan raised by the participants are real-time issues which need to be addressed to improve the responsiveness of both the airlines and airports. Invariably, these also influence the relationship of stakeholders because of the need for collective decision and action in addressing these issues. The fact that the stakeholders

see the need for change would inherently draw them to interrelate and interact during the planning process. The quality of their relationship would largely be a function of such interaction. One practice that reflects this is the use of materiality matrix. In companies that practice stakeholder engagement and sustainability reporting, these issues are included under the subject of materiality. To factor in the voice of stakeholders in the planning process, a materiality matrix is utilized which plots the attractiveness of the issues to stakeholders against the importance of the issues to the company in terms of their contribution to business success (Intesa Sanpaolo, 2016). The materiality matrix allows the identification and prioritization of topics which are drawn from the stakeholders and acted upon during the planning process. This allows the group to discuss these issues and prioritize those that could create short-, medium-, and long-term value for the company, hence the process involves identification, prioritization, and validation. Some forward-looking companies such as Intesa Sanpaolo adopt materiality as a principle and integrate these with two other principles such as inclusion and responsiveness in engaging stakeholders in governance, strategy, and operations. The company defines these principles as follows:

- Inclusion: promoting stakeholder engagement in developing and attaining a responsible and strategic response to sustainability;
- Materiality: determining the most relevant and significant social and environmental topics for the Group and its stakeholders by assigning a priority to them;
- Responsiveness: responding to stakeholders' needs and expectations on issues identified as material and as a priority also for the Group in terms of decisions, actions and results, as well as communication activities (Intesa Sanpaolo, 2016:5).

In terms of the airline industry, aspects of materiality are incorporated in the engagement practices of some airports such as Newark Liberty International, Teterboro (PANYNJ, 2014), Hong Kong Airport Authority (HKIA, 2015), and Schipol (Schipol 2015), among others. Some of the airlines noted to take materiality into account in sustainability reporting include Lufthansa (Lufthansa, 2015); Cathay Pacific (CP Factsheet, 2014); Singapore Airlines (SA, 2015); Air France (AFKLM, 2015); Qantas (Qantas, 2014); South African Airways (SAA, 2014), and China Airlines (China Airlines, 2015), among others.

From the findings of the study, the stakeholders interviewed had quite a number of significant issues that could create potential value for the company. What is apparently missing is the mechanism for listening to stakeholders on organizational and operational matters in order that the company could address these stakeholder expectations and enhance and expand engagement of stakeholders in their sustainability reporting.

5.7. Stakeholder Relations Model

Based on the findings and discussions, new insights into the dynamics of factors that shape stakeholder relations during strategic planning have emerged here. The usefulness of the theoretical framework presented in Figure 11 is that it served as an initial guide on how stakeholder relationship is understood on the basis of the literature reviewed. In view of the lived experiences of the stakeholders investigated in the study, a stakeholder relations model is hereby presented in Figure 15 which is based on the findings of the study. In this regard, the model is a synthesis of the findings and serves as the contribution of the study to the existing pool of knowledge on stakeholder relations. In coming up with the model the researcher modified the theoretical framework in Figure 11

to reflect the salient features borne out of the findings pertinent to understanding stakeholder relations during strategic planning.

It has to be noted that Figure 11 is a framework synthesized from given concepts and theories in the literature review, hence is largely theoretical and heuristic in nature. Figure 14 generally retains the general logic of the theoretical framework but its features are more grounded in the context of the study. It is obvious from the general structure of the model that the dynamics of stakeholder relations still revolve around the three major elements: company, stakeholders, and strategic planning.

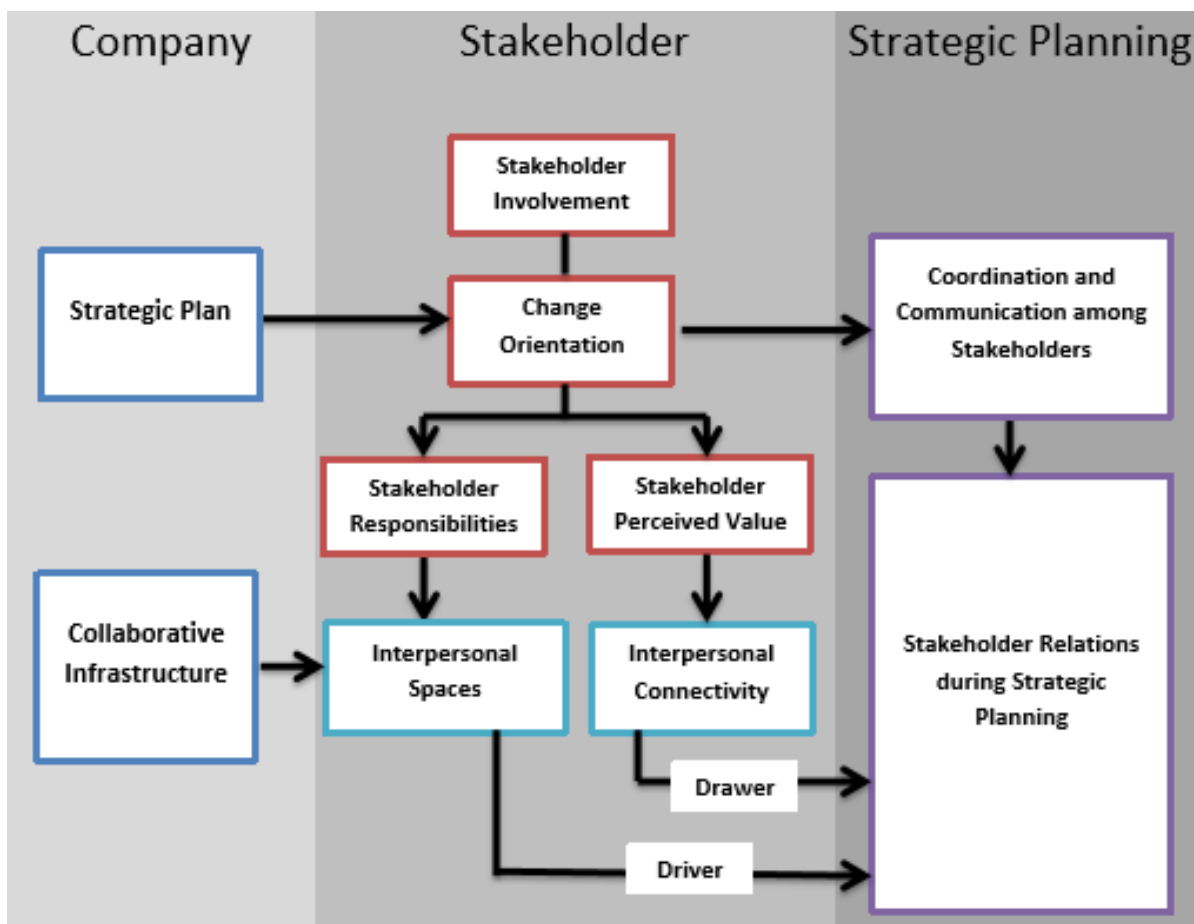


Figure 15. Relations of Stakeholders during Strategic Planning

With regards to the company, it is reported in the findings that the company strategic plan is formulated by top management, but it is also evident that the company allows room for others below top management levels to participate in the process. This points to three given realities: the existence of a company strategic plan, the involvement of middle level executives, and the provision of a collaborative infrastructure for planning. Stakeholder involvement is borne out of the company's change orientation endemic to the strategic plan and the need seen by stakeholders to introduce changes in the plan as reflected in section 5.2.6. This will determine the extent to which they communicate and coordinate with each other during the planning process.

The change orientation among stakeholders is expressed in terms of the responsibilities of stakeholders that they bring to the table during the planning process (section 5.1) as well as the inherent value of strategic planning that they perceive (section 5.2). The collaborative infrastructure provided by the company serves as an interpersonal platform or space where stakeholders meet and interact while discharging their responsibilities during strategic planning as well as an opportunity that facilitates connectivity.

The roles and responsibilities of stakeholders drive them to interrelate with each other and the perceived inherent value of planning draws them to interact with each other during the planning process. Together with the extent and quality of coordination and communication, the drivers and the drawers determine the relationships that take place during strategic planning.

On the whole, the model highlights the streams of thought pursued in the study that relationships result from what transpires, happens, or occurs during strategic planning and from the inherent connectivity that results from the social nature of individuals involved in the planning process. The former is on account of the responsibilities of the stakeholders and the latter on account of the inherent value that stakeholders place on strategic planning. The quality and extent of stakeholder relations, however, is moderated by extent and quality of coordination and communication before and during the planning process.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the answers to the research questions, how the research objectives were addressed, the lessons learned and recommendations, and the limitations and direction of future research.

6.1. Conclusion

To reiterate, this study aim is to examine the perceived relationship among the stakeholders during the strategic planning process. Based on the aim of the study, the study answers the following research questions:

1. How do stakeholders understand their responsibilities in strategic planning based on their lived experiences?
2. How do stakeholders perceive the importance of communication and coordination to their relations during the strategic planning process?
3. How do the stakeholders' expectations shape the challenges faced by the company and their relations during strategic planning?

Based on the research questions, the study attains the following research objectives:

1. To draw out insights into how stakeholders of an airline industry understand their responsibilities as lived experiences in their company's strategic planning process.

2. To analyse the meaning of stakeholder relationship from the frame of coordination and communication during strategic planning.
3. To explore the challenges to stakeholder relations faced by a company emanating from the stakeholders' expectations during strategic planning.

The study used the qualitative method of research which employed inductive content analysis, narrative analysis, and phenomenology to answer the research questions and attain the objectives of the study. Accordingly, the following conclusions were drawn. With regards to the research question on the extent to which stakeholders understand their responsibilities in strategic planning based on their lived experiences, the study concludes that stakeholders perceive a plethora of responsibilities that have significant upward and downward influences during strategic planning. Upward influence has something to do with the influence of stakeholders on top management through the exercise of their responsibilities in looking at future strategies of the organization. Accordingly, stakeholders have the potential to alter the course of strategic planning by providing top management with unique interpretations of emerging issues and by proposing new initiatives. Downward influence reflects how the responsibilities of stakeholders align organizational arrangements within the strategic context. Downward influence makes stakeholders become change agents, fostering adaptability and implementing deliberate strategy, bringing organizational action in line with company strategy. This downward influence also reflects the responsibilities of stakeholders to promote learning and increases the ability to respond to change. On the whole, the responsibilities of managers come in both directions, exist in many forms, and take on several modes. The diversity of responsibilities covers the broad range of process as well as organizational concerns.

These are not mutually exclusive but rather complement and supplement the responsibilities of other stakeholders during the planning process.

Stakeholders perceive the value of strategic planning in terms of the benefits that it offers in (a) making the future happen, (b) establishing targets and directions, (c) making rational business decisions, (d) fostering the longevity of business, (e) attaining differentiation, (f) increasing profitability, and (g) learning in the process. The advantages are organizational, operational, competitive, and economic but also personal in the sense that the participants are able to share and learn in the process. This is reflected in the variety of topics discussed during strategic planning which are interrelated and relate to the broader strategic landscape. These are also consistent with the value of strategic planning described that coincides with the responsibilities expressed by the respondents. The diversity in the topics discussed also implies that not all of these are taken up in a single session but are recalled topics possibly in various sessions attended by the participants. It is noted that the respondents failed to present a common agenda in planning which shows that the company allows the bottom-up flow of information regarding topics for discussion in strategic planning. Based on these, the stakeholders perceive that communication is very important and vital to the coordination among stakeholders.

With regards to the research question on the perception of stakeholders on the importance of communication and coordination to their relations during the strategic planning process, the study concludes that there is a consensus among stakeholders on the general importance of the relational benefits of coordination and communication. Real

time coordination and communication with external stakeholders is differentially perceived within the range of poor to excellent. Likewise, there is differential perception of the relational importance of communication in terms of organizational context. Whether the coordination among stakeholders is perceived as excellent or poor, the bottom line is that stakeholder relations in the company remains a challenge.

With regards to the research question on how the stakeholders' perceived expectations shape the challenges faced by a company during strategic planning, the study concludes that stakeholders have multiple expectations of the company strategic plan and the strategic planning process which raises multi-faceted challenges to the company along the perceived changes that are needed in terms of strategy, responsiveness, readiness, coordination, communication, partnership, procedures, transparency, alignment, technology and infrastructure, and culture. These would have significant implications for the quality of stakeholder relationships during strategic planning. The challenges perceived by the stakeholders can serve as a point of convergence that would draw them to act and interact during phases of strategic planning designed to address such issues.

Based on the findings of the study, the research objectives are addressed as follows.

The first objective which is to draw out insights into how stakeholders of an airline industry understand their responsibilities as lived experience in their company's strategic planning process is addressed in Chapter 4 sections 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3. Section 4.1 presents the stakeholders' perceptions of their responsibilities in strategic planning. Accordingly, the stakeholders perceive a variety of responsibilities that they bring to the table during their company's strategic planning process. These responsibilities stem from the different roles

played by stakeholders in relation to strategic planning either in the airline or airport. To support the perception of stakeholders of their responsibilities, section 4.2 describes how the stakeholders perceive the value of strategic planning while section 4.3 identifies the topics that are discussed during strategic planning. In section 4.2, it is inferred from the category of answers given by the participants that strategic planning in their company is valuable and advantageous because it enhances momentum by achieving effectiveness, support, and ultimately survival. Planning also enhances organizational performance by attaining organizational efficiency and adaptability. It encourages innovation through problem-solving and exploration, and it enhances profitability and growth through sustained partnership and economic viability. In section 4.3, the variety of topics taken up during strategic planning ranging from the most general, such as company survival, to the most specific, such as individual deliverables, reflect on the variety of responsibilities performed by stakeholders during strategic planning.

The second objective which is to analyze the meaning of stakeholder relationship from the frame of coordination and communication during strategic planning is addressed in sections 4.4 and 4.5. Section 4.4 deals with coordination among stakeholders and section 4.5 describes the role of communication in strategic planning. Regarding coordination, it is apparent that the participants are clear on who their internal and external stakeholders are. It was found that different stakeholders expressed their perception of the extent of coordination differently. The absence of consensus among stakeholders on this indicates that coordination is an on-going challenge among the stakeholders. In section 4.5, there is consensus among stakeholders that communication plays a vital role in strategic planning and they also identified communication constraints that can impede coordination. On

whole, it is inferred that the relationship among stakeholders can be further improved by improving coordination and communication.

The third objective which is to explore the challenges faced a company emanating from the stakeholders' expectations during strategic planning, is addressed in section 4.6 that identifies the perceived changes needed in strategic planning. Accordingly, the changes perceived by the stakeholders generally reflect changes in the culture of the company which can be driven by changes in strategy, process, stakeholder relations, and infrastructure and technology. This is supported by the findings in section 4.2 on the role of strategic planning, section 4.3, the topics taken up during strategic planning, section 4.4 coordination in strategic planning, and section 4.5 the role of communication in strategic planning.

On the whole, strategic planning serves as a platform that allows stakeholders to relate with each other both on a formal and informal level. The relationship at the formal level is based on the responsibilities that the stakeholders have in the planning process due to the specific roles that they have in the company. On the informal level, stakeholders relate with each other because they see the inherent value of their relationship to the success of the company. While they are driven to relate on the formal level, they are drawn to interact on the informal level where the strategic planning process acts as a vehicle for interpersonal connectivity. Hence the model reflects that stakeholders are both drawn and driven to inter-relate with each other during the planning process. This affirms what Giles, et al. (2012) cited regarding the perspectives on stakeholder relationships. The first is relationship as something that happens among stakeholders and the second is relationship

as connectivity. The view of relationships as something that happens among stakeholders presumes the creation of interpersonal spaces, gaps, or openings, which serve as apertures for relational events to occur. In these spaces, relationships take the form of exchanges from one person to the other in the form of interactions and transactions (Giles, et al., 2012). The view of relationship as connectivity shifts the attention from the functionality of spaces between people (as espoused by the first view) to an inherent connectedness that is integral to human interactions. This tends to nurture the wholeness of the stakeholders through a genuine concern for their relationships (Gibbs, 2006). When these relationships are re-framed within the context of the participants' experiences, then attention shifts to the interconnectedness of the many shared relationships that exist in everyday experience (Palmer, 1997).

The findings revealed not only how the stakeholders perceived the significance of strategic planning but also the need for greater coordination among stakeholders. The stakeholders see the inherent value of strategic planning in terms of its influence in driving efficiency, effectiveness, excellence and competitiveness. The various stakeholders perceive that the strategic planning can address some of the most important emerging challenges borne out of their lived experiences in the company. These can be generally summed up as follows:

1. The need to re-examine business strategy in the light of the change in business model.
2. The need for the right match of products and services with destination
3. The need to look at the "big picture" in the midst of the company's growth and expansion.

4. The need to maintain a pro-active stance and a posture of readiness to respond to uncertainty.
5. Improving coordination and communication with external and internal stakeholders
6. Sustaining partnership with stakeholders
7. The need for greater transparency among stakeholders
8. The need for greater alignment of the major stakeholder groups with corporate strategy
9. The need to leverage information technology for information sharing among stakeholders
10. Co-planning with other stakeholders

6.2. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

In retrospect, the purpose of the study is to understand “what is actually happening” in a company that shapes relationships during strategic planning using the actual perspectives and views of stakeholders. The study demonstrates that their responsibilities, their views on strategic planning, and the topics discussed during the process either drive and draw stakeholders to interrelate with each other and from these relations, challenges to the company and their relationships are surfaced. The study is qualitative hence is largely descriptive. The findings, however, compensate for the lack of detailed information on what really goes on during strategic planning. Whereas the literature is replete on the

importance of stakeholders and their relations during the strategic management processes, it simply stops there. The study extends this by demonstrating the real-time situation of what goes on in a company. Furthermore, quantitative studies done on stakeholders mostly speak of measuring causal relations and effects or coming up with empirically validated models. While an end in and of itself, these models are of little utility. What these models contribute is theoretical soundness and soundness of statistical logic that lack the political correctness of being groundedness to real events. This I find is the advantage of qualitative research since most quantitative studies after all recommend further qualitative validation of theory or models developed.

Turning now to the results of the study, stakeholders were found to perceive a variety of responsibilities that they bring to the table during strategic planning. Their responsibilities stem from a cross-section of organizational concerns and relate to the different aspects of the planning process. Stakeholders are in agreement on the importance of strategic planning, which is largely shaped by the perceived organizational, operational, competitive, economic, and personal benefits derived. They also reported a variety of topics taken up during strategic planning which largely reflects on their differential participation in the planning process, i.e., at different times and at different levels of planning. The lessons learned from the perceived responsibilities of the stakeholders during strategic planning projects the image of the organization as a collective embodiment of stakeholder voices that need to be amplified. Furthermore the perceived responsibilities recast the view of stakeholders as potential active legitimate partners in organizational sense-making. In this respect, multilateral dialogue enabled by multi-lateral contracting paves the way for meaningful stakeholder relationships.

In relation to the perceived importance of coordination and communication among stakeholders, the study found that the stakeholders are in agreement regarding the general importance of the relational benefits of coordination and communication but have differential perceptions of real-time coordination and communication in their company. Likewise, stakeholders have differential perceptions on the context of the relational importance of communication during strategic planning. Based on these findings, a lesson learned has to do with the necessity of institutionalizing responsive organizational listening methods to address multiple stakeholder voice mechanisms that would enable greater sense of relationship within a collaborative network. Furthermore, there is a need to factor in a functional stakeholder strategy for multi-lateral and inter-stakeholder dialogue to enable greater collaboration in organizations.

In consonance with the expectations of stakeholders of their company strategic plan, the findings show that stakeholders have multiple expectations of the company strategic plan and the strategic planning process which raises multi-faceted challenges to the company along the perceived changes that are needed in the plan. What can be learned from this is that the expectations of stakeholders of the strategic plan recast their role from mere participants in the planning process to potential joint partners in value co-production in co-planning the future of their company.

Based on the lessons learned from the results of the investigation, this study recasts certain key notions on stakeholder relations as its contribution to the existing stakeholder discourse. It will be recalled that one of the research gaps identified in the study is that

stakeholder relations discussed in the literature is more on the relationship of stakeholders and the organization which is represented by its management with its stakeholders and less on the relationship of stakeholders with other or fellow stakeholders. In this respect, the study deduced the notion of relationship as multi-lateral inter-stakeholder dialogue that is enabled by different forms of connected knowing. This entails the institutionalization of organizational listening platforms for its multi-voiced stakeholders to facilitate joint action over organizational concerns. This will shift the mode of relational contracting from a bilateral to a multi-lateral one. It will be recalled that the airline and airport investigated form a tripartite relationship with the government that owns both entities. Due to the specific nature and function of the airport and airline, the mode of transaction with the government is bilateral. The potential for stakeholder relations to be driven and drawn during strategic planning in the company adds another dimension of relational contracting thus making it multilateral.

In prospect, the findings offer several advantages that serve as its contribution to new knowledge. First, the findings are largely from an insider's perspective hence provide fresh insights from 'inside-out.' This overcomes the limitations of other studies that draw insiders' views but largely from questionnaires or instruments prepared by an outsider. Second, the phenomenological nature of the study allowed the 'voice' of the participants to be amplified in the way they understood and that meant what they said. Hence, the data are authentic, which lends reliability and validity to the findings. Third, the findings being authentic, fresh, and grounded constitutes a qualitative database of a real-time situation that can lend itself to the development of indicators that could be tested using quantitative research. The proposed model in itself could also be a good stimulus for

quantitative inquiry. Fourth, relations among people are governed by sociological and psychological factors. It occurs in a particular social setting that involves not only knowledge but feelings. I believe this was demonstrated in the study which can stimulate a deeper multidisciplinary inquiry into stakeholder relations hence providing a more holistic perspective on stakeholder relations. Most of what shapes the stakeholder–shareholder debate are external political, economic, social, and legal factors, which largely factors out the internal, subjective, and psychological factors. Fifth, the study contributes fresh insights into how the responsibilities of stakeholders and how they look at the importance of strategic planning help shape their relations. These are factors that have not been thoroughly explored in the literature. Sixth, the challenges faced by stakeholders during strategic planning can highlight the significance of competency-based or motivation-oriented planning. As it is, in the literature, strategic planning models are largely process-based. Even the best written plans can fail if they do not consider the competence and motivation of those who are supposed to be key actors in the planning process. Lastly, the findings of the study contribute pragmatic knowledge to planners, decision-makers, stakeholders, and researchers because the findings are deliverables in themselves. A reader can surely pick up a thing or two that they can relate to. This is in contrast to statistically defined findings and models which have high theoretical value but low value in terms of practical application.

Better stakeholder relations can either be an antecedent or consequence in addressing the various challenges faced by the company. In this regard, the study recommends the following:

1. Enhance the collaborative infrastructure. Collaborative infrastructure refers not only to the physical and technological but also the social infrastructure that would stimulate greater stakeholder interaction and involvement. This would be tantamount to creating interactional and transactional spaces and listening methods that would facilitate greater connectivity and learning among stakeholders.

2. Strengthen stakeholder management system. Undoubtedly, different business units within the airline industry have their own system of managing their stakeholders. What needs to be institutionalized is a centralized management system of the major stakeholder groups of the company. This system would oversee the overall dynamics of stakeholder management that would optimise the engagement of stakeholders in the company's strategic activities. This system is driven by the dynamics of stakeholder inclusion, materiality, and company responsiveness.

3. Exercise greater corporate social responsibility. The notion of corporate social responsibility in line with the concept of Thulkanam (2014) which integrates the various inputs of stakeholders in order that the company will have greater account of its impact on society. This move would give greater importance to stakeholder engagement and their relations with the company and with other stakeholders as well. This entails an integrated stakeholder engagement plan that sets the goals for stakeholder engagement and action plans for realizing these. In this manner, the company can keep track and report on the mechanisms and results of these engagements in improving sustainability.

4. Engage stakeholders in value co-creation. As shown by the findings, stakeholders exercise numerous responsibilities during the planning process and at the same time give greater importance to the activity. Other than these, the stakeholders also see the need for changes in the company which can be addressed by the strategic plan. These are positive and potential drivers which can be leveraged to create greater value for the company.

5. Incorporate stakeholder valuing. The trajectory of growth of the company investigated in the study shows that its orientation is not individualistic and solely profit-oriented but rather is inclined towards collectivism as indicated by its various partnerships. This gives it a great potential to practice stakeholder valuing. Accordingly, collectivist organizations that place a high value on stakeholders would in turn get the best value from its stakeholders. In stakeholder valuing, the value of stakeholders is measured and reflected in their financial and non-financial disclosures. When stakeholders feel that they are valued by the company, this would greatly enhance their relational orientations.

On the whole, these recommendations focus on creating a better organizational climate regime for stakeholder to get involved with other stakeholders and would be highly supportive of the stakeholder relations model proposed by the study.

The proposed model would find its significance and application not only in the study context but also in the Gulf region where the big three airlines companies are located, and also the rest of the countries in the Arab world where the growth of air travel has been accelerating through the years. It has to be noted that the air transport industry in the

Gulf and other Arab counties are localized only in terms of context but are globalized and internationalized in terms of personality and practice. In this respect, the study context more or less typifies the state of the air transport industry in the region which makes the adaptation of the model to the regional context tenable and feasible.

6.3. Limitations and Future Directions

The researcher experienced a number of limitations that influenced the course of the study. Time availability imposed an initial constraint to data gathering as the common time between the researcher and the participants for interviews did not always coincide which created gaps in the otherwise desirable continuous interview plan. This stretched the timeline for interviews and constricted the time for data processing and data reduction. Another limitation was data reduction itself because the large number of interviews demanded so much time for data processing. The dearth of local research on the topic also imposed a limitation to the study as well as on the methodology used. The generic nature of qualitative tools likewise imposed a limitation because the protocols for analysis are not as specific compared to those used in qualitative studies.

The researcher sees the future direction of the research in terms of using the knowledge generated to come up with a valid instrument that can be used in the quantitative mode to quantitatively verify the findings. The researcher believes that quite a range of significant descriptive material is covered in the study that can be a basis for the development of an instrument that measures stakeholder relations, develops hypotheses, and validates theory.

Epilogue

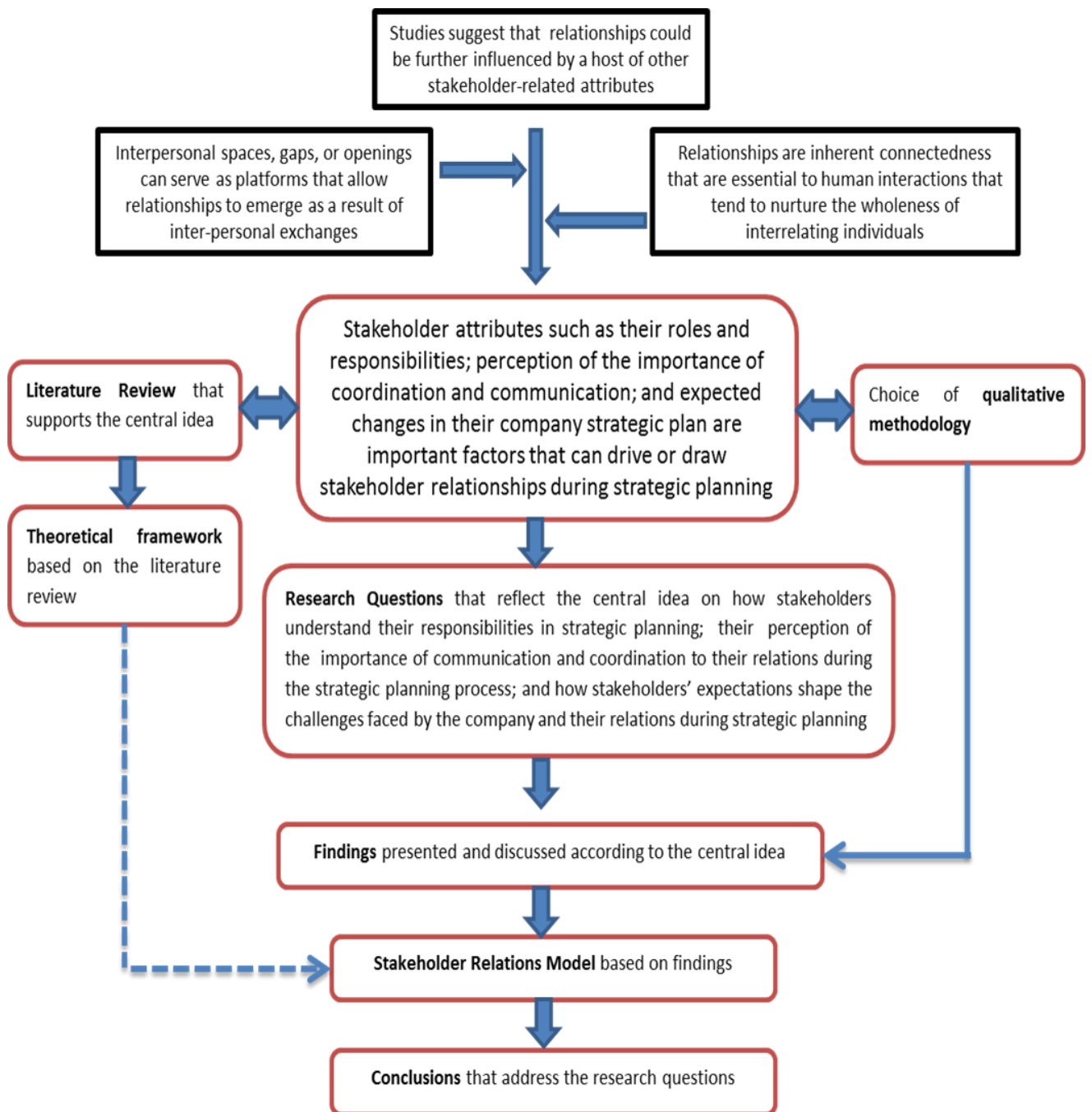
As I reflect on my experience and the outcome of my study, I look back at what was always asked of me when I was writing my report: the golden thread. Although different writers define the golden thread in a number of ways, the bottom line is that it represents the central argument of the study. So what is my central argument that holds the various parts of the study together?

I cited that my readings on stakeholder relations revealed that relationships can be drawn or driven. Since these were not mutually exclusive, I have to add that relationships can be both drawn and driven. Furthermore it was suggested that relationships could be influenced by a host of stakeholder-related attributes other than those found in existing literature. I searched outside the attributes identified in the literature and argued that "stakeholder-related attributes such as the roles and responsibilities, perceptions on the importance of communication and coordination, and expectations of changes needed in the company strategic plan are equally important factors that can drive or draw stakeholder relationships during the planning process". Accordingly, this became the central idea which I reflected in the research questions and objectives.

The literature review supported this argument with the essential concepts and also influenced my decision to draw out answers to the research questions based on the lived experience of the respondents hence I chose to do the study using the qualitative method. Since I used the interview, the questions asked explored the perceptions of the participants on their roles and responsibilities, importance of communication and coordination, and expectations of changes needed in the strategic plan which were consistent with the central argument. Accordingly, the perceptions of the participants were

analyzed, presented, and discussed arguing that the stakeholder attributes are essential factors that can shape the relationship of stakeholders during strategic planning. From what was found in the study, it became clear that the responsibilities of stakeholders drive them to participate, get involved, and interact during the planning process. In the same manner, how they perceived communication and coordination coupled with their expectations either drew them apart or drew them closer to interact. With this it comes full circle to the central argument. The following diagram illustrates the foregoing flow of ideas described.

Figure 16. Visualizing the Golden Thread



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APPENDIX A: Communications



Research Graduate School
University Square Luton
Bedfordshire LU1 3JU
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rgs@beds.ac.uk
www.beds.ac.uk

Name: Mr. Mohammed Abdulla Saeed Salem Al Awaini Al Khatheeri

Nationality: Emirati

To Whom It May Concern

Dear Sir or Madam,

Mr. Mohammed Abdulla Saeed Salem Al Awaini Al Khatheeri

Qualification Aim: PhD

Student Ref: 1132277

Course Type: Postgraduate Research

Passport Number: A2187657

Route of Study: Adult Student

Visa Number: 026022059

Actual Start Date: 11th June 2012

End Date: 10th June 2015

Mode of Study: Full Time

Campus: Luton

Director of Studies: Dr. Rodolphe Odier

Mr. Mohamed Abdulla Saeed Salem Al Awaini Al Khatheeri is currently a student enrolled on an MPhil/PhD degree in the Business and Management Institute here at the University of Bedfordshire.

The subject of his research is *(The Interaction Challenges between Strategic Planning in Etihad Airways and Abu Dhabi Airport Infrastructure)*.

Mr. Mohamed Abdulla Saeed Salem Al Awaini Al Khatheeri has confirmed he will be leaving the UK on 21st October 2012 to go to United Arab Emirates for data collection. During this time he will visit several government agencies/companies in order to gather the require information, references and conduct interviews that will support his study. He will be returning to the UK on 28th November 2012.

This has been approved by the student's supervisor as indicated above.

Yours Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim Porter".

Ms Kim Porter

Research Officer

kim.porter@beds.ac.uk

University of
Bedfordshire
Research
Graduate
School



Registered Office
University Square Luton
Bedfordshire LU1 3JU
England

Vice-Chancellor
Bill Ramsell

11 May 2011

To: Whom it may concern

Subject: Mohammed Al Katheeri

Dear Sir/Madam,

This letter serves to confirm Mr. Mohammed Al Katheeri is currently enrolled in Study of Doctorate in Business Administration.

Mr. Mohammed is required to complete assignments in relation to his studies and therefore, we would be grateful for your support in his research. He will require assistance in the below areas for successful completion of his assignments:

- Corporate Strategy
- Corporate Communications
- Finance
- Technical
- HR

Your assistance is highly appreciated.

Thanking you,

Sincerely,



Wissam Hachem
Head of Emiratization & Corporate Development

Mohamed Abdulla Al Katheeri

From: Mohamed Abdulla Al Katheeri
Sent: Tuesday, March 10, 2015 11:40 AM
To: 'masalkatheeri@adac.ae'
Subject: PhD Interviews - Mohamed Al Katheeri
Attachments: Mohamed Al Katheeri Guarantee Letter From Etihad Airways.pdf; Interview Grid - Mohamed Al Katheeri.doc

Importance: High

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Due By: Wednesday, March 11, 2015 10:30 AM
Flag Status: Flagged

Categories: Green Category

Dear Mohamed,

It was my pleasure to speak with you last time regarding my PhD thesis.

As you know I got my scholarship from Etihad Airways Management to study PhD as per the (First Attached PDF File) and my thesis title is : "The Relationship among the Internal and External Stakeholders during Strategic Planning Implementation: Challenges Faced by Organization".

Initially when I was thinking about the concept of my PhD thesis and for that reason I met some of EY/ADAC staff before three years who enabled me to reach to my thesis concept and the common outcome from those very short meetings was about " the obstacles that Etihad Airways & Abu Dhabi Airport faced when the Airline established"

I explained to my professor that both of (Etihad Airways & Abu Dhabi Airport) are owned by Abu Dhabi government and they are working under the umbrella of (Abu Dhabi Executive Council) & all of these government entities are working together to meet Abu Dhabi Vision 2030.

In my PhD study I am using qualitative research method which employed as an in depth analysis that required to find answers to the research questions. The purpose of this research is the acquisition of new knowledge on the relationship among stakeholders during strategic planning implementation. Qualitative methods are ideal for exploring aspects related to strategic planning as it focuses on an individual's experience and description of life situations in an organization. Sampling is one of the critical requirements of the qualitative approach and it has been designed/assigned to me to do the interviews with 90 key managers (40 internal stakeholders from Etihad Airways and 50 external stakeholders- From Abu Dhabi Airport & Abu Dhabi Executive Council). In addition I have to use the focus groups technique as a second method to collect the data to gain insights into stakeholder relationships and to check the outcomes of the

face to face interviews. Focus group is a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers, so that the interaction takes place within the group based on the topics that are supplied by researchers.

The outcomes of my thesis will be only as a recommendations that will be presented to the government entities as mentioned above and it's consider as the first study occur in Abu Dhabi regarding this topic because no one else wrote about this subject in the past. All of this eventually will be an added value to Abu Dhabi.

Please find below the requirements of my PhD study:

- 1- The support to achieve these interviews - because without your support & believe on the idea of this thesis it would be so difficult for me to attain it.
- 2- List of the **expert** staff (who lived the starting years of Etihad Airways from 2004-2009) working in ADAC various department and they were communicated with Etihad staff for (Ops, passengers, facilities, ground servicing, , immigration issues..ect) with their name, title, email, mobile number, office number & data/time/location of interview. This can be provided by the administrator as mentioned below (point #3).
- 3- **One focal administrator from ADAC to support me if I need any assistance related to my vast mission on my shoulders and to save your time and inputs in the future & to arrange the meetings, the location & the master sheet of the staff details.**

I will be very gratitude to have a dedicated meeting room in ADAC to do all of these interviews base on the suitable time of the staff who I am going to interview them at any time between (9 AM-1 PM) everyday because after that time I have to handle my department responsibilities.

Note: I am available between 15- 29 March 2015, then I have to go back to my University in UK to meet my Professors and that will be between 30 March - 7 April 2015 and then I will come back and can resume the rest of the interviews.

Kindly find the other attached File of the interview questions that I would like to ask the staff during the interview. Please note that these questions have been designed and agreed with my two professors in according with the principles of the PhD methodology, they will find the questions are broadly and open

but within the staff answers I will ask them sub questions that are relative to the main topic to make the questions explicable and simple for them to answer.

Appreciate your kind feedback/support at your earliest & many thanks for your collaboration.

Best Regards,

Mohamed Al Katheeri

Mohamed Al Katheeri
Head of Aircraft Warranty and Guarantee

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The National Airline of the United Arab Emirates

APPENDIX B: Sample Consent Form

Consent for Participation in Interview Research

I am THOMAS NOLAN, a HEAD OF MIDFIELD PROGRAM
(Name) (Position)

With 7 of working experience with Etihad Airline.
(No. of years)

I have been invited to participate as an interviewee in this PhD study entitled, *The Relationship among the Internal and External Stakeholders during Strategic Planning Implementation: Challenges Faced by Organization*, I am aware that Mohamed Al Katheeri, the principal researcher of this study, is a student of

_____ in _____
(Name of University) (Location)

I understand that this study is being conducting solely for academic purposes pursuant to the partial fulfillment of his PhD degree.

After having been thoroughly briefed by the principal researcher about the nature and purpose of the study I declare that I was made to understand that:

- a. I will not be paid for my participation.
- b. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
- c. Neither I nor my company will be held liable in any way should I decline to participate or withdraw my participation.
- d. I find the topic interesting and thought provoking but should I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
- e. The duration of the interview will not exceed one hour.
- f. Notes will be taken during the interview and the session will be an audio taped.
- g. The researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.
- h. Executives, managers and other employees will neither be present at the interview nor have access to field notes or transcripts. This precaution will prevent my individual comments from having any negative repercussions.
- i. I will be given a copy of this consent form.

Wherefore, I have understood all the explanation provided to me and I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction. I hereby signify my voluntary participate in this study.

Thomas Nolan
My Signature
THOMAS NOLAN
My Printed Name

6/13/2015
Date
[Signature]
Signature of the Investigator

For further information, please contact:

APPENDIX C: Interview Guide

Name: _____ Department: _____

Position: _____ No. of Yrs. With Etihad: _____

1. I would be glad to know you first of all, your background, roles and responsibilities, and when did you join Etihad Airways.
2. Could you please describe the structure of your organization starting from your own department.
3. Please describe to me your responsibilities in strategic planning.
4. How valuable is strategic planning to your department and organization?
5. Please tell me who your internal and external stakeholders are and to what extent are you involved with other organizational units in discussing the strategic plan?
6. I would just like to pose a theoretical question. Suppose you are planning to buy a luxury car but the road leading to your garage is just so damaged that it will entail a higher daily maintenance cost for your vehicle. Will you pursue your plan of buying the car or will you delay buying the car until which time that the municipality fixed the damaged road?
7. Let us reflect on your answer in terms of the airline-airport relationship. What do you think of the airline-airport relationship in terms of coordination?
8. How important is communication to this relationship?
9. What are your expectations of the strategic plan in your organization if this were to be updated/upgraded? What key changes would you like to see?
10. What are the more important lessons learned from the relationship of stakeholders with your department/organization.

APPENDIX D: Sample Interview Transcript

Etihad Airways – Operations – AAS 15-2-2015

Interviewer: Good Morning. First of all allow me to thank you for accepting this invitation and it's really a pleasure for me to meet you. Initially, I will be happy if you can introduce yourself to me, your ex-background, and when did you join

Etihad Airways and what is your current role and responsibilities.

Interviewee: My name is AAS. I joined Etihad Airways on 4th of January 2007. I joined Etihad Airways from Gulf Air. I used to be head of the airports and I worked with Gulf Air for about 7 years. Before Gulf Air, I used to be a customer service manager on British Airways for 4 years and before that was Gulf Air again. My total experience on the aviation as an airport operation man since 1989 January. All my experience works on airport operations from A-Z. I used to work as a customer service agent at check in counters until the date now. Currently, I'm now handling in Etihad Airways all the new station start-ups and that's only the perspective of ground services where I make sure that the airports are ready from the day announcement by the CEO that the airport is ready for the operations. I make sure that I work closely with ops planning to make sure that everything goes smooth with day number 1. So we talk about logistically. What I'm looking for is the logistic part of it which is I need to look into the airport readiness as there are so many aspects that need to be looked at the airport from frontline connectivity to the back office connectivity onto logistics, manpower, training. I need to coordinate all of these stuffs together.

Interviewer: Okay, so you're current title is.

Interviewee: Manager – airport operation development.

Interviewer: Out station or internally?

Interviewee: Internally, airport ops.

Interviewer: Development. Okay, **could you briefly describe the structure of your organization starting from your own department and to the bigger umbrella?**

Interviewee: Okay, we are headed by Chris Youlten as VP airports on network operations and then we have GM ground services which is Paul Smith, and then we go into ground services support division. The regularization which is we are currently existing at the moment. We have different elements where under Paul we have 3 areas which is systems developments which Chris Chance, Susannah Le Bron which is ground services support and then comes in to Brandon with ops support. And then we come under Susannah where we do all the logistics for back office functions for airports.

Interviewer: Susannah who is the old bridge lady?

Interviewee: No, she is Australian who just recently joined us 6 months ago.

Interviewer: Okay, recently joined. And **what do you think are your**

responsibilities in strategic planning? We know that strategic planning is wide-ranged. It will come to our table as a mission or task to achieve it to meet the strategic plan of our top management. So what is your responsibility? It will be great if you sustain your answer with some example to make it simple.

Interviewee: Okay, strategic wise, the main element strategically within ground services support or ground services function is finance. Financially, usually our department is bearing money more than saving money. We bear money because we are establishing a new business. Now, strategically, from my point of view, how smartly you can walk to reduce the cost. Not must, sometimes it needs to work within a budget specifically. However now, every year we get starter into how we can tackle an element and reduce the cost.

Interviewer: Is there any real example at least.

Interviewee: Okay for example we will be starting a new station now with all our business partners coming in aboard, this new idea coming aboard. Instead of we go and build up an office, we go and say, "Okay, can't we join the office of our business partner?" And instead of bearing up 800 dirhams of building that office, we can build quarter that amount or half that amount and sit down with them within the same area because we are one body, one company as an Etihad group. So if they have the space and they have the infrastructure, we can ask them, "Okay, can we go ahead and sit down with you guys instead of fronting an office and fitting an office." It's working properly in Los Angeles. It's working properly in Rome. It's working properly...

Interviewer: In Los Angeles which partner are we sitting with?

Interviewee: Virgin Australia. And in Rome, we are sitting with Alitalia. Madrid is coming up now on 29th of March. We're going to be sitting along with Alitalia office and instead of the burning the cost of 600,000 dirhams of fit-out. We'll be burning only 200,000 dirhams to sit down with Alitalia.

Interviewer: And is there any struggle from the other partner that are involve?

Interviewee: Of course because the set up of the office is being set for single use. Now, when you go in, you have to modify the sitting area because of HSA regulation (Health and Safety regulation) and you have to set up the IT cabling and service staff to suite 2 users instead of 1 user. We're happy to burn up the cost.

Interviewer: Yes, it's lower than building something from scratch.

Interviewee: However, now, we have constraint with legality behind us. See, sometimes in some stations they will say like in India, we tried to do that with Jet Airways, but the airport authority says, "No, you can't do that because of legality." Because they will consider Jet Airways is trying to subcontract the space to you and reality is not. We are sharing the space since we're having a part of that airline. But they don't understand this because we don't own the airline. Now, in Europe we don't have this issue. In the United States we don't have that issue because they understand the umbrella which is Etihad operates us. So it's working in some areas and some areas it doesn't work.

Interviewer: In India, I believe we reach Jet Airways before the airport or we reach the airport.

Interviewee: No, we speak first to the airline. If there's no objections from them as they are the landlord, the owned the list agreements, they go and talk to the airport authorities and then it comes either because in which bases we'll go and approach the authorities who's the landlord because if there is any modification that needs to happen to the airport or the office, it needs to come up a letter from the office leasing because the liability comes under that. They pay the guarantees. They pay everything. So they talk on our behalf and they do the talk too. Usually it doesn't really stop. The problem with Jet Airways in India is because they're having a current live court case of handlers, that's why they are stopped. However now, if you go to any other part where we operate and we go and seek that from them. Now, we are exploring that in Hong Kong which has been plotting on June, Jet Airways having a big space.

Interviewer: And they are willing also.

Interviewee: They have no issues, but at the moment, Jet Airways has no issues. Now, Jet Airways needs to go and talk to the airport authorities. Maybe airport authorities says, "No, we'll have the answer within this week," or say, "You can't." So in this case, we have to go to the other party.

Interviewer: Why can't we choose our power there. I mean embassy or something as unit of UAE body.

Interviewee: We don't really get them involved up to that stage. We get it into the stage of we talk to our business partners. If we feel the resistance happen from our business partner, so escalate to our executives. Our executives will speak to their executives and put it down. If it really needs the regulation by the airport operator, you can't change because that's obvious. I know you still can't change it, but we don't want to step in with a bad reputation

by squeezing hands.

Interviewer: Okay. I get your point. Okay, **in your opinion how does strategic planning exercise mean valuable to your department and your organization?** In another way of explaining, is there any task which came to your table and you achieved it and after that you monitor the outcomes and the performance of this project and you feel that it was really an added value and it was a good decision from our management to assign and achieve it?

Interviewee: Back again to sinking into our synergies and business partners. The idea of instead of having Virgin Australia, Air Berlin, Etihad Airways, Jet Airways all scattered around the terminal, the idea of working all under one roof, it was a very good idea. From handling agents, lounges, airport offices, and currently now, we are experiencing the manpower utilization.

Interviewer: Even though we paid a lot for the lounge?

Interviewee: Lounges always are really big areas to burn money. However now, that's a protocol and prestige. Now, if you see our cousin, Emirates, Emirates doesn't like to share the lounge with anyone. It's a protocol. It's a prestige. It depends into how financially and commercially we're looking into it. Are you looking into being talked about your brand, yourself? That's a different story. As soon as you share the space with someone else, you're scratching your back. And this not our call. This comes from higher. The executives make the call. Why does strategically the CEO decides, "We need a lounge in London by itself. We need a lounge in Washington?" He decides where the lounge needs to be build up by Etihad and then, sell it out to make some money. Again, we don't make the call. As an end user, we can suggest, "Yes, this is our findings."

Interviewer: That's scratch our brand we can say.

Interviewee: He makes some call.

Interviewer: Okay, but even though on the other side it's financial source to get a little bit of money from that function?

Interviewee: It's valuable, but running cost is still high to build up your own option and then sourcing the manpower to your lounge to maintain the maintenance for that lounge and then selling it out to any airline. It depends now how much variances or profit you look like looking into the account, I would like to charge that airline to come into my lounge. That plays a big different role.

Interviewer: Okay. You just mentioned starting point of sharing the space at the airport, so what about the selling tickets for example in Los Angeles? Not in the airport.

Interviewee: The direction Mohammed is the same.

Interviewer: The same even though without any sales in office in the mall or in the street if there is any availability?

Interviewee: As a principle idea, they should be having. If it's not happening, they should have a very good explanation why is it happening? The direction is very clear. Honestly sales up to my knowledge mark up to this stage now. But I think they will be forced at later stages because the city offices are a little bit different prestige wise. Your brands your look, the capacity. Behind the scene is basic fit out, basic things to be done because it's operations-based. Sales office is totally different because it's a public place where everyone can step in and feel the airline and the product. If you go to Emirates, Emirates always have a standard space allocation for airports like 250 square meters. Wherever you go around the globe, you will find that standard.

But this is definitely an executive direct strategy. City offices the same. Down town, on the main road of the city and this is how they market themselves. It depends into the executive.

Interviewer: This is a real brand. If you share your brand with another one, it will cover your brand and in some way it will fit into the picture.

Interviewee: It will, but again, at the end of the day, you will cascade what the executive call made to the reality is. Now, there are so many side effects of this cost wise. The lounge costs about 10 million, our own lounge. If we share lounge, could cost us 50%. If we go into a 3rd party lounge, it will cost us even more, but then again, the executive decision made and then we cascade.

Interviewer: Okay. You just mentioned something called sharing offices space at the airport. What are the similar ideas that we have?

Interviewee: The GHA. Like any ground handler handling. GHA (Ground Handling Agents). Let me give you a life example, that's is just happening and exercise at the moment. In Hong Kong when we are planning to go to Hong Kong on June, currently one of our business partner flies there too, Jet Airways and Air Seychelles. And instead of us going solo, negotiate with the GHA, we'll go into the GHA which is handling both airlines and tell them, "Now, you're handling this and you're rating him differently and you're

rating Jet Airways differently and you're going to be rating me differently will be joint handled 3 of us together and deal with us as one airline." So, definitely because of the frequency number, the cost will go down.

Interviewer: Yes, new business for them we can consider.

Interviewee: Absolutely, which at the moment, procurement part exercising us. In some stations it works. In some station again they will say you don't own them by 100%. You are only sharing part of them, will not be able to negotiate us. But majority are working well.

Interviewer: Okay. What else? What kind of idea?

Interviewee: Engineering the same. They're doing the same work in engineering. As an airport, yes, we're doing the same with engineering. We're doing the same with GHAs, cargo, airport officers, caterings. We go all as one team. We don't go as individuals. However now, if the GHA of the business partner airline has grown solo and did it himself and his contract is still valid, procurement will go and tell them, "Okay, when the times comes in and your contract expire, don't renew it, wait for us." And we'll do our contract accordingly when that will expire.

Interviewer: Okay, in that period, do we have to pay a daily payment?

Interviewee: Definitely no. It will work as a permanent contract, but instead of we contracting them for 3 years, we're contracting them for 1 year.

Interviewer: For the period that it will finish the other one?

Interviewee: Yes. Until that other party's contract is expiring, then accordingly, we will do it.

Interviewer: Okay, the second question. **So tell about how involved you are with other organizational unit or level in order to discuss the strategic plan?** For me, I will be happy to know who your internal stakeholder is within Etihad and who your external stakeholder is in the form of the airport or outstation of the immigration.

Interviewee: Externally, I don't have anyone directly interacting because of governance. We don't really interact with out bodies. It's only specialized especially because we really deal with money. So when it comes into contracts and money, we leave it to procurement. We'll facilitate. We'll give them our requirement and what are our needs. Accordingly, procurement will take it on both and accordingly, they will massage it according to the system. Internally, I interact with everyone within Etihad.

Mostly ops planning, network operations, network planning, quality

assurance, we talk about Abu Dhabi Airport itself. I'm talking about all external Abu Dhabi Airport. We don't deal with ADAC. ADAC deals with our teams in Abu Dhabi, but we need to make sure that everything is talked in the same length.

Interviewer: Okay, and if there is any joint project for example preparing a new destination, what are the different now working together with the internal stakeholders?

Interviewee: Everything, talking in the same language. We know that we need to look before me going outside and say, "Okay, I will take my office. I will do this. I will do that. I will do my intelligence first, how I can work with business partners, and how can I work it all together, and then pass it through to them to legalize it and as soon...

Interviewer: You mean approve from the approving department or legal or which one?

Interviewee: That's why from our side as an airport ops, we take it over to our buddy who is within the department called Peter Hewitt. Peter Hewitt will take it over to procurement and legal. And I will explain to him exactly what are the opportunities. Then, he explore it on both sides and then as soon as this is done, I will take it over and give it quality assurance. "Are you happy guys?" Because quality assurance talk to our buddy, GCA. So they will take, "Thumbs up. There are no issues. Go ahead grab this. We can do it." Because we are trying to minimize any findings and obstacles for the GCA saying, "You can't do this."

Interviewer: Okay now, we've reached to the **critical part** of this question. In the past, I did many interviews with many VPs and managers. Some of them, they have the aviation blood like you. Some of them, they have the financial background, the strategic planning background. So let them reach my target, I am giving you a simple example and ask them for example if Ayman would like to buy a luxury car which will cost him 700K, but in front of his home there is improper road which will cost him 5000 whenever he is driving in that road because of the maintenance service. Will Ayman buy that car or will he wait for the municipality to maintain that road? Yes or no. There is other choice.

Interviewee: This is a very difficult one. You mean if I buy the car, I have to take that car with a collated risk of really spending that much? If you go to meet personally, I will not buy it.

Interviewer: And this is the ideal answer because whenever you are driving in that road, it will cost you some money.

Interviewee: It will damage me. It will cost me more. If I look to it longer, this will cost me more.

Interviewer: Yes, within 3 months.

Interviewee: I will damage myself. I need to understand like at the end of the day, municipality is planning to do something, fine. When?

Interviewer: It would take time and then it's a grey area.

Interviewee: Grey area. So, I can't change my place?

Interviewer: But you have to buy it? The ideal answer is no, you are correct. Let us reflect this example to our relationship with the airport.

Interviewee: I do understand. See, the issue, if you're talking about ADAC, I came from Abu Dhabi Airport. I used to work in Abu Dhabi Airport for a long period.

Interviewer: Where?

Interviewee: I used to be airport manager Gulf Air. I used to be heading the Abu Dhabi Airport within Etihad from 2007.

Interviewer: But within ADAC body?

Interviewee: From 2007 until mid of 2008, I used to be heading Abu Dhabi Airport. The problem – I'm not trying to blame ADAC.

Interviewer: As an ADAC employee?

Interviewee: No, as an Etihad employee. The problem is, strategically with ADAC when we sat with other comp every day of developing that terminal before Terminal 3 comes up, we said, "Why are we building a terminal within this environment? Why don't we go for totally pure new terminal somewhere else?" We know that that there are issues within this terminal, example fog. Why do we choose to be within the same area where the fog is happening? We could choose somewhere else where we maintain our category of terminal and we move somewhere – I don't where is the space around here – but it's different. Next to anywhere where the fog risk is lower. There is no city around the terminal because as soon as the city builds up around the terminal, the category of the terminal goes down because of in case of emergency for the aircraft, the aircraft will crash into the city. So why are we doing this. At the end of the day, the big rulers who decides where to go where. We have explored it as Etihad and we cannot stop developing and get bigger because of some bout elements. Second runway or putting CAT IIIB into the terminal will not solve the problem. It will never solve the problem because anyway, you are exceeding the parameter of the terminal.

Now, we are expanding internally putting extra parking stand, putting extra boarding gates, putting extra chairs, but still we are above the parameter. Differently, if you see our neighbours, they are totally differently thinking about it. Now, the built up DWC.

Interviewer: DWC.

Interviewee: DWC will accommodate up to 120 million. Meanwhile, they are developing Dubai Emirates to maintain the 380 operation and their expansions and we can't do the same. Reasons? I have no idea. Since 1996 when I joined Abu Dhabi Airport Gulf Air, we are hearing about an airport coming up and we saw audit during his highness Sheikh Hamda and nothing happened. Reasons? I don't know.

Interviewer: For this study, I'm just highlighting one important concept that can be discussed where I can reach better, only for the interaction and communication channel. We know about the financial reason whatever it is which is behind our thoughts, but unfortunately this area because I can get real letter.

Interviewee: Okay, my question if you tell if I'm gonna buy the car, I might not be buying that car but I will downgrade my expectation of the car. Instead of buying it for 700K, I will go for a lower version.

Interviewer: Okay, let us reflect this example in relationship between airport and airline. We know that in the airline business, it's a unique business. If Ayman today went to airbus or Boeing and he would like to buy 20, 30, 50 aircrafts, they will tell you, "Ayman, okay you will get your aircrafts, but you have to wait." In the real life, the airport should utilize that waiting period to enhance its infrastructure, ground equipments, lighting the runway. A-Z, but that thing didn't happen. I am focusing on that area where we really that challenge with Abu Dhabi Airport which led them to build the temporary solution for Terminal 3. So, for example I will be happy to know about your vast experience in aviation and then let us speak typically about the relationship between EY and ADAC. **What do you think of airline-airport coordination relationship generally wise, generally speaking?**

Interviewee: Between us and ADAC?

Interviewer: No, before that, how it should be and how did you feel it in the real life from your vast experience?

Interviewee: Let me tell you Mohammed something. If tomorrow strategically Etihad was thinking about buying 50 aircrafts within the period of 20 years, I would share this information with this ADAC.

Interviewer: Definitely.

Interviewee: 100% and tell them, "I'm planning to buy this number of aircrafts, this type of aircrafts, total capacity of this passengers. How quickly can you build?" if they come to me talking negative, I will escalate because I cannot stop my expansions because A, B, C reasons.

Interviewer: My expansion is not coming from me. It's coming from the top which is running both entities.

Interviewee: Understood, but still, I will push it through. I will make myself clear. I will expand and there could be damage.

Interviewer: Okay. Damage to whom?

Interviewee: Damage to the reputation itself by expanding because if I expanded like tomorrow. I will tell you one thing, if tomorrow I have 10 aircrafts, 380. These aircrafts are grounded for any operational reason. Will the terminal be able to accommodate this?

Interviewer: No.

Interviewee: No. So should I stop by this aircraft?

Interviewer: No. Because you are on the queue and in the aviation business, you are buying that, sometimes you force.

Interviewee: To maintain my business and to be one of the most known airline in the world, I have to go ahead with my expansions. Now, you're telling me you will not ready by that time. Okay, what can you do to do this? How can you help me to be number and you're going to be successful?

Interviewer: Alternative solutions.

Interviewee: Thank you very much. Give me. Support me. Instead of I'm going to do it. Take it or leave it. This is what I feel sometimes happening with us Mohammed. I'm not hiding anything. We are saying it, we are doing it. Fix it. This is where you go along.

Interviewer: So what should it be currently from the beginning?

Interviewee: Maybe I don't have the full picture of the vision of what the executives have, but maybe I need to slow down a little bit. Slow down, not stop. Slow down. Instead of going 100, I will go 60. Until they can cope. Any equipment you ask for, when you go to the manufacturer for grounds equipments, from the day you submit your request, you need 3 to 6 months to receive it unless I'm going to go and buy some second hands where it's going to be a big risk also again, damaging it or it is not working

properly, maintaining it differently. So I need to work hand in hand with this. As I told again Mohammed, I might need to slow down a little bit, a little bit, bit really dramatically. I'm not saying to reduce the speed from 100 to 40 or 20 because that will damage me as an airline, will damage the whole vision of the executives.

Interviewer: I will be happy to know what do you think of airline-airport coordination relationship from your vast experience away from EY and ADAC? How should it be? What did you feel? How did you see it?

Interviewee: Okay, we are in Middle East and especially with us in Gulf Air, that's totally different from Europe.

Interviewer: Let us speak about these conditions.

Interviewee: Our conditions is much more relationship between Ayman and Mohammed. We know there is a book to follow, but sometimes, the nature of this area when I sit with Mohammed, I'm not going out of the rules. I'm not abusing the rules, but face to face relationship is totally different. Shake hands, done.

Interviewer: Great.

Interviewee: This is how we used to be. Now, take it, do it which is where sometimes you feel that you are putting someone in the cooler. As you're putting a cat in the cooler and try to attack the cat. The reaction will be bad.

Interviewer: Yes definitely.

Interviewee: At the end of the day, he will stand and will do whatever you ask, but the time when it comes for opportunity to revenge, you will revenge.

Interviewer: And you will be in the corner.

Interviewee: Thank you very much. I'm telling you reality now.

Interviewer: Yes, definitely, that's the business.

Interviewee: I don't want to hide anything. I'm simply giving you the whole picture. I don't care how you put it.

Interviewer: If we don't know where our negative issues are, we can't be developed. Even in EY side or ADAC side, we have to know where our gaps in this area are. If we don't know where our gaps are, there is no point to develop why you are expanding if you didn't correct your current issues.

Interviewee: We have damaged that badly.

Interviewer: And how is the picture now? I sit with my guys and they told me the same

thing at the beginning; but now, it's fine, it's going smoothly.

Interviewee: I have no idea. I'm far away from Abu Dhabi Airport at the moment. We are maybe at the moment, our relationship with ADAC, it's getting better, but slowly.

Interviewer: How was it in the past?

Interviewee: The past was different. Because we used to have the access to each office in ADAC, talk openly and discussed it openly.

Interviewer: It was easy previously.

Interviewee: Yes. It was easy.

Interviewer: Full transparency.

Interviewee: Yes. At the moment, as I am hearing from the last 3 years or 5 years because we have done so many forced things that were damaged a little bit. The last conflict I had about it happened last December or last November when we had a fog, when ADAC senior staff said to one of our seniors, "If you can't control it, we'll take over the control." How...

Interviewer: What did we say to them? This message was transferred from our side to their side.

Interviewee: No. This is message that was coming from them to us.

Interviewer: Okay and the fog is out of control.

Interviewee: How to manage disruption. Say natural things happens, thing goes wrong with airline business, but how to manage it.

Interviewer: Okay, let us specifically keep in this point. We know that the fog is everywhere – in Emirates Airline, Qatar Airways - but do the aircraft land? Yes. Why? Because of the landing rights. In the runway they have high technique equipments like the lighting. Is it the same picture with our story with ADAC or something else? If we have the same equipments...

Interviewee: We have the same equipments. Maybe we as a CAT IIIB. Abu Dhabi Airport is one of the highest for that region. I don't think that we have CAT IIIB anywhere within Middle East. We are the highest. Over now, capacity wise, terminal count taken.

Interviewer: So which means that our runway lighting equipment, it is advanced than whatever we have in Qatar or Emirates?

Interviewee: Yes. We are CAT IIIB.

Interviewer: So what are the reasons that are stopping the flights to land?

Interviewee: Now, again. Here we go. As soon as you activate the LVO (Low Visibility Operations), the GCA and ADAC have a specified number of take off and landings per hour. Now, the amount of flights you have per hour is much, much higher than that LVO procedure. By default, aircrafts will not be able to land. For example, I'll tell you, you have per hour from 18 to 21 take offs. The LVO allows 6 take offs, 6 landings.

Interviewer: Decrease the number.

Interviewee: So by default, your aircrafts were delayed. The LVOs doesn't talk with new number of operations.

Interviewer: Okay, with this role, how can ADAC manage it better than us?

Interviewee: The LVO needs to be looked at again. The GCA and ADAC needs to sacrifice the LVO procedures.

Interviewer: What is the best practice worldwide?

Interviewee: Heathrow. They are CAT IIIC which is zero visibility.

Interviewer: And has it the same frequency of landing?

Interviewee: Higher than us. They never have diversions. I remembered, even the aircraft with zero visibility – zero not 50, we are 50 here – aircraft lands. They shutdown the engines. Aircraft will be told and keep you on board the aircraft for 45 minutes until there is a bridge empty, get in through the bridge. But the terminal capacity wise can accept you.

Interviewer: Yes, definitely.

Interviewee: Parametric. Again, parameter of the terminal per square meter, we are already 3 times ahead. At the moment, the Midfield Terminal is above capacity. So we build up something we know that's going to be overcapacity at the intersection.

Interviewer: And now we are building the new satellite next to Midfield.

Interviewee: Which has expansion for something still didn't happen.

Interviewer: This happened based on our strategic number to avoid something happening in the future.

Interviewee: Mohammed this is what I am saying. The suggestion went back again in 2007 and 2008. Through his excellency and we said, "Why are we building a terminal in this area? Why don't we build up a terminal with 60 million capacity for the future and somewhere differently from here. I tried to

explore where the fog is lower maintaining your category anyway.

Interviewer: Okay. We can like them, the picture, they have Terminal 1 here, Terminal 2 there which is far. Okay the question here. Did they involve us in their strategic planning? For example they come to you, "Ayman we'll open new gates. What's your opinion about it?" Do you have something, any stories let us say in this area?

Interviewee: Not really exploring, but I think the suggestion always comes from Etihad, not coming from ADAC.

Interviewer: Yes, because we are relaying them 100%. Okay, did we play any role during the implementation of their strategic planning in Terminal 3 for example? **We were involved totally in that?**

Interviewee: Yes, absolutely yes.

Interviewer: If we didn't involve them or they didn't involve us in their strategic planning, what could be the side effects?

Interviewee: They are the landlords. So, if they don't involve us, it could have a lot effect on us by default because it doesn't meet our requirements. Vice versa also. If we did something without telling them or briefing them on it, they will come back badly on us because that's going to be having a side effect on the standard of Etihad. So it needs, I believe always open channels of communication all the time. And I will suggest one thing, one office within Etihad head office. We have one manager or 2 or 3 from ADAC sitting with us. Always.

Interviewer: In the operation side or which department?

Interviewee: Strategic wise. Because strategically, you will understand what we are planning to do.

Interviewer: You mean the head quarter?

Interviewee: Head quarter definitely.

Interviewer: Okay, there was one thing coming in my mind. You know that in Etihad Airways we have one of our principle for any new staff to have an induction for 7 days to let the new staff to know what is the head quarter, what are the departments, how are we working. Ayman, do you believe that it will great if we call all of ADAC guys for example for 2 days induction course at our head quarter to let them know what the airline business is, where are we affecting them, and it's ongoing issue.

Interviewee: Let me tell you Mohammed one thing, ADAC shouldn't be recruiting anyone

without an aviation background. You have to have a background. I recruited someone as in aviation. If I recruit someone, the first target thing is to attend training for aviation because you can't talk to someone on aviation where he has no idea what we are talking about. What a runway is, how we set up the runways, why we set up runways in these numbers, why are we having terminal, what's the parameter of terminal. They are landlords so they need to understand. Then you go to the soft skills, services, skills of what's the requirement of passengers, nature of problems. He goes into the CRM trainings. They are the...

Interviewer: Customer relationship management.

Interviewee: Customer relationship management. We understand how the crisis is managed. Currently, ADAC is lacking a great time.

Interviewer: So we can say that there are some staff in ADAC side where we are facing problem in the technical language with them?

Interviewee: Generally, they don't have the background of aviation. So they are learning the job on the job.

Interviewer: Okay. And it's fine, but it should be corrected from the first point courses, training, orientation in EY.

Interviewee: Absolutely.

Interviewer: Okay. **If there is any problem between both entities, how will it be solved?** We know that today they will agree with us, but tomorrow due to conflict of interest, they would disagree and it's happening.

Interviewee: Are we talking professionally or personally?

Interviewer: No, in the business itself.

Interviewee: That's what I'm saying. Sometimes we put it in personal.

Interviewer: Definitely, as per the environment and the profession.

Interviewee: The environment. Sometimes you need to take it professionally. As I told you Mohammed, I would believe 100% open channels of communication needs to be always, always. Our issues in Etihad, everything is confidential. You cannot keep confidential and suddenly within a day or 2, "Come Etihad, I'm going this." You cannot do this to them. The other side, they also share their developmental plans and what they are trying to do. This is what we used Mohammed.

We used to sit down with him weekly. We talk. We are having a chat with a cup of tea, "Okay, what do think?" There was a thinking of - there is a

strategic looking at. So he keeps in his mind, "Okay, here we go." Open channels of communication. If he is having something, he comes and tells you, "What do you think Ayman if we do this?" or "Good idea. Okay, let me select." These are missing.

Interviewer: I get your point. Can you talk the key subject being discussed during the strategic planning sessions? For example, you have been through many job projects, what are the key elements that you are looking for any joint project? Is it about due date to accomplish the projects?

Interviewee: Absolutely.

Interviewer: Can we just listen to your needs.

Interviewee: I will say financially, benefits, timelines of achieving a project, developments, future, and opportunities. I will say also this comes to my mind. Operation and synergies, but again this comes with timelines of projects.

Interviewer: Okay, now the most important question in this interview. In your opinion, what is the role of communication in strategic planning? Let us cascade this question. How was the communication with ADAC? Is it positively wise or negatively wise from that period 2004 to 2008 and how would Ayman like to be communicated? What are the prod shot you prefer?

Interviewee: 2004 to 2008 was wonderful.

Interviewer: Let us speak in your opinion, from your perspective, what's the important role of communication generally speaking and then let use reflect it to our relationship.

Interviewee: You see Mohammed, if you go to the relationship between ADAC from the day of establishment of Etihad, it used to be ruled by one person. So ADAC and Etihad were ruled by one person. So the communication, the big man, was one person. So he knows what's happening.

Interviewer: Sheikh Hamdan.

Interviewee: Until Khalife took over. And then these are 2 entities. Still, we maintained good relationship because the approach was different. It has changed different now. However, it was working for me. We approached properly, talking, sharing, even when the runway was closed, if I call Mohammed, "Mohammed can we do this per session? We need the runway for 2 hours, extend." Okay that close to it.

What happened after that? Because I'm out of the airport, the damage, I have not heard what happened. Where it went wrong? Beside the changes

of management keep moving and ADAC and our structure keep moving. So if you talk about every year we're changing Etihad management. And then we talk about changes in ADAC from the other side. So communication is destructive. And everyone will come with his own agenda of achieving. "Okay fine. Well done. Fine."

Interviewer: So what about what they agreed in the past?

Interviewee: Because he is having his own way of thinking and I have my own way of thinking.

Interviewer: Where was the big change in the management? ADAC?

Interviewee: ADAC. Big change.

Interviewer: And is it still running?

Interviewee: I think it will run for some time.

Interviewer: And we ask ourselves why. We know their internal issues, but we are in the same business. We know.

Interviewee: Yes. How many CEOs they changed over the last 4 years?

Interviewer: 4.

Interviewee: Thank you for mentioning. There you go. So that's why default itself is cascaded somewhere else. Your below will change. So as your executive schools below the CEO are really executives or only...

Interviewer: I can say that coming from another airline to the business. Something which is different than what is in Heathrow.

Interviewee: You know Mohammed more than me in this.

Interviewer: Okay. So what is the approach of communication that Ayman would like to be approached? If I am ADAC and you are my customer.

Interviewee: I would love to see you every week to update you with my developments and I would like to see what your developments are.

Interviewer: And how would like me to be communicated with you?

Interviewee: That's what I'm saying. If I can have weekly or monthly meeting or could be quarterly meeting. I have no issues with this. But at least a sort of communication happened and Mohammed, it needs to be effective meetings where...

Interviewer: You mean achieve what we agreed, not delay.

Interviewee: Okay, because this is the agenda, 1, 2, 3, 4. Okay, we see 1, 2, 3, 4. We would like to see next week what do you think about 1, 2, 3, 4. And then we'll meet monthly to see how we can achieve this and how we tackle with them and any new items comes onboard will come in and we'll put timelines on this. We used to have this and we used to be having Changi Air, Singaporean company. We used to this monthly meeting.

Interviewer: Changi Air company who's running the airlines.

Interviewee: Singapore Airlines. We used to have this before.

Interviewer: Okay, Ayman. **If the strategic plans of your organization are to be updated, what key change would you like to see?** What are your wish lists?

Interviewee: Honestly, at this moment, nothing comes in my mind.

Interviewer: Anything that you would like to change or something to be improved, any enhancement.

Interviewee: I would say the main concern which is worrying everyone around this company, disruptions. The disruptions which are at the moment are all on papers and never been exercised and never been shared. I would love to see it to be shared first with ADAC and to see what's going to be the ideas to exercise this disruption plan.

Every quarter, every half year to make sure that it's working. It's like whenever the GCA decides along with ADAC, you do a crash test exercise.

Interviewer: Where we are on this one?

Interviewee: Okay, how quickly we can react.

Interviewer: Okay, just something for my knowledge, we know that the disruption manual is already published by the operation department. When we wrote this manual, did we involve ADAC in this one?

Interviewee: I have no clue. I would assume it should be shared with ADAC.

Interviewer: Okay, on the 3rd of January 2015 or 2nd, the nightmare for all of us.

Interviewee: This is the 4th that we have. The same thing happens at the same time.

Interviewer: Yes, when we started working with manual, we didn't inform ADAC, "Listen we are going to launch..."

Interviewee: Which is in the case to me? They have no idea about this or they have an affirmation and they will be cascaded or discussed.

Interviewer: I'm speaking about ADAC maybe you know better than me. Do they have the same manual?

Interviewee: Definitely they have. They have to regulated by the GCA.

Interviewer: Okay. So it's something mandatory.

Interviewee: Mandatory, required that they have to have in emergencies. This comes in emergency manual of the landlords itself. The emergency manual is something. You will find it here somewhere.

Interviewer: Yes, I already know it.

Interviewee: It's issued by ADAC. They have an emergency issued by ADAC management. It's similar to this.

Interviewer: Yes, and that one will start when they have the fog.

Interviewee: As soon as the lockdown starts, Etihad says there are problems, they activate it.

Interviewer: So these functions will activate based on our feedback.

Interviewee: Yes, of course.

Interviewer: It's not automatic or something?

Interviewee: It depends what type of issues we have.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Like aircraft crash. They will establish it themselves. They will not wait for you because they are the landlord. They will take over. They will take over by default

Interviewer: I'm so happy that I have this interview with you and at the same time I'm sad because we reached to the last question of this interview, **what are the learning lessons?** Let us speak about the topic itself and how can we develop it or maintain it.

Interviewee: Again Mohammed, communication. Communication is very important. It's a very good tool which is not used. Listening is a very good tool also because you are not always right. There is other party also that have constraints. You can understand their constraints. If I tell you, "Mohammed your car capacity is fine and you are also planning to load 7." How will you do it? Okay. Can we do it in 2 terms, 4 and 3? Can we do it 5 and 2? I know there is a financial impact. So understanding each needs some requirements.

Interviewer: So what are the areas that we found that there is a lack in the

management side and it should be improved more?

Interviewee: Honestly Mohammed, at this stage, I don't know how our constraints with ADAC were and how much information we are sharing with ADAC.

Interviewer: For the meetings, we have monthly meetings each Tuesday to update us about the Midfield.

Interviewee: That's it.

Interviewer: Yes. I believe that something will happen behind this meeting, but regarding contractual meeting. This meeting, the guys from ADAC strategic planning coming and then there's instruction from Basafi's area, operation side.

Interviewee: That's a talk about the Midfield though, but we are not really talking about the current operational situation of Abu Dhabi Airport.

Interviewer: It is on daily basis because I sit with many guys in EY who will work in the operation side, the terminal managers, the daily operation managers, and some of them, they are in relationship with ADAC on daily business if there is something.

Interviewee: Okay, do we meet quarterly or monthly about what's going to happen from now until 2017?

Interviewer: You mean the future strategic wise?

Interviewee: And how are the constraints going to be handled? How many stations are we planning to open? How many aircraft we'll be receiving? Is that happening? So you need to see something arriving between both that this is communication that is happening. So they will know by next month, we'll have our 340, 380, the new one, the 2nd one. We're going to be having another 2 or 3 787 coming in 2 months. We're going to be having 2 more 777.

Interviewer: For example in the 380 project, they were very strongly involved to maintain I mean for the bridge.

Interviewee: This is something prepared. Strategically, I'm talking about are you ready for these 2 aircrafts to be grounded on the ground on one shot view, any of the reasons?

Interviewer: You mean involve them in the long term strategic views.

Interviewee: Yes you have to Mohammed. That's off record. Airport authorities always talk and they mandate and they demand their standards. And this is how a landlord should be because compliance would become regulation. So you

cannot divide from this and the moment who's on the stronger is Etihad more than ADAC.

Interviewer: Currently, yes.

Interviewee: Which is wrong.

Interviewer: It should be both of them leading both to the right direction.

Interviewee: Mohammed, it needs to be ADAC to grow a strong relationship. "Etihad, you are my national carrier. I will support you 101%, but I don't dictate on what you should be doing for me."

Interviewer: I got it.

Interviewee: Now, it's the opposite way. It's a reaction. It's not proactive.

Interviewer: Okay. Reaction of something that happened in the past.

Interviewee: Thank you very much. Or reaction to the situation which is happening.

Interviewer: I get your point. It should be as we start with an open way of communication.

Interviewee: I should respect them as a landlord. They are the landlord.

Interviewer: But we have to take into consideration what lead our attitude with them to be like this.

Interviewee: Mohammed, it must be the channels of escalation.

Interviewer: It didn't work for that and they are using this mask. Anyway we see the picture of the midfield on 17th July.

Interviewee: I know for now that they are trying to fit the roof, the roof does not fit, cannot be fitted.

Interviewer: Can't be? Due to what?

Interviewee: The infrastructure of the terminal itself cannot take the roof internal and they will not fit. I said, "Oh my God, here we go. We're failing from now."

Interviewer: We'll see Insha'Allah.

Interviewee: It's going to be opened by hook or by crook on July 17, needs to operational and work.

Interviewer: Yes definitely. It already has been delayed from 2011, 2012, 2013.

Interviewee: I think. All the way through.

Interviewer: Do you believe that this is the same scenario with Qatar Airways' new

terminal, new airport? It has been delayed also.

Interviewee: Delayed because of certification from the civil defence.

Interviewee: In Qatar.

Interviewee: Because when you do your ORAT testing and exercise, you need to make sure that this terminal is safe. So you have to build up the terminal in a way that when a thing happened wrong, this just needs to go, vacated safely. What happened there in Doha was due to some hidden reasons politically.

The civil defence in Qatar didn't certify the airport which is delayed.

Until they have the final signatures when we moved to the terminal, we cannot build up anything to the roof, the fire extinguishers, and the fire alarms. All these have been stopped because the terminal was delayed for a year.

Interviewer: Twice.

Interviewee: Yes, because politically, it's been delayed because His Highness stepped down. And His Highness taking onboard until they get everything the government started out, yes.

Interviewer: Eventually it happens. It's a nice airport with their population. I have been through it, it's nice.

Interviewee: I haven't been through yet, but in future. For them, size of operation and this size of population, it's so huge.

Interviewer: Yes, for the coming 20s we can say.

Interviewee: Yes. Approximately.

Interviewer: Thanks again for your time, for your valuable comments and feedback and I'm sure that it will reach this study.

Interviewee: Anytime, feel free.