Accelerating Service Innovation with Global Account Management

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MASTER THESIS
Accelerating Service Innovation with Global Account Management

A Case Study at a Manufacturing MNC

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Abstract

Title: Accelerating Service Innovation with Global Account Management – A Case Study at a Manufacturing MNC

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Issue of Study: This master thesis is conducted as a case study at a large, mature, manufacturing company; referred to as the MNC. Like many other global, business-to-business, manufacturing companies, the MNC works with global account management. The MNC’s global accounts are large, global customers of high strategic importance to the MNC. The Service Organisation is a company within the MNC. They drive service as a business and currently many new services are being developed within the central unit of the Service Organisation. The study focuses on how the central unit of the Service Organisation can be more customer-driven and accelerate service innovation by making better use of the Global Account Teams. The thesis also aims to fill the theoretical gap in existing literature regarding what role the global account management function can play for a company’s open service innovation approach.
Purpose: The purpose of this master thesis is to increase the understanding of how a company’s global accounts’ needs can be used to initiate and drive service innovation and thus, how global account management can be used to strengthen the competitive edge in service innovation.

Method: The study was designed as a qualitative case study with an abductive reasoning approach. The empirical data were collected through 30 one-to-one, semi-structured interviews held with MNC employees and 10 observations made of the Service Organisation’s weekly service development project status meetings.

Conclusions: In summary, the Global Account Teams can contribute to a more agile, customer-driven service innovation and thus, play an important role in a company’s open service innovation. The Global Account Teams can help to prioritise between customer needs, increase the early customer engagement in service development projects, drive deployment through central agreements and contribute to a customer-dominant logic in the service innovation. All this increases both relevance and speed of the service developments, which strengthens the competitive edge in service innovation.

Keywords: Service Innovation, Global Account Management, Customer Needs, Customer-Driven Innovation, Speed to Market
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Lund, May 2017

Emma Malmström
### Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>B2B</td>
<td>Business-to-Business</td>
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<td>B2C</td>
<td>Business-to-Consumer</td>
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<tr>
<td>KPI</td>
<td>Key Performance Indicator</td>
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<tr>
<td>MNC</td>
<td>Multinational Corporation (the case company)</td>
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<td>MNC1</td>
<td>A division at the case company</td>
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<td>R&amp;D</td>
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1 Introduction

In this chapter, an introduction to the research area is provided. The purpose and the research questions are defined and the delimitations are presented and discussed.

1.1 Background

Already today, we can see the important role that services have come to play in our economy. We have gone from buying a product to buying a whole service experience. This trend is forecasted to continue (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003), and it therefore becomes important for companies to understand services’ impact on their industries and business models (Chesbrough, 2011).

Chesbrough (2011) furthermore argues that it has become critical for any company to have a service perspective on the business. He means that companies must today innovate in the service sector to achieve high growth, high profitability and high competitive advantage. Innovation has long been of interest to researchers (Schumpeter, 1928) and as Drucker (1998, p. 149) states: “no one needs to be convinced of the importance of innovation”. However, with the dominating role that services have come to play for the company’s growth, service innovation has become an area of increasing interest to both companies and researchers (Chesbrough, 2011). Additionally, service innovation has become a way to tackle the growing competition that we can see in many industries. Competing only through products can be tough, as there are often competitors that today can find ways to produce a similar product cheaper (Ryans, 2009). Innovating in the service sector can therefore be a way to increase the competitive advantage, as services are more difficult to copy (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003) (Chesbrough, 2011).

The next question one can ask is how to innovate successfully in the service sector. To have an effective service innovation strategy and process is something many companies today strive towards (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003) and Chesbrough (2011) suggests that companies can adopt an open innovation approach to increase the effectiveness of their service innovation. Chesbrough (2003) describes open innovation as using both internal and external ideas, as well as using both internal and external go-to-market routes. Customer co-creation is an
example of open innovation (Chesbrough, 2011) and Gustafsson and Johnson (2003) argue that customer co-creation can be an effective method, especially for service innovation. They mean that due to services’ inseparability between production and consumption, the customer is directly involved in the production process. Gustafsson and Johnson (2003) suggest that this creates an opportunity to engage more with the customers also in the development process, which leads to the concept of customer co-creation. They also argue that how much value the company manages to deliver depends to a great deal on how well the customers’ ideas and knowledge have been captured in the service development process. Thus, many believe that engaging with the customers early and in every step of the innovation process is the key to the innovation’s speed, effectiveness and success (Gassman & Enkel, 2004) (Brown, 2008) (Payne & Storbacka, 2008) (Blank, 2013).

Furthermore, one way to engage and interact with the global, B2B customers is through global account management. Birkinshaw et al. (2001) describe global account management as a type of a strategic partnership between a multinational customer and a supplier, where an important aspect is how the two parties’ central, strategic units work together.

This master thesis was conducted as a case study at a large, mature, global, manufacturing company, from now on referred to as the MNC (Multinational Corporation). Like many other large, global, B2B, manufacturing companies, the MNC has a few, selected customers that are the MNC’s global accounts. The global accounts are big, global customers that are of high strategic importance to the MNC. The Global Account Teams are the teams within the MNC that communicate with the respective global account’s central unit. They have extensive customer knowledge and they constantly identify needs among the global accounts.

At the same time, many new services are being developed within the MNC, in a time where the competitive landscape is more intense than ever before. However, the demand for the developed services has in some cases been overestimated and it has sometimes been harder than anticipated to sell the services. Sometimes, after much time and money invested in the service development, it has even been a challenge to find a first pilot customer for the service. Moreover, it generally takes the MNC one to two years to develop a new service, and often the service development projects are delayed and timelines are being pushed forward. The MNC must be faster to stay competitive. The service development projects are in general also very technical and solution oriented and the MNC’s central unit is far from the business and the customer. The close, strategic interaction and engagement with the big, global customers through the Global Account Teams has only in a couple of cases been used to initiate and drive service development projects and they are not used to the extent that they could. Instead, most service development projects are initiated based on a belief that there is a demand for something, without direct customer engagement and customer interaction.
In addition, limited literature was found on how global account management can be used to initiate and drive service innovation. Thus, it seems like there is theoretical gap in existing literature regarding what role the global account management function can play in open innovation and open service innovation.

1.2 Issue of study

The MNC’s service business is driven through the Service Organisation. The Service Organisation is registered as a separate company, but belongs to the MNC. The service development work is mainly conducted at the central unit of the Service Organisation, and Service Department X is one service department within the Service Organisation.

The study focuses on how the central unit of the Service Organisation, and particularly Service Department X, can be more customer-driven and accelerate service innovation by making better use of the Global Account Teams.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this master thesis is to increase the understanding of how a company’s global accounts’ needs can be used to initiate and drive service innovation and thus, how global account management can be used to strengthen the competitive edge in service innovation.

RQ1. How can a company’s Global Account Teams be used to increase the relevance of the services being developed?

RQ2. How can a company’s Global Account Teams be used to faster develop new services?
1.4 Delimitations

There are three main delimitations to the study.

One delimitation regards the customers and the account teams. This thesis focuses on the global accounts and how their needs can be used to drive service innovation. The focus is therefore the interaction between the central unit of the Service Organisation and the central Global Account Teams. Other customers’ needs and the interaction with other account teams are considered out of scope. The local account teams that work towards the global accounts on a local level are also considered out of scope.

Another delimitation regards the area of service innovation. This thesis does not focus on the process used when a new service is being developed and brought to the market. The focus is instead how the Global Account Teams can play a role for service innovation at the MNC. Furthermore, in this thesis, service innovation refers to the development of new value-added service offerings, offerings that the customer can choose to pay for like any other product in the portfolio. Service innovation could also refer to innovating in the various interaction points between the customer and the supplier, but for this thesis, service innovation only refers to the development of new value-added service offerings.

The final delimitation regards the research design. The study is a case study and therefore focuses on the MNC and specifically the chosen service department; Service Department X, which belongs to the Service Organisation. The MNC’s other organisations and divisions are considered out of scope.
1.5 Disposition

Chapter 1: Introduction
In this chapter, an introduction to the research area is provided. The purpose and the research questions are defined and the delimitations are presented and discussed.

Chapter 2: Method
This chapter offers the reader an in-depth understanding of the method used throughout the study. Here, research strategy, research design, work process, data collection, data analysis and the study’s credibility are presented and discussed.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework
In chapter three, the reader is introduced to the literature related to the research field that is needed for the study’s analysis. The theoretical framework includes the areas customer-driven innovation, service innovation and global account management.

Chapter 4: The Case Study
In chapter four, the case study is presented. Here, insights from the interviews and the observations are gathered. The chapter begins with an introduction to the MNC, followed by an introduction to the service business and to the MNC’s global account management function.

Chapter 5: Analysis
In chapter five the case study is analysed, using the theoretical framework from Chapter 3 as a foundation. The insights from the interviews and the observations are discussed and comparisons with the presented theory are made.

Chapter 6: Conclusions, Recommendations and Final Remarks
In chapter 6 the answers to the research questions and the recommendations to the case company can be found. The chapter also includes suggestions for future research and a summary of the thesis’ contribution to academia. Lastly, some final remarks are presented.
2 Method

This chapter offers the reader an in-depth understanding of the method used throughout the study. Here, research strategy, research design, work process, data collection, data analysis and the study’s credibility are presented and discussed.

2.1 Research Strategy

A qualitative research strategy was adopted for this master thesis together with an abductive reasoning approach.

Hennink et al. (2011) mean that a qualitative research strategy allows the researcher to “examine people’s experiences in detail” (Hennink, et al., 2011, pp. 8-9). The approach is suitable when the research questions are of the nature to understand “how” or “why” something works. In contrary, a quantitative research strategy aims to draw conclusions from numerical data with the purpose to quantify a problem. The research questions are then often of the nature “how much?” or “how often” (Hennink, et al., 2011). As the purpose of this thesis is to increase the understanding of the research area, and the research questions are of the nature how, the qualitative research approach is considered appropriate.

Abductive reasoning was furthermore considered appropriate as the research area is relatively unexplored (Chesbrough, 2011) and abductive reasoning can be effective when the purpose of the study is to “discover new things” (Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p. 559). This reasoning approach combines the inductive and deductive reasoning approaches, where empirical data and grounded theoretical data is collected and analysed in an iterative way (Dubois & Gadde, 2002).

2.2 Research Design

This master thesis was designed as a case study. Höst et al. (2006) explain that choosing a case study research design is appropriate when the research is of exploratory or descriptive nature. This master thesis research study is of exploratory nature of a relatively unexplored research area (Chesbrough, 2011). Conducting a case study is a common and appropriate approach for studies where the research questions are of the nature to explain “how” or “why”, Yin (2014) suggests. Stake (1995) means a case study aims to capture only one unique case,
and should be used when the case itself is interesting and contains enough complexity. He furthermore explains a case as a bounded, integrated system (Stake, 1995) and Yin (2014) means that this allows the results to be more comprehensive and rich in details.

2.3 Work Process

For this thesis, an iterative approach was conducted as Yin (2014) describes a case study research as an iterative approach. Furthermore, Höst et al. (2006) also state that data collection and data analysis can be more iterative for qualitative research approaches. Thus, the initial phase of the work process was done in a very iterative manner. Yin (2014) also means that the work process of case study consists of the steps Plan, Design, Prepare, Collect, Analyse and Share through various iterations. He stresses the importance of clearly defining the research questions in a research study and he means that this can be done through various iterations. Therefore, for this thesis, the research questions were defined and developed through various iterations of literature review, in-depth interviews and observations.

Figure 1 shows the work process of the master thesis. After the research questions were defined, further empirical data were collected in the form of in-depth interviews and observations. The theory was then used to analyse the case study. From the analysis, conclusions were drawn and recommendations to the case company were made.
Figure 1: Work process of the master thesis (the author’s own figure)
2.4 Literature Review

The literature review aims to cover three research fields: customer-driven innovation, service innovation and global account management. The research fields are in some ways overlapping, which Figure 2 illustrates.

![Figure 2: Overview of literature review (the author's own figure)]

**Sources**

The sources used to find literature were Google Scholar, Lund University Library and Lund City Library. The journals and books were chosen based on relevance and credibility through reading abstract and reviewing number of citations on Google Scholar.

**Search Words**

The search words that were used were mainly: innovation, service innovation, service development, global account management, customer co-creation, customer-driven service innovation, customer needs, open innovation, open service innovation, strategic account management, customer requirements management, speed to market, portfolio management and business unit integration. These search words were used in various combinations and synonyms to the stated search words were also used.
2.5 Empirical Data Collection

As a qualitative research strategy was adopted for this master thesis, the empirical data was qualitative. Qualitative data refers to data that normally consists of words and descriptions; data which cannot be counted and measured (Höst, et al., 2006). Furthermore, Höst et al. (2006) argue that qualitative data contain a greater level of details and nuances. On the contrary, quantitative data refers to numerical data; data which can be counted and measured in numerical terms (Höst, et al., 2006).

Höst et al. (2006) state that common methods of data collection for qualitative case studies are interviews, observations and archive analysis. For this master thesis, the chosen methods of empirical data collection were observations and in-depth interviews.

2.5.1 Observations

Höst et al. (2006) mean that observations can be either active observations or passive observations. This refers to the level of interaction and whether the researcher contributes to the results of what is being studied. The advantage with active observations, where the researcher contributes to what is being observed, is that the researcher might get more insights in the results. With passive observations, where the researcher only has the role to observe, the distance between the researcher and the informant can sometimes be too big, which makes it difficult for the researcher to obtain information. However, the disadvantage with active observations is that the distance between the researcher and the informant can be too small, which leads to the risk of a decreased level of objectivity (Höst, et al., 2006).

Observations of the informants can also be done with or without the informants knowing that they are being observed. Höst et al. (2006) mean that the ethical aspect when the informants are not aware that they are being observed often comes up as an issue. On the other hand, when the informants are aware that they are being observed, the informants might adapt their behaviour (Höst, et al., 2006).

For this study, the author passively observed the Service Organisation’s recurrent, weekly service development project status meetings. The purpose of the observations was to get a holistic view of the service development projects; how they were progressing and what challenges that were arising in the projects. In total, the author observed 10 meetings spread out over the time of the master thesis project. As the meeting had an open structure, anyone could listen to the meeting. Thus, the author could observe the meeting in the natural setting without ethical issues to be raised. From the observed project status meetings, descriptive notes were taken directly after the meeting. This was to preserve the natural setting of the meeting.
2.5.2 In-Depth Interviews

Interviews can be open, structured or semi-structured. Open interviews let the informant steer the discussion and what is being covered. Structured interviews are interviews that strictly follow a predefined list of questions. Semi-structured interviews are interviews where questions are prepared beforehand, but during the interview, the order of the questions can be altered and questions can also be changed depending on the interview situation and the informant’s answers (Höst, et al., 2006). For this study, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted, as this allowed the author to adapt the questions depending on the informant’s answer and it allowed for interesting follow-up questions to be asked. This way a more in-depth understanding was built.

The informants were sampled based on judgemental sampling. Lekvall and Wahlbin (2001) argue that for research questions of explorative nature, it is often not of interest to make a statistically based sample. Instead, judgemental sampling could be of use where the researcher defines criteria that the informants should obtain (Lekvall & Wahlbin, 2001).

In total, 30 one-to-one, semi-structured interviews were held. All interviews lasted approximately one hour each and saturation (Guest, et al., 2006) was reached. All informants were MNC employees. 22 interviews were face-to-face interviews and 8 interviews were telephone interviews, as some informants were based in other countries. The telephone interviews were held through the MNC’s internal video conference call software which, apart from audio, also enabled screen sharing. The face-to-face interviews were all held in conference rooms, at the informants’ work place, which enabled a quiet and natural environment.

The informants were sampled from three different informant groups:

- Informant Group A: Service Development Project Teams
- Informant Group B: Service Strategy and Management Teams
- Informant Group C: Global Account Teams

Three different interview guides were used for the interviews; one for each informant group.

See Appendix A for the list of informants. See Appendix B for a more detailed description of the informant groups. For interview guides, see Appendix C, D and E.

The interviews were recorded and notes were taken during the interviews. Directly after the interview more descriptive, detailed notes were made, using the recorded audio material as support.
2.6 Data Analysis

When all the interviews were conducted and all the observations were made, the author went through all the notes. All audio recordings were listened to at least once to complement the notes and to ensure the data was captured properly. To analyse the data, the author was looking for key words and patterns. Key words and phrases that were used by many informants were highlighted, together with the data that included key words found in the theoretical framework. The audio recordings that included this data were then listened to again, to make sure the data were captured properly, and some sections of the audio recordings were then also transcribed.

Bryman (2002) means that coding and categorising can help the analysis of the data from qualitative research studies. He means that it is important to start with the coding of the data as early as possible. Before the interviews, the informants were therefore categorised in three different informant groups, based on their role and experience. The data from each informant group were then compiled and analysed separately to see how the insights from the informant groups were differing.

From the analysis, findings and answers to the research questions could be outlined.

2.7 Credibility

The credibility of the study can be measured by its reliability, validity and objectivity (Björklund & Paulsson, 2013). A forth measure, transferability, is also considered for this study, which is a measure that Höst et al. (2006) suggest as a measurement for case studies and master thesis studies.

2.7.1 Validity

Validity refers to how well the collected data can respond and answer to the research questions. (Björklund & Paulsson, 2013). Lekvall and Wahlbin (2001) mean that the validity of a case study is in general relatively high.

To make sure the collected data truly answered the research questions, the author prepared interview guides. The interview guides were discussed in detail with an informant working for Service Department X and the informant gave feedback on the questions and the planned set-up of the interviews. The informant was chosen based on a recommendation from the Service Department X’s management team. Furthermore, the informant giving feedback on the interview guides had experience from several service development projects within the MNC and had also experience from conducting interviews. Based on the informant’s feedback,
the interview guides were adapted to better capture the data needed to answer the research questions.

To increase the validity of the study further, the study was conducted in an iterative manner using an abductive reasoning approach. This means that the literature review, the in-depth interviews and the observations were conducted through various iterations, and based on feedback from the initial interviews, the interview questions could be adapted and improved. This could, however, also be a weakness as the initial informants were not given the same questions as the final informants. To mitigate this weakness, some of the data from the initial interviews were not used.

2.7.2 Objectivity

Objectivity of the study means to what extent the researcher’s own values, judgements and opinions have influenced the study results (Björklund & Paulsson, 2013).

For qualitative research methods, the researcher has an important role to interpret, listen and understand the situation from the informant’s perspective. Therefore, the researcher’s empathic thinking is important for the success of the study (Hennink, et al., 2011). Hennink et al. (2011, p. 15) furthermore argue that “the interpretive paradigm acknowledges that people’s perceptions and experiences of reality are subjective”. This means that the study’s level of objectivity is relatively low.

Furthermore, when starting the master thesis project, the author had worked part-time for the MNC for more than a year and during the master thesis project, the author was also working part-time in parallel to the master thesis study. The work was in service development and service innovation within the Service Department X, where the master thesis case study was conducted. This could mean that the author is less objective, and the data interpretation could be more biased. On the other hand, having worked for the case company allowed the author to emphasise with the MNC and see the problems from the Service Department X’s perspective. Having a greater understanding for the work within the MNC might therefore have helped to identify, understand and interpret, but also to question the findings made, which might have contributed positively to the study.

2.7.3 Reliability

The study’s reliability refers to the level of reliability in the chosen method. If the reliability is high, the same results would appear if the study was conducted again (Björklund & Paulsson, 2013).
For this study, the reliability is relatively low as the methods of data collection were interviews and observations. The sampling of informants for the interviews was made based on judgemental sampling. The author had an appointed mentor from the MNC with the role to support and guide the author during the master thesis study. The mentor worked in one of the Global Account Teams and had previously had a role in the Service Organisation. Therefore, the mentor had a big network within the MNC that the author could use and the mentor therefore gave recommendations of potentially suitable informants. If the author would have had a different mentor, other recommendations might have been given which could lead to different results. It is also possible that the mentor’s own opinions have impacted the results. On the other hand, having a mentor with the role to guide and support was critical to get insights and build a deep understanding. Furthermore, other informants also gave recommendations of potentially suitable informants and many times the same people were recommended by several informants. To increase the reliability further, the informants were chosen from three different informant groups, categorised based on role and experience. This makes the group of informants more diverse. Having the informants come from three different informant groups meant the informants contributed with insights from different perspectives. Informant Group A and B contributed with insights from a Service Organisation perspective, from both a project level and management level and Informant Group C contributed with insights from a global account management perspective. Using both observations and in-depth interviews as methods of data collection also led to a triangulation of the data collection (Yin, 2014).

Moreover, a weakness could be that the study was conducted by only one author. This means that during interviews, the author had the role to both ask questions and take notes. Audio recordings helped, as the author could listen to the audio recording after the interview. Directly after the interview, the author went through the initial notes from the interview as well as the audio recording and complemented with detailed, descriptive notes. A way to mitigate the weakness of being only one author further could be to transcribe all interviews, but due to the time limit and the relatively large number of interviews held, the author decided that detailed, descriptive notes were sufficient.

2.7.4 Transferability

Transferability refers to the generalisation of the conclusions; if the results and the conclusions are applicable and could be used in a general case (Höst, et al., 2006). Höst et al. (2006) argue that the transferability for a case study is in general low.

For this study, the informants were all MNC employees and therefore the results are mostly applicable to this case. It is, however, likely that the results are applicable to other manufacturing multinational corporations that also works with global account management. Moreover, the described method enables the reader to
form own opinions whether something can be applied to other industries and other companies.
3 Theoretical Framework

In chapter three, the reader is introduced to the literature related to the research field that is needed for the study’s analysis. The theoretical framework includes the areas customer-driven innovation, service innovation and global account management.

3.1 Customer-Driven Innovation

3.1.1 Open Innovation

Chesbrough (2003) define innovation as an invention that is implemented and brought to the market. Gustafsson and Johnson (2003) define it as the outcome of a set of activities with the goal of putting something new in use (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003, p. 120).

The term “open innovation” was first introduced by Chesbrough (2003). In his book, “Open Services Innovation” (Chesbrough, 2011, p. 23), he defines open innovation like this:

“In an open innovation model, firms use internal and external sources of knowledge to turn new ideas into commercial products and services that can have internal and external routes to market.”
Figure 3: Closed Innovation (Chesbrough, 2003, pp. xxii, xxv)

Figure 4: Open innovation (Chesbrough, 2003, pp. xxii, xxv)
In Figure 3 and Figure 4 the differences between closed and open innovation can be identified. Figure 4 illustrates open innovation and it shows how open innovation is done across the boundaries of the firm. The external sources of knowledge could be from suppliers, customers, academia, competitors etc. (Chesbrough, 2011).

Chesbrough (2011) states that open innovation is a way to innovate in the innovation process. Chesbrough and Crowther (2006) mean that many companies use open innovation to increase the speed to market and to drive growth of the business. Thus, it is a way to accelerate the innovation process, Chesbrough (2011) argues.

Staying proactive to disruptive technologies is, many times, also a main driver, and cost reduction is often a secondary driver (Chesbrough & Crowther, 2006). The concept of open innovation also enables sharing risks and rewards related to the innovation (Chesbrough, 2011) and if companies use open innovation successfully, both the cost and the risk of innovation can be reduced (Chesbrough, 2011).

Open Innovation Processes
Gassman and Enkel (2004) speak about different approaches to open innovation through a process perspective. They distinguish three types of open innovation processes: The Outside-in Process, the Inside-Out Process and the Coupled Process, see Figure 5. The Outside-In process can be described as integrating external knowledge in the internal processes. The external sources could be e.g. suppliers, customers and academia. The Inside-Out Process is described as innovating using internal knowledge, followed by external exploitation of the ideas to the markets, e.g. through selling or licensing technology outside the boundaries of the firm. Coupled Process is described as a combination of the Outside-In and Inside-Out Process.
Gassman and Enkel (2004) mean that the outside-in process approach to open innovation is most effective and can generate most value. Gassman and Enkel (2004) talk about the importance of strategic networks, when putting new ideas to the market. They mean that the coupled process reflects these strategic networks well. For customer co-creation, Payne and Storbacka (2008) suggest the outside-in process. They mean this is because the first step to value co-creation is to understand the customers’ processes.

Open Innovation Barriers

Payne and Storbacka (2008) argue that legal constraints could be a barrier to open innovation. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) also argue that the complexity is increased with increased collaboration level regarding e.g. intellectual property, responsibility and risk versus rewards. Dealing with risk and guarantees is more complex, and to overcome these obstacles organisational alignment for what each function promises and delivers is essential (Payne & Storbacka, 2008).

There are several challenges linked to the implementation of open innovation that researchers have highlighted. The Not Invented Here Syndrome is one important example. This refers to products, services, ideas or technologies with external origin that are often avoided due to the external origin. The Not Invented Here Syndrome can be overcome by clearly explaining the important role that external ideas play to achieve the growth targets (Chesbrough & Crowther, 2006).
3.1.2 Design Thinking

Design thinking is an innovation process which highlights the importance to engage and emphasise with the customers (Brown, 2008). It is believed that design thinking is a way to secure the demand and the success of new developments as the customers’ true needs are identified and solutions to what truly disturbs the customers are developed. This innovation process is more iterative, more flexible and generally more effective in terms of successful innovations compared to many other, more linear, innovation processes (Brown, 2008).

Brown (2008) highlights the importance of identifying the customer needs when designing and developing a product or a service. In his theory design thinking, he describes design as an iterative approach between the building blocks Inspiration, Ideation and Implementation. See Figure 6 for his innovation process. During the Inspiration phase, Brown (2008) suggests empathic thinking, where each situation should be analysed from a customer or user perspective. From the Inspiration phase, the true needs or preferences can be identified. These customer needs will then be at heart of the solution design. During the Ideation phase, ideas of solutions to the problem and the need, are generated. This could be done through brainstorming activities followed by prioritisation of which ideas of solutions to develop further. The final building block, the Implementation phase, is where the solution is being brought to the market (Brown, 2008). Here the lean start-up is one possible approach (Blank, 2013).

![Figure 6: Design thinking (Brown, 2008)]
3.1.3 Lean Start-up

The lean start-up approach is an implementation approach which, like design thinking, also highlights the importance of customer engagement. The lean start-up approach focuses on the urgency to as fast as possible launch “a minimum viable product”. Based on the early customer feedback that this enables, the product or service can then be adapted to better fit the customer needs and this could lead to a leaner and faster innovation process (Blank, 2013).

3.1.4 Customer Co-Creation

The literature about customer co-creation covers many different aspects of customer co-creation. One aspect of customer co-creation is when a service or a product is co-developed and co-created by a customer and a supplier. The co-creation is done through collaboration and engagement in activities together (Payne & Storbacka, 2008). Figure 7 shows this aspect of customer co-creation, and the figure shows that the intensity of the collaboration and the collaboration prerequisites decides the level of the collaboration. If there are joint goals between the supplier and the customer, information is shared and created easily between the customer and the supplier, and new opportunities can together be developed. The collaboration level is then considered very high (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).
The DART model is a model for co-creating value with the customers, which can help managers to answer the question of how to deal with heterogeneous requirements from customers, focusing on B2C. The key building blocks in the DART model are Dialogue, Access, Risk Assessment and Transparency (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

In the Dialogue building block, an important component is shared learning and communication where loyalty is the key output. The authors mean that in-depth dialogues and interactions with the customer can be very time-consuming which is a challenge that the managers need to deal with to keep up the operational efficiency. The Access building block refers to e.g. access to the right tools, data and information, where software can be a significant enabler. The Risk Assessment building block refers how to deal with risks when the customer is
involved actively in the project. If the customer is active and involved in a development project, should they be partly responsible for the related risks, is a question the authors are highlighting. They mean that this is a well debated subject that will continue to be discussed. The customer will normally continue to require extensive information about all related risks. The Transparency building block refers to openness, and today it is becoming increasingly common to share information with the customer (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

The building blocks in the DART model are then to be combined. The combination will show how co-creation of services is possible. If the company combines the building blocks Access and Dialogue in an effective way, this makes the customer more informed. The customer is therefore more likely to make better choices, due to the increased level of interaction and transparency. One way can be to develop and maintain communities through platforms. If the company combines Dialogue and Risk Assessment in an effective way, better information regarding risks is a likely outcome. If the company combines Transparency and Risk Assessment, a co-developed trust can be built. Through combining Transparency and Access the customers can make well informed choices (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

Through a variety of customer interactions, a diversity of services can be created. The interactions with each firm should be personalised and meaningful and through those interactions, co-creation of value is possible (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

“Eventually, the roles of the company and the consumer converge toward a unique co-creation experience, or an ‘experience of one’.” (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 6)

The framework for value co-creation that Payne and Storbacka (2008) present, see Figure 8, highlights three processes that are important to consider when co-creating value with customers. These are the customer’s process, the supplier’s process and the process of combining the two. The purpose of the framework is to help the suppliers to manage the expectations and the interactions with the customer when co-creating value.
3.1.5 **Webbed Customer Innovation**

Reichwald, et al (2004) discuss how to include customers in the innovation process and they present a framework where the customers are integrated in the innovation process through a value web, which leads to the coined expression “webbed customer innovation” with the following definition (Reichwald, et al., 2004, p. 4):

“The webbed customer innovation refers to the systematical collection and preparation of information from customers and users to generate innovations, modifications or service specifications within a value web, which totally meet the customer’s requirements. With the help of modern ICT, customers are interacting with the suppliers within a value web by expressing, specifying and configuring their requirements for innovations.”

Through a webbed customer innovation tool, the company can in a structured way capture the needs and the requirements and use them when developing new products or services. The customer can come with input in the form of information, creations or decisions. The Customer Integration Cube is a framework that emphasises the importance to use the right kind of customer input, by the right customers and at the right stages of the innovation process, see Figure 9.
3.1.6 Success Factors for Customer-Driven Innovation

Many argue that early customer engagement is important to the innovation’s speed and success (Gassman & Enkel, 2004) (Brown, 2008) (Payne & Storbacka, 2008) (Blank, 2013). Continuous customer feedback can enable speed and agility which can accelerate the innovation process (Blank, 2013), and customer engagement can also enable the innovation process to be driven based on true customer needs (Brown, 2008).

Chesbrough and Crowther (2006) present four factors that they mean are critical for a successful use of open innovation: Strategy/goals, Sourcing, Integration & Management and Metrics & Organisation. They mean that the concept must be well embedded in the strategy and in the business growth objectives but also that deep networks and interactions are necessary. Many companies see open innovation as a method to achieve growth targets, but it is then important to also integrate open innovation in the follow-up metrics and in the current practices and processes. An example of this could be to make open innovation integrated in a KPI (Chesbrough & Crowther, 2006).
The company’s relational capacity is also important for how much value can be created through strategic alliances. Through the strategic alliances co-creation is possible, but it requires the companies to have a strong capability to maintain strategic relationships outside the firm’s boundaries (Dyer & Singh, 1998).

Johnson and Sohi (2003) emphasise the importance of the firm’s culture, when co-creating value and implementing open innovation. This includes factors e.g. transparency, receptivity and willingness to learn. The inter-firm partnering competence can be built from these factors, and Johnson and Sohi (2003) refer to them as platform variables. From the learning outcomes, activities can be driven with the benefits of the strategic partnership as possible outcomes.

Gustafsson and Johnson (2003) also talk about the the importance of culture and strategy. They mean that to succeed in service innovation, it is critical to involve the customer. They suggest that strategy and culture will come to decide how much the customer can participate in the development of the new service offering.

Von Hippel (1986) introduces the concept of lead users. The lead users have strong needs that will become the general market needs in a near future. The article talks about how these lead users can be identified and how to capture the needs of the lead users and incorporate them in the innovation process.

“Since lead users are familiar with conditions which lie in the future for most others, they can serve as a need-forecasting laboratory for marketing research.” (von Hippel, 1986, p. 792)

Reichwald, et al. (2004), furthermore, suggest, based on empirical findings from their case study research, that also typical customers can have high quality input to the innovation process. They mean that not only lead users should have this role.

The chemical manufacturing company Sterling Pulp Chemicals started the customer driven service development through interviews with their most important customers to understand which problem areas they could deliver solutions to (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003). Knowledge and understanding of the customer’s processes is considered a success factor by Payne and Storbacka (2008). They also stress the importance of communication and alignment through a cross-functional perspective for managing the customers’ expectations and promises between supplier and customer.

Yip and Bink (2007) talk about co-creation in the B2B context, through strategic partnerships and global account management. Here they emphasise that similar cultures, strategies and geographical spread between the customer and the supplier is important to succeed in joint activities. They also highlight the importance of having a close relationship built on trust where the parties value each other as partners.
3.1.7 Integration between Business Units within a Firm

Griffin and Hauser (1996) argue that collaboration and working together as one firm could increase the effectiveness and the success of new innovations. To understand and capture the customer needs in an innovation, they mean that there is a high need for integration between R&D and Marketing, but that there, at the same time, are many barriers for a close cooperation between these business units. The barriers could be related to e.g. organisational responsibilities, languages, cultures, location and personalities. Griffin and Hauser (1996) suggest different methods to overcome the barriers depending on the nature of the barrier. To overcome a barrier related to the organisational responsibilities they suggest incentives and rewards. This means finding a way to compensate two business units for working together. An effective way to do that is to develop joint targets and joint KPIs (Griffin & Hauser, 1996).

3.2 Service Innovation

Service innovation differs in many ways from product innovation (Gallouj & Weinstein, 1997) and this makes service innovation a specifically interesting area for researchers. The reason why service innovation differs from product innovation is because services’ characteristics are different from those of physical goods. Services’ inseparability between production and consumption is an example of such a characteristic (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003).

To have a clear service strategy is important to innovate and improve the service offerings and to build the competitive advantage. The service offerings should address the true needs of the customers and help them to in a cost-effective way solve their problems, and at the same time considering the linkage between all activities. This is because building the service offering through linking activities can achieve higher competitive advantage, as a system of services, focusing on the entire customer experience, is very hard to copy (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003).

Tacit knowledge, a term that can be described as know-how or knowledge that cannot be articulated (Polanyi, 1962), is something that Chesbrough (2011) also means is a main contributor to the increased competitive advantage that services enable.

3.2.1 Service Characteristics

“Most important from a service improvement and innovation standpoint is that your customers are fellow engineers in the co-production process.” (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003, p. 6)
This quote highlights a significant difference between physical goods and services: services’ inseparability between consumption and production. The way the customer is involved when the service is produced/consumed differs profoundly from physical products (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003).

Apart from the inseparability between production and consumption, services are also more intangible and more heterogeneous than physical goods. The perishability, how services cannot be stored, is also a characteristic that often is used to describe services (Pekkarinen & Ulkuniemi, 2011) (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003). Table 1 summarises these specific service characteristics.

Table 1: Physical goods versus services (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003, p. 5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Goods</th>
<th>Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More homogeneous</td>
<td>More heterogeneous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More tangible</td>
<td>More intangible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separation between production</td>
<td>Inseparability between</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and consumption</td>
<td>production and consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be stored</td>
<td>Cannot be stored</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chesbrough (2011, p. 54) states that since services are more intangible than products, more tacit knowledge is involved, and thus it is more difficult to develop specifications for service offerings.

3.2.2 Economies of Scope

Chesbrough (2011) and Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) suggests that economies of scope could help suppliers to create and deliver value to the customers, specifically when it comes to services. Economies of scope means that costs could be decreased from “offering multiple items from a single source” (Chesbrough, 2011, p. 80). From a customer-supplier relationship, the supplier can identify more customer needs that can cost-effectively be addressed, which uses the advantages of economies of scope. This could mean e.g. extending the service to offer something the customer today does in-house. Implementing economies of scope could mean that the understanding for the customer’s processes is increased and this could therefore enable further improvements and additions to the service portfolio (Chesbrough, 2011).
3.2.3 Service Process Mapping

Payne and Storbacka (2008) argue that before setting a strategy, the company must fully understand the customers’ value-creating processes. From these processes, the company can identify the processes they want to contribute to and develop support to. This is aligned with Brown’s (2008) design thinking, where understanding the customer problems and needs is the first step.

Chesbrough (2011) means that service process mapping, or service blueprinting as it is also called, is a common tool used for identifying all key interactions that together builds up to be the entire customer experience. Gustafsson and Johnson (2003) also mean that this is an important tool for identifying interactions and needs.

To visualise the root causes can help the need identification process and increases the understanding of the true customer needs (Chesbrough, 2011). By identifying all steps that the customer needs to take, the company can more easily identify the customer’s pain points and from there deliver value to the customer. Also, skill level required for each step of the process can be added to the service process mapping (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003).

An Ishikawa diagram could be used to visualise the mapping and, in addition, identify the root causes of a problem. Furthermore, full-blown service blueprinting is an example of a very detailed service process mapping tool where also time, cost and revenue for each step of the process is included together with other extensive information (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003).

3.2.4 Prioritisation of Customer Needs

When the needs are identified, Gustafsson and Johnson (2003) mean that the next step is prioritisation of customer needs; to wisely choose and develop a strategy for which problem areas to develop solutions to. In Brown’s (2008) theory design thinking, the prioritisation is done in the Inspiration phase, but prioritisation is also an important activity in the Ideation phase (Brown, 2008).

The strategic satisfaction matrix is an example of a tool that can be used when prioritising customer needs. Based on impact and performance tests, the data can be compiled into a matrix, see Figure 10 (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003).
The matrix divides the attributes and the areas into four fields. The upper right field with High Impact and High Performance are areas of high importance to the customer, and the company already performs well in these areas. Here the suggested strategy is to maintain the competitive advantage or to improve further. The upper left field with Low Impact and Strong Performance are areas where the customer does not see great value in, which is why change is required here. One option is to reduce the activities in these areas, or the other options are to find the appropriate target customer for the activities. The bottom left field with Low Impact and Weak Performance are areas, activities or attributes where the resources spent on these should be eliminated, as neither the customer sees any value in them nor the company performs well in them. The bottom right field are areas with High Impact and Weak Performance. These are the areas to focus on, where improvements are necessary and can deliver the most value to the customer (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003).
3.2.5 Customer-Dominant Logic

Heinonen et al. (2010) argue that there are three types of logics when it comes to innovation and business: goods-dominant logic, service-dominant logic and
customer-dominant logic. Lately, companies have increasingly gone from a goods-dominant logic towards a service-dominant logic, which instead of focusing on products focuses on services. However, they argue that neither goods-dominant logic nor service-dominant logic have the customer in focus. They argue that these types of logics are “provider-dominant”. Customer-dominant logic, on the other hand, means creation of a service experience from a customer point of view, with the customer needs in focus. Many times, this means that the supplier must fully understand the customers’ activities, not only those that are directly linked to the supplier’s business. The scope of the customer experience can thus be broadened. The customer should be the starting point and they argue that the supplier can co-create value with the customer and create value from the customer’s perspective (Heinonen, et al., 2010).

3.3 Global Account Management

Yip and Bink (2007) define global account management as when suppliers “treat a customer’s operations worldwide as one integrated account, with coherent terms for pricing, product specifications, and service” (Yip & Bink, 2007, p. 103). This allows the customer to have one main point of interaction with the supplier, but the interaction could also be structured through multiple organisational level interaction points (Birkinshaw, et al., 2001).

Yip and Bink (2007) explain that the global accounts should be the global customers that are of high strategic importance to the supplier. They also mean that the global accounts should be aligned with the supplier’s strategy, culture and geographical spread. The global accounts are usually also big in terms of net sales or net sales’ potential. The supplier can then take the strategic decision to offer global account management to the customer, to centralise the customer’s relationship and operations with the supplier (Yip & Bink, 2007). This allows suppliers to operate on a strategic level with their multinational customers, Yip and Bink (2007) mean. The main driver behind the global account management phenomenon is globalisation as it has resulted in multinational organisations and a strive towards global standardisation (Birkinshaw, et al., 2001).

3.3.1 Advantages

Global account management is becoming increasingly more common. With the ongoing globalisation, more customers today want to drive global consistency across their operations. They want to manage their operations globally and they require a global quality consistency across their local operations (Senn & Arnold, 1999).
Yip and Bink’s (2007) empirical findings suggest that customer satisfaction can be improved by 20 percent from implementing global account management. Senn and Arnold (1999) also argue that customer satisfaction can be increased. Apart from the customer’s will to standardise and drive global consistency, they mean that global account management can reduce the customer’s purchasing cost by reducing the customer’s number of suppliers. Motorola is an example of a company who has managed to reduce their number of suppliers through global account management. Within a few years, they reduced the number of suppliers from 10,000 to 3,000; a reduction of 70 percent. Another example is IBM, who managed to reduce their number of suppliers by 50 percent, which led to a 20 percent reduction of purchasing costs (Senn & Arnold, 1999).

Yip and Bink (2007) argue that the way suppliers manage the global accounts, to whom and in what way they offer it, is what decides the success of the global account management. They say that global account management can lead to net sales to be increased by 15 percent for the supplier. However, Senn and Arnold (1999) argue that the long-term success of global account management should rather be measured in customer satisfaction.

Apart from increased sales and increased customer satisfaction, there is also a competitive advantage of offering global account management to a customer, as there is a risk that the customer otherwise will find another supplier that responds to the customer’s global needs. Global accounts should be customers that the supplier sees as strategically important, which they cannot afford to lose (Yip & Bink, 2007). Shi and Gao (2016) also suggest that the reason to adopt and implement global account management is to “better serve and retain their key global customers” (Shi & Gao, 2016, p. 1).

3.3.2 Challenges

Many argue that there are several challenges linked to global account management (Birkinshaw, et al., 2001) (Yip & Bink, 2007) (Shi & Gao, 2016). Birkinshaw et al. (2001) mean that the main issues are linked to the organisational structure, but they also state that global product or service consistency is another challenge that is often raised. Shi and Gao (2016) also highlight the organisational challenges linked to global account management.

Yip and Bink (2007) mean that a challenge is to make global account management beneficial for the supplier. They mean that global account management can lead to increased costs due to the global account’s wish for customisation of products or services. Furthermore, the prices are often lowered. The reason behind this is the increased price transparency which often can lead to an increased bargaining power for the customer, as setting a global price and a volume discount is common (Yip & Bink, 2007).
Birkinshaw et al. (2001) argue that the more the customer depends on the supplier, the better will the global account perform on e.g. sales growth and customer partnership. If the customer is not dependent on the supplier, the customer will have an increased bargaining power and the party with the highest bargaining power is the party that will gain the most from the relationship and the partnership. See Figure 12 for Birkinshaw et al.’s (2001) global account performance model. They also mean that a true partnership should not be about bargaining power but it should be a balanced relationship. The partnership’s success is, however, often measured based on the party’s own bargaining success, even though both parties strive for a more long-term partnership (Birkinshaw, et al., 2001).
Buttle (2009) means that the supplier is often more willing to build a strong partnership than the customer is. He states that for B2B customers, there could be many factors that could be in the way to build a strong supplier-customer relationship. This could be that the customer feels a fear towards being too dependent on the supplier, or that the customer does not see any value in the relationship. It could also be that the customer does not trust the supplier and therefore has a lack of confidence towards the other party. The customer’s culture may also be a concern, if the culture does not value relationship building. Another
concern may be rapid technological changes, which is linked to fear of dependency, as the customer might feel that the commitment to one supplier leads to a risk of missing out on new technological innovations from other suppliers (Buttle, 2009).

3.3.3 Three Different Approaches

Yip and Bink (2007) describe three different approaches to global account management: coordination, control and separate global account management. Birkinshaw et al. (2001) also share this view of the three different approaches.

The first approach, the coordination global account management approach, is the kind where the Global Account Team is weak and only has the role of coordinating the local and national operations. This could be a suitable approach when there are limited needs of standardisation across countries (Yip & Bink, 2007).

The second approach, the control global account management approach, is suitable when the need for global standardisation is larger. In this approach, the Global Account Team has an increased control and responsibility compared to the national operations and the work is structured through a matrix organisation. This is the kind of global account management approach that is the most common (Yip & Bink, 2007).

The third approach, a separate global account management business unit where all operations go through the separate global account management organisation, is an approach that is not at all common. The reason that only a few companies have adopted this approach is because it is very expensive, and having an autonomous Global Account Team might lead to organisational issues and less sharing of information between the Global Account Team and the rest of the organisation (Yip & Bink, 2007).

3.3.4 Framework for Global Account Management Implementation

Senn and Arnold (1999) developed a conceptual framework, see Figure 13, for global account management implementation. The framework is a matrix including 9 fields and 18 factors. The matrix makes up the criteria that the company should focus on for a successful global account management implementation.
Their empirical findings say that the implementation can be conducted in three steps:

Step 1: Defining goals and objectives together with the global accounts.

Step 2: Aligning business processes towards the needs of the global accounts.

Step 3: Safeguarding know-how and speeding up learning processes.

(Senn & Arnold, 1999, p. 4)

Figure 13: Framework for global account management implementation (Senn & Arnold, 1999, p. 3)
In the first step, the global accounts are carefully analysed and selected. On an operational level, the global accounts’ needs are analysed and products and services are offered consistently across the globe. A well-trained and well-experienced Global Account Team is beneficial to the customer satisfaction at this stage (Senn & Arnold, 1999).

The second step regards the aligning of processes. Here, good personal relationships are critical. On the operational level, clear, structured processes are necessary and on a tactical level, cross-functional teams must be built up (Senn & Arnold, 1999).

The third step includes high level of joint learning activities. On an operational level, customer performance measures should be developed and on a tactical level knowledge should be managed in an efficient way. Senn and Arnold (1999) argue that this should include feedback systems. This means that the customer should be able to feed in to the development process. Also, there should be an effective information infrastructure, which allows information to easily be shared and accessible between the two organisations (Senn & Arnold, 1999).

Apart from these eighteen factors, Senn and Arnold (1999) also emphasise that a critical success factor is time. Time is needed to build the partnership, develop ways of working together and synchronize working pace between the two organisations.

3.4 Summary of Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework includes the concept of open innovation (Chesbrough, 2003), and particularly the outside-in process approach (Gassman & Enkel, 2004) using external information and ideas from customers. Customer co-creation is an example of that kind of open innovation approach and Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) mean dialogue, access, risk assessment and transparency are important factors to think about to successfully co-create value with the customer. Engaging in an iterative way with the customers throughout the innovation process is something Brown (2008) and Blank (2013) argue is critical for the innovation’s speed, relevance and success. Design thinking (Brown, 2008) is an example of an agile innovation process, where the customer needs are the heart of the solution. The lean start-up is an implementation approach which stresses the importance of continuous customer feedback during implementation (Blank, 2013). For a supplier to co-create value with the customer and drive customer-driven innovation, common success factors also include joint KPIs (Chesbrough & Crowther, 2006) and aligned cultures and strategies between the customer and the supplier (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003) (Johnson & Sohi, 2003). Griffin and Hauser (1996) also mean that the integration between a firm’s different business
units is important to an innovation’s success and here joint targets is one way to increase the cooperation between two business units.

The theoretical framework also covers the area of service innovation. Due to services’ unique characteristics, engaging with the customers during the development process is essential to the success of the service innovation (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003). Understanding the customers’ needs and the customers’ processes in detail is something many argue is the first step (Payne & Storbacka, 2008) (Chesbrough, 2011) (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003) (Brown, 2008). This is followed by prioritisation and ensuring strategic fit, and from there the service strategy and service roadmap can be developed (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003).

Finally, the theoretical framework covers the area of global account management. Being culturally, strategically and geographically aligned with the global account is important for a successful global account management relationship (Yip & Bink, 2007). Success factors include understanding customers’ needs, aligning customers’ processes, setting shared targets and driving a common agenda (Senn & Arnold, 1999). These resemble the success factors of customer co-creation as global account management is a way to build a strategic partnership between a customer and a supplier, where the two parties can co-create value together.

Limited literature was found on global account management’s role in open innovation and open service innovation. Furthermore, no innovation process model was found of how services can be developed based on the global accounts’ needs. Thus, it seems like there is limited research done on how global account management can be used to initiate and drive service innovation, including what role the Global Account Teams can play for a company’s service innovation. Nevertheless, the theoretical framework includes how to drive service innovation based on customer needs, how to co-create value with the customer and how to manage a global account successfully.

Figure 14 provides the reader with a visualisation of the theoretical framework. The author’s own model, Figure 19: An iterative innovation process model for how to develop services based on the global accounts’ needs (the author’s own figure) can be found in Chapter 5, section 5.4.
4 The Case Study

In chapter four, the case study is presented. Here, insights from the interviews and the observations are gathered. The chapter begins with an introduction to the MNC, followed by an introduction to the service business and to the MNC’s global account management function.

4.1 Introducing the MNC

The MNC operates in the B2B market, and the customers are other manufacturing companies. The MNC organisation is divided into two divisions; from now on referred to as MNC1 and MNC2. These divisions are responsible for their respective product area. Both MNC1 and MNC2 have their respective service organisation, where services are being developed, sold and delivered. This master thesis is conducted at one of those service organisations; referred to as the Service Organisation. The Global Account Teams work both towards MNC1 and MNC2 and belong to a separate organisation. See Figure 15 for a simplified organisational chart. The grey blocks in the chart highlight the focus for this thesis.
The Service Organisation is registered as a separate company, but belongs to MNC1. Within the Service Organisation there are nine service departments. The case study is conducted at one of these service departments; Service Department X, which also can be seen in Figure 15.

Moreover, the Service Organisation has a central unit with the responsibility to develop global services, support the local organisations and drive global standardisation projects. The Service Organisation’s local organisations are responsible for the operations within their respective region, including selling and delivering the services to the customer. They make up the delivery organisation for the services being developed. Each service department has one central team in the Service Organisation’s central unit, and this team is then mirrored in the local organisations. Figure 16 provides a visualisation of this for the Service Department X, but the other service departments have the same set-up.
4.2 Driving Service as a Business

The industry which the MNC operates in, is a mature industry, and the competitive landscape is growing stronger. In the past the MNC had barely no competition, but this has now changed. With the increasingly intense competitive landscape the MNC has seen an opportunity to compete through services and achieve higher growth, higher profitability and higher competitive advantage through the service business. Hence, around the year of 2007, the Service Organisation started to drive service as a business in a more structured and conscious way than they had done before. Before, the MNC had mainly delivered services to customers without charging for them. Driving service as a business meant the MNC had to start thinking about how to drive service innovation and how to truly deliver value to the customer, as the customer now needed to have a willingness to pay for the service they received. A service that the MNC used to deliver for free, needed to be packaged, with e.g. value proposition, business case, pricing model and product proposition, for the MNC to be able to charge for it. When the Service Organisation started charging for the services, they also wanted to guarantee a certain quality level of the services being delivered. This put pressure on competence and capabilities to develop, sell and deliver the services. Thus, the Service Organisation needed to work with service development and service strategy in a more structured way. The Service Organisation did a re-organisation around the year of 2011-2012 and was then structured into different service departments; each responsible for one type of service and for its respective business unit.
4.2.1 Service Development at the MNC

When the decision was taken to drive growth of the service business, each service department had to be more crisp on how they were adding value to the customer. Much work was then put in on each service department separately to see how they could develop the business and drive service business growth from that service department. A service roadmap was populated, consisting of all services that were planned to be developed and released the coming three years. This was done from a service department perspective and it meant deciding what services that the service department could develop, deliver and sell that could be categorised under their service department. This is now done annually where the service department sets the targets for the coming three years by defining what new services they will develop and how much net sales each service in the portfolio will generate. Each service department also has KPIs that they are measured on that only relates to their service department. The service departments’ respective service roadmap is then being brought in to the Service Organisation’s service roadmap, which then shows all new services that are expected to be developed and released by the Service Organisation within the coming three years.

Most of the services in the roadmap are services that the Service Organisation, to some extent, already delivers today. It could be that the service is a local offering, and the service has potential to be sold and delivered in other parts of the world. It could also be that the Service Organisation delivers the service, to some extent today, but as the service is not packaged as a service offering, they do not manage to charge for it.

“Often the service already exists as a local offering somewhere in the world, and we see an opportunity to sell and deliver it in other parts of the world. Other times, it could be that we see an opportunity to charge for something that we today give away for free. We then initiate a service development project.” – Manager, the Service Organisation

Most service development projects are initiated based on a belief that there is a demand for something, but how big the demand is, is unknown. The most common view among the informants is that the estimation of demand and the calculation of business cases could be sharper. In many cases, the Service Organisation sees an opportunity to develop something and once it is developed, they start to look if the service offering has a demand.

“We often start from the solution and then we try to see what customer needs that solution addresses.” – Service Development Project Member, the Service Organisation

Sometimes the service offering has not met the specific needs of the customers, as the customers have not been involved during the service development phase. Also, there has sometimes not been enough interaction with the delivery organisation
which has resulted in an offer or a business model that does not make sense, neither to the customer nor to the delivery organisation.

There may be a need and a demand for the services that are being developed today, but there is a shared view among the informants that the context is lacking. The services are not developed from a need, but the solution and the service department is the starting point.

“We need to think more customer first. [The Service Organisation] from a service development perspective often thinks [the Service Organisation] first. It is a lot of self-interest; that we should deliver, we should sell. More focus on that than what the customer actually needs.” – Manager, the Service Organisation

Moreover, a common belief is that the MNC cannot achieve the competitive advantage they are aiming for if they approach the customer service department per service department.

“The real value we can create if we start working more integrated.” – Manager, the Service Organisation

In most service departments, the MNC does not approach the customer from a holistic approach.

“We need to think more solution; how we can combine different services to meet the customer needs and how we can help the customers more long-term.” – Manager, the Service Organisation

In some service departments, this is done, but in far from all. Where it is done, they look at the customer’s operations and how they can help them from a holistic, customer-need perspective. However, there is still a lot of room for improvement in this area, and a common view among the informants is that the problem is the way the Service Organisation’s central unit looks at service development. Centrally, the focus is on each service department and not what is best for the customer. Additionally, the service departments are often described as “silos” and even “competitors” to each other.

“Sometimes, it feels like the other service categories are our competitors.” – Project Manager, the Service Organisation

Moreover, a common belief among the informants is that the service roadmap from a holistic perspective does not make sense to the customer and that the customer perspective is missing in today’s roadmap. A frequent suggestion for how the central, service development organisation can be more customer oriented is not to let the service departments themselves decide and plan what services that should be developed. Instead, there is a shared belief among the informants that this should be done from a holistic perspective where the customer needs are in focus and where the customer needs are the starting point. The Service Organisation has recently started to discuss how they could drive the service business more integrated between the service departments with a stronger
customer focus. The goal is to populate the service roadmap from the customer perspective and instead of using the service departments as the starting point, a few, carefully selected areas of customer needs, “customer themes”, will be the starting point.

“My vision is to have a service roadmap that is not based on categories. I want to see themes, themes that are important to the customer. And then we can look at what we can deliver within that customer theme; not because we can deliver it, but because the customer wants it and because it is strategically important to them.” – Manager, the Service Organisation

There is a shared belief that the first step is to identify areas that are important to the customers today and in the future. Based on the selected areas of customer needs, the service roadmap can be populated and the appropriate service departments can be involved.

“We need to understand the customers’ pain points.” – Manager, the Service Organisation

Another common view among the informants is that the Service Organisation must measure differently and each service department cannot only be measured on sales from their respective service department.

There is also a shared belief that the MNC should look at what they have today and see how they can package it differently so it makes sense to the customer.

“It’s not only about developing new services, as we don’t even manage to sell what we have today. We need to look at what we have and see how we can package it differently.” – Manager, the Service Organisation

A common view is that it must be clear to the customer what value the service has, and therefore the commercial approach is important. Thus, the informants share the opinion that an increased customer understanding and an increased commercial approach in the development phase is needed, including clearer value calculations of the economic benefits of the service.

4.2.2 Service Department X

The Service Department X has, like the other service departments, long given away services for free. Service A is a service that has recently been developed and released by the Service Department X, and Service B is another service that is still being developed by Service Department X. The service department also has several other services in the pipeline; services that are planned to be developed the coming three years. All the services in the roadmap are services that the Service Organisation already, to some extent, delivers today.
Service A was initially a local offering, but based on a customer request from two different global accounts, the service development project was initiated and the service is now a global service offering. See section 4.5.3 for more details about Service A.

The service development project for Service B was initiated on a more technical ground, where the service development project started in 2015 with an idea of the solution. The informants share a belief that there is a demand for the service, but how big the demand is, is unknown. The project has faced many challenges along the way, and the timeline has been pushed forward many times. Some challenges have been linked to the collaboration between different business units within the MNC, as delivering the solution require several business units to work together. Other challenges have been due to lack of resources, as the project have not always been prioritised internally.

Among the informants from the Service Department X, there is a shared view that the next step for the Service Department X is to start looking at completely new services, services that the MNC does not yet deliver today. To do this, the informants share the belief that the customer needs must be captured and understood and that the services must be designed in a way that meets those customer needs. There is also a shared belief that one way to do that is to interact more with the Global Account Teams and to drive service innovation based on the global accounts’ needs.

4.3 The MNC’s Global Account Teams

The MNC’s global accounts are large, global, multibillion dollar customers with many strong, internationally known brands. The MNC has the ambition to work with the global accounts on a strategic level; to be a strategic partner to these selected customers.

The MNC has five global accounts, but this number can come to grow if there are other customers in the future that qualify to be treated like global accounts. Each global account has a Global Account Team on the central level within the MNC, consisting of MNC employees that work only towards that customer.

“I see my role as being part of the team whose main task is to grow [the MNC’s] business together with the customer. It is about helping the customer to grow and find opportunities of mutual benefits and mutual interests.” – Global Account Technical Director, MNC

“Above all, the Global Account Team has the role to make sure that the customer’s central functions have a speaking partner at the central unit of [the MNC].” – Global Account Technical Director, MNC
The global account’s central unit often works towards global standardisation, cost efficiency and global quality assurance. The MNC’s Global Account Team has the role to work with the customer’s central organisation and find opportunities for standardisation across the globe. In the job the Global Account Team agrees with the customer on a central level what should be standardised across the globe. Today the global accounts have an increasing will to drive global standardisation.

As the global account has operations around the globe, the MNC also has local account teams in each market where the global account operates. These local account teams belong to the MNC’s local organisations. The Global Account Teams therefore also have the role to support the global account’s local account teams.

“One part of my role is to be the speaking partner towards the customer’s central unit and the other part of my role is to support the local markets.” – Global Account Technical Director, MNC

In Figure 17, a holistic view of the MNC’s interaction with the global account is provided. The figure shows that the Global Account Team interacts both with the customer’s central unit and with the MNC’s own local organisations, through the local account teams. The MNC’s local organisations then interact directly with the global account’s local organisations, which is also visualised in the figure. This means information flows in both directions.

Figure 17: Global account management (the author’s own figure)
Generally, each Global Account Team, on a central level, consists of four people, three that work towards MNC1 and one that work towards MNC2. See Table 2 for a list of the roles and a short description of each role.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MNC1</td>
<td>Global Account Director</td>
<td>The leader of the Global Account Team. A strategic role to maximise the MNC’s opportunities to drive business with the customer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNC1</td>
<td>Global Account Technical</td>
<td>Responsible for driving growth of the global account’s service business with MNC1. The bridge between the Service Organisation and the global account.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Director</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNC1</td>
<td>Global Account Business</td>
<td>Responsible for driving growth of the global account’s product business with MNC1. The bridge between the Product Organisation and the global account.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development Director</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNC2</td>
<td>Global Account Director</td>
<td>Responsible for driving growth of the global account’s business with MNC2. The bridge between MNC2 and the global account.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
See Figure 18 for an organisational chart of the Global Account Teams. The other Global Account Teams have the same set-up as the Global Account Team X1 in the figure. The Service Organisation is marked grey in Figure 18, as this organisation is in focus for this master thesis.

![Organisational Chart](image)

Figure 18: The MNC’s Global Account Teams (the author’s own figure)

### 4.3.1 The Global Account Technical Directors

There is a shared view among the informants that driving service innovation based on the global accounts’ needs can be done by closely collaborating with the Global Account Technical Directors, as they have the role to be the bridge between the global accounts and the Service Organisation. The informants share the belief that the Global Account Technical Directors can identify opportunities to help the customer with global standardisation and turn that into a global service business opportunity for the Service Organisation.

The Global Account Technical Directors interact with the Service Organisation both on a central level and on a local level through the MNC’s local organisations. The Global Account Technical Directors also meet once a month to collaborate between the global accounts. The interaction with the local organisations is mainly through the local account teams. There are Global Account Technical Directors that work more towards the local account teams, while others work more towards the central unit of the Service Organisation.
"I think it is better if the Global Account Technical Directors keep an arm-length’s distance to the local key account teams and work more closely with the central unit of [the Service Organisation]." – Director, the Service Organisation

The balance depends a lot on the global account’s culture, strategy and organisational structure. Some global accounts drive global standardisation very hard and the global accounts then see that the MNC can help them with that. These global accounts generally have a stronger central unit. The global accounts that the MNC has the closest relationship with have a culture, strategy and organisational structure much like the MNC’s.

“They are like us.” – Global Account Technical Director, the MNC

Many of the Global Account Technical Directors’ contacts in the global accounts’ organisations have a technical role, but the Global Account Technical Directors also interact with the procurement unit. There is a shared view among the informants that it is critical that the Global Account Teams have established the right contacts on the right level, to build a close, strategic partnership; and having contact with the global account’s top management is preferable. However, it depends a lot on how the customer look at the interaction with the MNC; whether the customer sees it as a strategic, long-term partnership, which is what the MNC strives for, or whether it is more a price negotiation opportunity. Some global accounts are more price and cost focused and the Global Account Team then have more contact with the procurement unit.

“They only want to talk price and cost so they put Procurement in the middle.” – Global Account Technical Director, the MNC

The Global Account Technical Director’s role is a technical sales role, as the service opportunities often are of a technical nature in this industry. The informants share the belief that the technical aspect in the role is valuable, as explaining the more technical benefits without having a technical background can be difficult. Similarly, the customer’s procurement unit sometimes do not manage to understand the long-term, strategic value if it is of a technical nature.

“The procurement unit only sees a negotiation opportunity, but a discussion between two technical people could sometimes be more honest and have more substance in it.” – Global Account Team Member, the MNC

Furthermore, the Global Account Technical Director’s role is very broad, and knowing and understanding all the technical details in all the business areas that they work towards is nearly impossible. However, a common suggestion from the informants is that the Global Account Technical Director can make sure the customer’s technical people get in contact with, and talk directly to, the right technical people at the MNC, as it is then important that the MNC and the customer have a shared view of the commitment. This has not always been the case. One time the MNC had defined a commitment criteria differently compared to the customer’s definition, which resulted in the MNC believing that they could
not meet the expected commitment. However, based on the customer’s definition, the MNC had no problem meeting the commitment. The common view is that these misunderstandings can happen when the discussions go through the sales organisations, without involvement from the technical experts. However, the informants have a shared belief that the Global Account Technical Directors can play an important role as they can facilitate and make sure the technical people from the MNC interact directly with the technical people within the global account’s organisation.

4.4 The Global Account Technical Directors and the Service Organisation

The collaboration between the Global Account Technical Directors and the central unit of the Service Organisation has developed and improved the past couple of years. Four out of five Global Account Technical Directors work in the same building as the central unit of Service Organisation and one Global Account Technical Director is placed where the customer has its headquarter. Having most of the Global Account Technical Directors in the same building as the central unit of the Service Organisation was a strategic decision with the purpose to build a close collaboration with the Service Organisation.

The Global Account Technical Directors are included in the Service Organisation’s quarterly, two-day, extended management meetings, which was not the case before. However, as it is today, the Service Organisation is primarily sharing information with the Global Account Technical Directors.

“The agenda of [the Service Organisation’s] extended management is more about sharing what’s happening, it’s about informing. It’s not about deciding.” – Manager, the Service Organisation

There is a common view that the extended management meetings could be used better and the Service Organisation could listen more to the Global Account Technical Directors. The informants share the opinion that the Service Organisation should not only invite the Global Account Technical Directors but also give them the opportunity to speak up.

“It is kind of like they are in the backseat of the car. We need to put them in the driving seat.” – Manager, the Service Organisation

A common suggestion from the informants is that the Global Account Technical Directors could be included in the Service Organisation’s decision bodies and that there could be more workshops where they are included; workshops mainly between the Global Account Technical Directors and the Service Organisation, but the customers can also be included in more workshops. The Service Organisation
can then together with the customer and together with the Global Account Teams proactively see what the customers will need in the future.

“Through workshops an arena of collaboration can be created and we can learn from our customers.” – Manager, the Service Organisation

“We have already the [Service Organisation’s] extended management meetings where we participate, but it is pre-determined agenda where they are showing what they are already running. Sometimes we come with input, but with this big audience, with this many people, it is not easy. We need more workshops with these people, more open discussions, where we can discuss things like what we have, what the global accounts need, what to prioritise etc. These open meetings do not exist today.” – Global Account Technical Director, the MNC

Furthermore, what role the Global Account Technical Directors can play to contribute to a more customer-driven service roadmap has not been discussed. However, there is a shared belief that the Global Account Technical Directors can help to turn it around, towards a more customer-driven service roadmap. A common suggestion is that the Service Organisation can populate one service roadmap for each global account. Then, the Service Organisation can look for commonalities between the different global accounts’ service roadmaps. The informants also share the belief that the Global Account Technical Directors could play an important role in the prioritisation of what areas of customer needs to focus on.

Another common opinion among the informants is that the MNC needs to start looking at the global accounts as the voice of the customer and that the service departments should take a more active role to include the Global Account Technical Director by asking themselves “How can we include the global accounts in this question?”. Apart from the extended management meetings, there are ad hoc meetings between e.g. the Service Organisation’s project managers or line managers and the Global Account Technical Directors. However, to what extent differs between the different Global Account Technical Directors.

“Sometimes we go to them, sometimes they come to us. But these meetings, they are very limited. There could be a lot more.” – Global Account Technical Director, the MNC

Another director from another Global Account Teams is every week involved in meetings with the Service Organisation’s activity drivers and project managers. The common view is that he has a very close collaboration with the central unit of the Service Organisation.

The collaboration today between the Service Organisation and the Global Account Technical Directors is, to a great deal, depending on the individuals; whether they are pushing for a collaboration or not. The Global Account Technical Director who is not working in the same building have the least interaction with the central unit of the Service Organisation and has a stronger collaboration with the local
account teams instead. A shared insight among the informants is that how strong the global account’s central unit is play a role for how close the collaboration is between the Global Account Technical Directors and the Service Organisation.

The Service Organisation do not belong to the same internal organisation within the MNC as the Global Account Teams. However, there is a common view among the informants that the central unit of the Service Organisation needs to find a way to come closer to the Global Account Teams. Today they are measured by different KPIs and this means the work is not integrated. The informants share the belief that the KPIs play an important role to steer the organisation and the teams forward in the right direction. “You get what you measure”, two different managers and directors from the MNC say. A common suggestion is that the Service Organisation and the Global Account Teams can together develop some shared goals and targets. Another common suggestion from the informants is to build a stronger team around the Global Account Technical Directors, e.g. through a matrix organisational set-up, where people from the Service Organisation drive projects for the Global Account Teams.

“We need to give them more muscles.” – Director, the Service Organisation

4.5 Driving Service Innovation Based on the Global Accounts’ Needs

4.5.1 Benefits, Opportunities and Advantages

The global accounts are defined by the MNC as strategic accounts. Due to the MNC’s close, strategic collaboration with the global accounts, the MNC has insights in the global accounts’ short-term and long-term needs. The global accounts see that the MNC can help them to get where they see themselves in three to five years. Thus, the global accounts share information, plans, goals and strategies with the MNC, to make it possible for the MNC to help them on the strategic journey that they want to take. Furthermore, there are several joint innovation activities ongoing between the MNC’s Product Organisation and the global accounts, and they also have some joint KPIs. There is a shared belief among the informants that this close, strategic partnership could be used more to identify new, long-term business opportunities, as the MNC knows exactly where the customer sees themselves in three to five years. There is also a shared belief that the continuous dialogue that the MNC’s Global Account Teams have with the global accounts could also be used more for the R&D functions.

“They are our biggest customers and if we develop something in collaboration with a big customer, then we automatically get a strong customer pull of that
service. And reaching the critical mass will go faster if our biggest customers have been involved and given input.” – Manager, the Service Organisation

The needs of the global accounts are in general more advanced than other customers’ needs. Furthermore, the global accounts are industry leaders in their respective industries. The common view among the informants is that other customers look up to them and see them as a reference. Thus, the informants share the belief that other customers are likely to have the same needs in due time.

“People are looking what these big dinosaurs are doing and they want to follow. It’s like a reference.” – Global Account Technical Director, the MNC

“They are market leaders; our smaller customers are looking up to them. They see that [a global account] is doing something, and then they come to us and say that they want to have the same as [the global account].” – Global Account Technical Director, the MNC

However, no process for capturing and feeding in the global accounts’ global needs to the Service Organisation exist today and there are only a few cases when service development projects have been driven based on a request from the global accounts.

4.5.2 Drawbacks, Risks and Challenges

There is a shared view among the informants that it is important to listen to different types of customers; both the big and the small customers. However, there are different opinions among the informants regarding how much the MNC should listen to the global accounts and how much the global accounts’ needs resemble other, smaller customers’ needs.

“We cannot only listen to the big customers. Smaller customers might not have the same needs as the global accounts.” – Service Development Project Member, the Service Organisation

Today, the global accounts have a strong bargaining power. They often come to the MNC with difficult requests and requirements. There is a fear among the informants that a closer collaboration with the global accounts can lead to the global accounts becoming more powerful. The global accounts are all bigger than the MNC and to them, the MNC is a small supplier.

“We have to remember that to them, we are very small.” – Director, the Service Organisation

“All customers are not global accounts. In principle, the bigger our customers get, the higher requirements they have. Sometimes for us, many small customers could be better than one big customer. The global accounts are already today so strong and powerful and the more we offer special treatment to them, the more we
give them the chance to grow even bigger and stronger. And maybe it is better if we instead help some smaller customer to grow bigger.” – Manager, the Service Organisation

Also, working with these big customers both takes time and effort, as it is two big organisations with long decision lead times, that work together. Some projects therefore choose to collaborate with smaller customers instead.

4.5.3 Service A

Service A is an example of how the Service Organisation initiated a service development project based on the global accounts’ needs. The MNC then together with the customer created a framework and drove global standardisation through a service offering. The service development project was initiated based on a customer request coming from two different global accounts. Even though the two global accounts are very different from each other, they had the same request. The request was aligned with the global accounts’ long-term strategies and it had to do with global standardisation of quality assurance. The MNC captured the opportunity and reacted to the request by developing a service offering meeting that request.

“In the dream scenario, we would be more proactive and see the customer need first and then offer it to the customer.” – Manager, the Service Organisation

The service took around two years to develop. There is a shared belief among the informants that without the pull from the global accounts, it would have taken a longer time to develop the service, and that the customer pull helped to accelerate the service development project.

“During the project, we have had a constant pull from [the global account].” – Project Manager, the Service Organisation

During the project, the global accounts were involved as pilot customers. The Global Account Technical Directors were also, together with the service development project, driving deployment of the service through the global accounts’ central units. When the MNC developed Service A, they made a central agreement with one of the global accounts which also included a global price of the service. The common view is that this enabled a fast and efficient deployment of the service and that it led to customer pull on a local level.

During the service development of Service A, one of the Global Account Technical Director was part of the service development project’s steering group. The purpose of this was to increase the commercial approach and to make sure the service was meeting the customer’s requirements.

“I had the role as the facilitator and the engine, guarding the needs of [the global account].” – Global Account Technical Director, the MNC
Service A is also an example of when the organisation dared to take a risk and commit on a higher level that the MNC had done before. The global accounts’ requests were very advanced and they were asking the MNC to make a high commitment on a level that the MNC had never committed on before.

“This was a long journey to make this happen and to internally drive a change in mindset that we should take this risk. As a company, we need to think about the reward and what business opportunities this risk and this commitment enables.” – Global Account Technical Director, the MNC

“Some people only saw the risks we were taking when working with a big customer.” – Global Account Technical Director, the MNC

4.6 Speed in the Service Developments

When it comes to speed in service developments, there are different beliefs among the informants.

The MNC is operating in a slow industry and as a big organisation with long decision lead times, this makes the MNC as a company relatively slow as well. The Service Organisation has already speeded up the service development work and some informants argue speeding up more could therefore be a danger, as time is needed to build capabilities internally to sell and deliver the service.

“If we speed up there is a risk that we don’t have anything to deploy. That we only deploy a PowerPoint.” – Manager, the Service Organisation

In some cases, the central unit of the Service Organisation has closed the service development project too early, without the service being fully deployed, and without the local organisations having capabilities to sell and deliver the service properly.

On the other hand, some mean that the Service Organisation must speed up their service developments to be able to meet competition, as customers are increasingly valuing speed.

4.6.1 Prioritisation

There is a shared view among the informants that the right prioritisation can speed up the service development. A frequent suggestion is that the Global Account Teams can contribute and make sure the service development project has captured and is addressing the global accounts’ requirements properly and that time and money is invested in the right service development projects.
“Handling requirements is an area where we definitely can improve in. If we get the requirements right from start, the service development project can go much faster.” – Director, the Service Organisation

The common view is that if a project is internally prioritised, it generally progresses faster.

“We need to secure resources before we start a project.” – Service Development Project Member, the Service Organisation

There is a shared view among the informants that prioritisation represent a difficult, challenging, yet very important task, and the general opinion is that it is something which the Service Organisation must be sharper at. The prioritisation today is not done in any structured way.

“To me, it is unclear how we prioritise today.” – Manager, the Service Organisation

4.6.2 Increased Agility

Today the service development is done in a rather closed environment, far from the customer. A frequent suggestion for how to speed up the service developments is to become more agile. There is a shared belief that testing, engaging with customers early in the service development project and being quick to market is critical to the speed of the service development.

“Maybe it is time of thinking if it is better to go for much more agile processes where you develop the solution, you test it quickly and then you improve it because the speed of the digital world is much faster.” – Manager, the Service Organisation

A common suggestion from the informants is that the Global Account Technical Directors can help to find appropriate customers who are willing to collaborate and develop the service together with the MNC; including both pilot customers whom the MNC can test the solution on, but also customers that want to get engaged at an earlier stage of the development, when the solution is not even defined yet.

There is also a common view among the informants that it is critical to engage with the local organisations and dedicate some of their time for the service development project, and it is believed this would lead to an increased speed in the service development project.
4.6.3 Deployment through Central Agreements

Moreover, there is a shared belief that deployment through central agreements with the global accounts can be a fast and efficient way to implement a service. Thus, a frequent suggestion is that the Global Account Technical Directors can play an important role during the deployment of a service. Service A, see section 4.5.3, is referred to as a successful example of this kind of deployment through central agreements with the global accounts.
5 Analysis

In chapter five the case study is analysed, using the theoretical framework from Chapter 3 as a foundation. The insights from the interviews and the observations are discussed and comparisons with the presented theory are made.

5.1 Customer-Driven Innovation

Brown (2008) stresses the importance of understanding the customer needs and the importance of designing the solution based on these needs. Meanwhile, the MNC does not always have the customer needs in focus. Instead of using the customer needs as the starting point, the solution or the service department’s capabilities are often the starting point and most service development projects use a closed innovation approach. The central unit of the Service Organisation is far from the customer in many ways and the customers are often not engaged in the service development projects until when the solution is already defined.

5.1.1 Customer Engagement and Innovation Agility

Many believe that engaging with the customers early and in every step of the innovation process is the key to the innovation’s speed, effectiveness and success (Gassman & Enkel, 2004) (Brown, 2008) (Payne & Storbacka, 2008) (Blank, 2013). The MNC is often lacking an early customer engagement in their service developments, but an increased agility in the service developments is believed among the informants can increase both relevance, speed and success, which is aligned with the theory (Blank, 2013) (Brown, 2008).

Brown’s (2008) design thinking with the three building blocks Inspiration, Ideation and Implementation is an agile process that stresses that the true customer needs must be captured and understood. The importance to understand the customer needs and the customers’ pain points to succeed in the long-term with the innovation can also be seen in the case and it is also aligned with the theory (Brown, 2008) (Chesbrough, 2011) (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003) (Heinonen, et al., 2010) (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004) (Payne & Storbacka, 2008).
The Global Account Teams can contribute to a more agile service innovation through engaging more with the customers in the service development at an early stage and throughout the whole service development project (Chesbrough, 2011) (Brown, 2008) (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003). The Global Account Technical Directors can identify the appropriate customers whom they can test the idea or concept on, at an early stage. They can later also help to identify and engage pilot customers, whom the solution later can be tested on. Engaging with the customers throughout the development of the service can be compared with Blank’s (2013) implementation approach lean start-up, which emphasises on the importance to as early as possible go to market and collect feedback from the customers.

5.1.2 Using an Open Innovation Approach

Chesbrough (2011) argue that firms using open innovation can accelerate the innovation process and Chesbrough and Crowther (2006) argue that it can also drive growth of the business. Service A used the coupled open innovation approach (Gassman & Enkel, 2004), as this service development project was initiated based on a customer request, partly developed together with the customer as a customer co-creation (Payne & Storbacka, 2008) but then also deployed through the customer’s central unit. This was a successful case of a more customer-driven service development project, strongly driven by customer needs. This kind of collaboration and continuous customer pull throughout the service development project make the MNC come closer to the customer.

Service B represents a more closed service innovation (Chesbrough, 2011), as the idea of the solution was the starting point and the customer has been limitedly engaged during the development. This is the case for many other service development projects at the MNC. Nevertheless, as Chesbrough and Crowther (2006) mean, an open innovation approach can increase the speed of the innovation, which the case also indicates.

5.1.3 Barriers to Open Innovation

Some informants express that it would be better if the MNC themselves came up with the idea for Service A, instead of the customer coming to them with the request. This is an example of the Not Invented Here Syndrome, which Chesbrough and Crowther (2006) argue can be a barrier to open innovation. It is then important to build an understanding within the organisation around the importance of using external ideas for innovations (Chesbrough & Crowther, 2006).

Furthermore, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) argue that the level of complexity increases with increased collaboration level. In addition, Payne and Storbacka
(2008) mean that a barrier to open innovation can be legal constraints, and they mean dealing with commitments and guarantees are more complex when it comes to open innovation. The complexity regarding commitments and guarantees, due to the collaboration level, is something that can be seen in Service A as well. For Service A, the customers were asking the MNC to make a commitment on a very high level. To be able to do that, the MNC had to first understand the customer’s definition of the commitment. The next step was to make sure that the MNC could deliver on that commitment. Finally, they had to drive a change in mindset, and make everyone internally believe that they could meet the commitment. This strengthens both Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) and Payne and Storbacka’s (2008) theories.

Thus, the case shows that the MNC could make higher commitments than they make sometimes, but internally, people are afraid that the MNC cannot live up to them. This shows that the MNC has a protective culture, which could be another reason why the MNC sometimes is avoiding collaboration with the global accounts. As the MNC used to be the best in their field, this might have led to an internal belief that they need to protect everything they have. This could be the reason behind today’s fear of collaboration, and a reason why the Not Invented Here Syndrome (Chesbrough & Crowther, 2006) can be seen in the case. It could also be a reason why the MNC sometimes avoids making commitments and issuing guarantees to the customer, as they want to protected themselves in the first place, due to their protective culture.

One lesson the MNC can take from Service A is not be afraid to include and collaborate with the global accounts. The MNC has taken the decision to work with these customers on strategic level. Thus, the MNC should then be willing to take risks, make commitments and collaborate with the global accounts as it would benefit both the customer and the MNC. Having a big customer on board from start can also lead to an enormous breakthrough when releasing the service.

5.1.4 Joint Targets

To successfully use open innovation Chesbrough and Crowther (2006) argue that it is important to embed the concept in the strategy and in the KPIs. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) also argue that finding and developing joint goals with the customer is important if the company wants to drive customer co-creation. The MNC tries to achieve a strategic partnership with the global accounts. To strengthen the relationship with the customer, they have both joint innovation activities and joint KPIs with these customers, which strengthens these theories.

KPIs have an important role to steer the organisation in the right direction (Griffin & Hauser, 1996) (Chesbrough & Crowther, 2006) (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004) and this can also be seen in the case, which strengthens the theories. The case also confirms that joint targets between business units can be an effective way
for two business units to work closer together (Griffin & Hauser, 1996). The Service Organisation can have more integrated KPIs between the different service departments and they can also have joint KPIs with the Global Account Teams.

5.1.5 Speed to Market

If the MNC does not manage to speed up, they will not manage to meet competition. Blank (2013) argues that a lean start-up approach can increase the speed of the innovation process, as it means the solution is designed in a way that meets the specific customer needs. Failing early and constantly improving the solution based on direct customer feedback means the right solution is found sooner (Blank, 2013). The case strengthens this, as the case shows that a more agile approach, enabling increased early customer feedback, can lead to increased speed. This can also facilitate the requirements handling. If the right service would be developed, that meet the specific needs of the customer, this would increase the speed of the service development. Engaging with the global accounts through the Global Account Teams could therefore increase the speed of the service innovation.

On the other hand, a reason why the MNC is sometimes avoiding including the global accounts in new developments is because the inertia of working with big organisations. There is a risk that the global accounts’ long decision lead times can slow down the project if they are engaged during the development. Sometimes it is better to engage a smaller customer or test the solution on a smaller customer during the service development project as this can speed up the project. This is again aligned with Reichwald et al.’s (2004) theory, that the right customers should be engaged at the right stage of the innovation process.

Prioritisation has a very important role for the innovation’s success (Brown, 2008) (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003). Fully understanding what the customer needs, makes it easier to prioritise, and the case also shows that prioritisation can speed up the service development, which strengthens the theory around prioritisation. If the MNC prioritises more and focus on less projects, this would speed up the service development. To initiate a service development project, resources must be secured both centrally in the organisation that develops the service, but also locally in the delivery organisations. This was not the case for Service B and it led to the timeline being pushed forward many times. To have secured resources, prioritisation is necessary. In addition, the case shows that a strong customer pull can accelerate the service innovation. This is possibly because the customer pull creates a higher prioritisation level internally.

However, there is a belief within the MNC that speeding up the service developments can have a negative impact on the business. It is argued that speeding up can lead to decreased quality of the services being developed and a risk of releasing services that are not ready. At the same time, the case shows that
speeding up through an increased agility would mitigate this risk as the delivery organisation would be naturally engaged during the service development project. This way, capabilities to sell and deliver the service would be built up during the service development project due to the agile service innovation approach. Not believing speed is important for the innovation might also be a danger, especially if the customer values speed. If the service development project members do not believe that speed is important, the project might not progress as fast as it could. However, the Global Account Teams can influence the Service Organisation and create a sense of urgency to be faster. Driving a change in mindset towards a culture where speed is important could help to accelerate the innovation process.

5.2 Service Innovation

Many argue that the services’ unique characteristics make service development different compared to product development (Pekkarinen & Ulkuniemi, 2011) (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003) (Gallouj & Weinstein, 1997) (Chesbrough, 2011). The case shows that it is critical to interact and engage with the delivery organisation during the service development project to build up internal capabilities to sell and deliver the service. Chesbrough (2011) argue that services have an increased level of intangibility and an increased level of tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1962) and as the production and consumption is inseparable, the importance to build up competence and capabilities is more important for services than for products (Chesbrough, 2011). Chesbrough (2011) also means that it is harder to develop specifications for services due to services’ increased level of intangibility and tacit knowledge. The case shows the difficulty to package the services, which confirms Chesbrough’s (2011) theory. There is a need for the services to be packaged better than they are today with a clearer economic value. To calculate the true value of the service, the service development project must fully understand the customer’s operations, processes and needs and an increased commercial approach together with an increased customer engagement, is needed.

The Global Account Teams can contribute to increasing the commercial approach by building a deeper customer understanding in the service development project teams. They can also contribute to an increased agility in the service developments projects. This would lead to increased early engagement with the delivery organisation, which would ensure internal capabilities are being built. The Global Account Teams can therefore contribute to a mitigation of some of the challenges linked to services’ increased intangibility, services’ increased level of tacit knowledge and services’ inseparability between production and consumption.
5.2.1 Service Process Mapping

One way to build a better understanding around the customer needs is to have more interactive meetings and workshops between the central unit of the Service Organisation and the Global Account Teams, and this strengthens Payne and Storbacka’s (2008) theory about customer co-creation and service process mapping. It is also aligned with Gustafsson and Johnson’s (2003) suggestion to lay out a blueprint of all the interaction points between the customer and the supplier together with the customer’s own activities, as the supplier should not only understand how the customer thinks related to their business area, but the supplier should build a broader customer understanding of everything that the customer experiences.

5.2.2 Prioritisation of Customer Needs

Gustafsson and Johnson (2003) argue that prioritisation is a very important task, but the Service Organisation is lacking a structured way to prioritise which customer needs to focus on. Here the Strategic Satisfaction Matrix (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003) can be a tool to increase the level of structure in the prioritisation activities and the Global Account Technical Directors can contribute with a cross-business and cross geographical aspect. As they have the consolidating, global role they have a valuable, holistic perspective that can be useful especially for prioritisation of which activities and customer needs to focus on.

The Global Account Technical Director can help the Service Organisation to come closer to the customer and they can play an important role in the prioritisation of which areas of customer needs to focus on. When laying out the service roadmap, this can be done through workshops which is a method that also Brown (2008) suggests. The case highlights the need for more workshops to understand customer needs and to prioritise better, which strengthens Brown’s (2008) theory. The Global Account Technical Directors should therefore be included in the Service Organisation’s decision bodies. The Global Account Technical Directors can participate and represent the voice of the customer during meetings and workshops and help the Service Organisation to move away from the service roadmap that is based on each service department and what they technically can develop, sell and deliver. Gustafsson and Johnson (2003) suggest interviewing the customers to understand how to best prioritise. Listening to the Global Account Technical Directors and letting the Global Account Technical Directors speak up during meetings and workshop can have a similar effect, as they internally represent the customer. Additionally, they are close to the customer and they know the customer well across markets and across business units.
5.2.3 Customer-Dominant Logic

Understanding the customer needs should be the starting point to the service innovation and service roadmap (Brown, 2008) (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003) (Chesbrough, 2011), but to do that the Service Organisation cannot drive service innovation based on each service department’s perspective. The MNC has gone from a goods-dominant logic to a service-dominant logic (Heinonen, et al., 2010), but Heinonen et al (2010) argue that the next step should be to go to a customer-dominant logic, where the customer needs is the starting point. This includes looking at the service business from a holistic, customer’s point of view. The MNC cannot only look at the scope of activities that their services are targeting, but they need to broaden the perspective and see what the customer’s pain points are throughout the customer’s supply chain. This is also aligned with what Chesbrough (2011) and Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) say about economies of scope. They mean that economies of scope can be used to create value for customers, particularly in the service business. In the case, it is believed that working more across the service departments can increase the value delivered to the customer, which strengthens Chesbrough (2011) and Prahalad and Ramaswamy’s (2004) theories on economies of scope.

5.3 Global Account Management

The global account management function at the MNC appears to have a control approach (Yip & Bink, 2007), where the Global Account Teams are organised in a matrix structure where the global account directors work towards different business units within the MNC.

Birkinshaw, et al. (2001) and Shi and Gao (2016) argue that one of the most common types of challenges linked to global account management seems to be challenges of organisational nature. The MNC also experience some of these challenges, which strengthens their theories. The link between the Global Account Teams and the central unit of the Service Organisation is through the Global Account Technical Directors, and here the collaboration can be stronger than it is today. The barriers to a close collaboration found in the case include e.g. personality, organisational belonging, geographical placement and separate goals and targets, which confirms Griffin and Hauser’s (1996) findings.

By using Senn and Arnold’s (1999) framework for global account management implementation to analyse the MNC, one can draw the conclusion that the MNC is at different stages on the global account management implementation journey with the different global accounts. For some global accounts, they have achieved step three and for some they are at a more immature stage.
What contacts the Global Account Technical Directors have in the global account’s organisation mirrors what relationship the MNC has with the global account. The closer the MNC is to the global account, the closer the Global Account Technical Director is to the Service Organisation as the need and the potential of the global account management relationship is bigger. This strengthens Yip and Bink’s theory (2007) which says the organisational set-up of the global account management function can be different depending on the need of a global account management. The case shows that global accounts are increasingly striving towards global standardisation and global quality assurance and consistency, which is aligned with what Senn and Arnold (1999) say. The global account management’s success and potential depends a lot on the contacts that the MNC has with the global account. This is aligned with Senn and Arnold’s (1999) criteria for a successful global account management implementation, as they argue that good personal relationships are critical.

The case highlights that the relationship between the central unit of the Service Organisation and the Global Account Teams depends a lot on the individuals on these roles, whether they are pushing for a collaboration or not, but also on the global account’s culture, strategy and organisational structure. This is aligned with Yip and Bink’s theory (2007) when they argue that the customer’s strategy, culture and geographical spread needs to be aligned with the supplier’s. The global accounts, whom the MNC has the closest collaboration with, are the customers who resemble the MNC. This strengthens Yip and Bink’s (2007) theory. Also, Johnson and Sohi (2003) and Gustafsson and Johnson (2003) highlight that the firms’ cultures need to be aligned, and this is also strengthened by the case.

Furthermore, when co-creating value with the customers, Payne and Storbacka (2008) highlight that the supplier needs to understand both the customer’s processes and their own processes, and in addition, they need to understand how to combine the two. Co-creating value with the customer seems to be easier when the customers’ processes are more like the MNC’s processes, as the global accounts which the MNC is closest with, are ones that are most like themselves. The conceptual framework for value co-creation (Payne & Storbacka, 2008) also indicates this. The case also shows that it depends on how the customer looks at the relationship, whether they see it as a long-term, strategic partnership or not. This strengthens Dyer and Singh’s (1998) theory that a customer’s relational capacity is important to build a strong, strategic relationship with a customer. How much the global accounts drive global standardisation and how strong their central units are, is also important for how close collaboration the MNC has with the global account on a central level. A strong central unit of the global account often pushes for standardisation across the globe and the MNC can help them with a global standardisation through developing global service offerings, which leads to a closer collaboration between the MNC and the global account.

In addition, using the building blocks Dialogue, Access, Risk Assessment and Transparency in the DART model (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004) can help the
Global Account Teams to build loyalty, handle requirements and develop shared strategies with the customers. The DART model is designed for B2C (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004), but the case shows that these building blocks also are critical when interacting with B2B customers. The case clearly shows the need to have a continuous dialogue with the customer and the importance to handle risks in a structured way. The case also shows that the level of customer co-creation for B2B customers depends to a great deal on the customer’s culture and its alignment to the supplier’s culture. This can lead to different level of access and transparency of information between the two firms. Consequently, this indicates that the DART model also can be applied in the B2B market.

Buttle (2009) argues that it is often the supplier that tries to build a close partnership relationship with the customer, while the customer might not have the same willingness to do so. This can lead to the customer coming with high demands that the supplier is trying to meet, leading to an unbalanced relationship where the customer has more power than the supplier. This is the case also between the MNC and the global accounts, which strengthens Buttle’s (2009) theory. Birkinshaw et al. (2001) argue that if the customer is not dependent on the supplier, the customer’s bargaining power is bigger. The MNC is only a small supplier to the global accounts and the global accounts often come with difficult request, which confirms Birkinshaw et al.’s (2001) theory.

A closer collaboration with the global accounts could make the global accounts more powerful. On the other hand, one can argue that the MNC should take advantage of the close, strategic relationship that they have with these customers as it can enable big business opportunities. As the global accounts share their strategies, plans and information with the MNC, the MNC knows what the customers want and need in a long-term perspective. This is aligned with what Yip and Bink (2007) say about the benefits of global account management; that a successful global account management can enable increased customer satisfaction as well increased net sales. In addition, the global accounts are big, strategic, important customers and therefore the MNC cannot afford to lose them, which strengthens Shi and Gao’s (2016) argument for global account management.

The case shows that the Service Organisation can make better use of the Global Account Teams, particularly the Global Account Technical Directors. The Global Account Technical Directors can help with prioritisation as well as play a role for increased agility and for deployment through central agreements. This would increase both relevance and speed of the service developments.

5.3.1 The Global Accounts’ Needs

If the MNC would drive service innovation more based on the global accounts’ needs, they would most probably get a service portfolio that suit most customers. The global accounts are market leaders and other companies in their respective
industries see them as a reference, due to their strong, internationally famous brands. This means the global accounts represent the lead users (von Hippel, 1986) and that their needs will soon be other customers’ needs. Driving service innovation based on the global accounts’ needs can therefore mean that the innovations will meet other customers’ needs in the future. Building an understanding for this internally within the MNC can lead to a decreased fear of collaborating with the global accounts, as there are those that believe the global accounts’ needs should not be used to initiate and drive service innovation.

If the MNC would drive the service innovation based on the global accounts’ needs, the MNC can also sell the service through the Global Account Teams directly to the global account’s central unit. If the global account has a will to standardise their operations, they will want to have the service conducted in many of their local markets where they operate. Having such a big player on board from start and drive innovation based on their needs and their requirements could therefore accelerate the service development and secure demand of the service that is being developed.

Due to the global accounts’ internationally strong brands, they all have a need for global quality consistency and global quality assurance, which is something the MNC’s global account management function can help them with (Senn & Arnold, 1999). The case also shows that their needs can sometimes be identical.

Yip and Bink (2007) mean that global account management should be offered to the customers that the supplier cannot afford to lose, and Senn and Arnold (1999) argue that the success should be measured in customer satisfaction rather than cost saving and sales growth. Driving service innovation based on the global accounts’ needs is therefore not only a way to drive growth of the business and increase the relevance of the services being developed, but it is a way to maintain the global accounts as satisfied customers by listening to their needs and requests.

However, the case shows that the MNC should interact and engage with many different customers, not only the global accounts. This is aligned with Reichwald et al.’s (2004) theory about webbed customer innovation; that the right customers should be used at the right stage of the innovation process. They also argue that not only lead users should be engaged during an innovation, but the firm should also take input from other customers, and the case strengthens this theory.

5.3.2 Deployment through Central Agreements

When the solution is defined, the Global Account Technical Directors can also help to effectively deploy the service through the global accounts’ central units. Selling the service directly to the global account’s central unit, through a central agreement, can be a very efficient and fast way to reach many customers directly. The Global Account Technical Director interacts with the global account and if the
global account is engaged both centrally and locally, the deployment can be very fast. The global account’s central unit then themselves sell in the service directly to their local organisations, and locally the supplier can experience a customer pull.

Yip and Bink (2007) raises central pricing agreements as a challenge for suppliers, as it could lead to lower prices due to the increased transparency. Nevertheless, a central agreement was in the case seen as beneficial for the speed of the service innovation. For Service A, the central agreement allowed a fast and efficient deployment of the service, as the MNC could sell the service directly to the global account’s central unit.

5.4 How to Develop Services Based on the Global Accounts’ Needs

Combining the insights from the case study and the theoretical framework from Chapter 3 leads to an iterative innovation process model for how to develop services based on the global accounts’ needs, Figure 19, developed by the author. It shows how services can be initiated based on ideas and needs from the global accounts.

Figure 19: An iterative innovation process model for how to develop services based on the global accounts’ needs (the author’s own figure)
In the innovation process model, Figure 19, there is a continuous dialogue and a strategic long-term planning with the customer. The process is in that way iterative, which ensures that the developed strategy and the developed service offering truly meet the needs of the global account. Here, the Global Account Teams play a critical role as they are responsible for this interaction with the customer. The service offering can then also be deployed and implemented through the global account management function, by selling the service as a central agreement to the global account’s central unit. As the customer is engaged both in the development and the deployment phase through a strategic alliance with the supplier, this process model represents a coupled open innovation approach (Gassman & Enkel, 2004), where the outside-in and the inside-out open innovation processes are combined.

Figure 20 shows which theories that were mainly used for the development of the model (Gustafsson & Johnson, 2003) (Senn & Arnold, 1999) (Birkinshaw, et al., 2001), but other theories, model and frameworks presented in Chapter 3 were also used as inspiration, and insights from the case study was also used for the development of the model.

![Figure 20: Combination of theories together with insights from the case study leads to the developed iterative process model (the author’s own figure)](image_url)

The case shows that the service innovation at the MNC can be driven more based on the global accounts’ needs and the service development projects can be initiated based on a need from the global accounts. To increase the relevance of
the services’ being developed, the MNC can therefore develop their own internal process for capturing and feeding in the global accounts’ global needs to the service developments, as no such process exist today. Figure 19: An iterative innovation process model for how to develop services based on the global accounts’ needs (the author’s own figure) could be used as a starting point. The next step for the Service Organisation should be to link it to existing, internal processes.
6 Conclusions, Recommendations and Final Remarks

In chapter 6 the answers to the research questions and the recommendations to the case company can be found. The chapter also includes suggestions for future research and a summary of the thesis’ contribution to academia. Lastly, some final remarks are presented.

6.1 Answer to RQ1

RQ1: How can a company’s Global Account Teams be used to increase the relevance of the services being developed?

These bullet points summarise the answer to the first research question:

- Let the Global Account Teams contribute to more a customer-driven service roadmap
  - Service roadmap populated using areas of customer needs as the starting point
  - Let Global Account Teams play a role in prioritisation of customer needs
  - Develop joint KPIs to increase business integration between business units

- Develop a process for capturing and feeding in the global accounts’ global needs to the service development
  - Link the developed innovation process model with the company’s internal processes

- Let the Global Account Teams contribute to a more agile service innovation approach
  - Invite customers to interactive meetings and workshops
  - Test the idea or concept on customers at an early stage
A close collaboration between a company’s R&D function and the Global Account Teams can increase the customer focus in the service developments. The Global Account Teams can help to build a better a better understanding around the customer needs and they can help to increase the customer engagement during a service development project.

The Global Account Teams work closely with the biggest and most important customers. Due to the global account management partnership between the customer and the supplier, the Global Account Team has insights in the customer’s long-term goals and strategies. The Global Account Team therefore knows what services that can help the global account in the strategic journey that they want to take. The Global Account Teams also have a valuable cross business and cross geographical perspective which can be used for a holistic view of the business and the future customer needs. They also have the customer in focus and they see things from global customer perspective which can contribute to a customer-dominant logic in the service innovation. Thus, the Global Account Teams can play an important role in prioritisation of customer needs. The Global Account Teams should therefore be included in the service development unit’s workshops and in the decision-making bodies. They can also have internal presentations for the R&D department where they present the global accounts’ business plans, strategies and what challenges the global accounts are facing. To increase the integration between the Global Account Teams and the R&D department, joint KPIs can be developed.

The Global Account Teams can also be used to increase the customer engagement during a service development project. Consequently, they can contribute to a more agile service innovation. During service development projects, the Global Account Teams can play a role to engage the customers and test the idea or the concept on them at a very early stage, as the lean start-up approach to the implementation. This would enable early customer feedback, resulting in a service offering that makes better sense to the customer. Thus, using the Global Account Teams to increase the early customer engagement and the agility of the service developments could lead to an increased commercial approach and a service that truly addresses the customers’ pain points. The commercial approach can be increased as the service development project would come closer to the customer and the service development project would better understand the customer needs. The service development project can make the offering more commercially attractive and package it in a way that the customer wants to see it, with a clear economic value calculation. A service that is meeting the customer’s needs and the customer’s pain points is a service that the customer is willing to pay for, which drives growth of the service business.

Service development projects can also be initiated and driven directly based on a need or request coming from a global account. Here, the Figure 19: An iterative innovation process model for how to develop services based on the global accounts’ needs (the author’s own figure) can be used, where the Global Account...
Teams play an important role as they are responsible for the interaction with the customer. To implement the presented innovation process model, it is important that the company link it to their internal processes.

Finally, driving service innovation based on the global accounts’ needs will increase the relevance of the services being developed as the global accounts’ needs are likely to be other customers’ needs in the future.

6.2 Answer to RQ2

RQ2: How can a company’s Global Account Teams be used to faster develop new services?

These bullet points summarise the answer to the second research question:

- Let the Global Account Teams contribute to more a customer-driven service roadmap
  - Prioritising the right services can speed up service development
  - Create a sense of urgency to value speed

- Let the Global Account Teams contribute to a more agile service innovation approach
  - Fail fast, fail cheap
  - Efficient handling of requirements
  - Engage the delivery organisation at an early stage to naturally build internal capabilities to deliver the service

- Engage Global Account Teams during deployment planning
  - Drive deployment through central agreements to quickly deploy the service worldwide

Driving service innovation based on a customer need can lead to a customer pull, which can accelerate the service innovation. The Global Account Teams can contribute with a direct customer request, which can accelerate the innovation speed internally as the customer pull might lead to a higher internal prioritisation. Prioritisation can furthermore speed up the service development, and here the Global Account Teams can contribute with their cross business and cross geographical perspective. There is however a risk that the global accounts’ long decision lead times, somewhat slows down the project, but overall the study shows that the Global Account Teams can contribute to a faster service development. Moreover, Global Account Teams can create a sense of urgency within the R&D department of the importance to be quick to market with new service
developments. Building this understanding within the R&D function can contribute to an accelerated service innovation.

The Global Account Teams can also contribute to an increased speed in the service development by helping to make the service developments more agile. Going faster to market can increase the speed of the innovation and testing as early as possible enables early customer feedback which means the service development project faster knows how to improve the service offering. The Global Account Teams can also help during requirements handling; making sure the global accounts’ requirements are captured and addressed in the service development project. Doing things right from the start can speed up the service development immensely. A service development is also to a great deal about engaging with the delivery organisation and making sure they are prepared to sell and deliver the service. This would be made easier as the delivery organisation would be naturally engaged at an earlier stage. The risk of deploying something that the delivery organisation is not ready to sell and deliver would therefore be decreased.

The Global Account Teams can also help during requirements handling; making sure the global accounts’ requirements are captured and addressed in the service development project. Doing things right from the start can speed up the service development immensely. A service development is also to a great deal about engaging with the delivery organisation and making sure they are prepared to sell and deliver the service. This would be made easier as the delivery organisation would be naturally engaged at an earlier stage. The risk of deploying something that the delivery organisation is not ready to sell and deliver would therefore be decreased.

The Global Account Teams can also play an important role during implementation and deployment; once the service is developed and ready to be released globally. The Global Account Team can then help to sell the service to the central unit of the global account. If the global account wants to drive global consistency or global standardisation, they might want to have the service conducted in all their local markets. Thus, there is a chance that they want to buy the service centrally. Then the local organisations only have the role to deliver the service as there will be an automatic pull from the customer’s central unit. Thus, central agreements and deployment through the customer’s central unit can increase the speed of the service development and by addressing the global accounts the critical mass can also be reached faster.

6.3 Recommendation to Case Company

The Service Organisation is recommended to work more integrated between the service departments. The Global Account Teams can help the Service Organisation in this journey towards a more customer-driven service innovation and a more customer-driven service roadmap. It is recommended that the Service Organisation starts to look at the service roadmap from a holistic, customer perspective and not from a technical, service department perspective. To do so, the Service Organisation is recommended to develop joint KPIs between service departments but also joint KPIs with the Global Account Team. These joint KPIs would help the service departments to becoming more integrated and it would make the link to the Global Account Technical Directors stronger. This would lead to the service departments moving away from the thinking of what is technically possible for each service department to develop, sell and deliver. Instead, the
service roadmap should be populated from a holistic, customer need perspective, where areas of customer needs are the starting point. The joint KPIs could therefore help the Service Organisation to move from a service-dominant logic to a customer-dominant logic.

Using Figure 19: An iterative innovation process model for how to develop services based on the global accounts’ needs (the author’s own figure) as a foundation, the MNC is also recommended to develop an internal process for capturing and feeding in the global accounts’ global needs to the service development, as no such process exists today.

Furthermore, the Service Organisation is recommended to make better use of the Global Account Technical Directors to increase the relevance of the services being developed. They should take advantage of having the voices of big, global, strategic customers in the same building. The Global Account Technical Directors should be invited to more meetings and they should have more open workshops with them. It is also recommended that the Global Account Technical Directors are represented in the decision-making bodies. When the Service Organisation makes the prioritisation of what areas of customer needs to focus on, the Global Account Technical Directors can play an important role to increase the relevance of the services being developed.

To faster develop new services the Service Organisation should use the Global Account Technical Directors and let them contribute to more agile service innovation approach. Through early customer engagement and early customer feedback, the speed of the service innovation can be increased. An agile service innovation process can also contribute to increase relevance as the service will be developed and improved based on direct customer feedback.

The Service Organisation is also recommended to work closely with the Global Account Teams during deployment of services and deployment through central agreements to the global accounts can be a fast and efficient way to drive implementation.

6.4 Contribution to Academia

Limited literature was found on global account management’s role in open innovation and open service innovation. Thus, this master thesis helps filling that theoretical gap. Furthermore, no innovation process model was found of how services can be developed based on the global accounts’ needs. Consequently, the author developed a model, Figure 19: An iterative innovation process model for how to develop services based on the global accounts’ needs (the author’s own figure), which contributes to that theoretical gap.
The study also contributes with insights regarding how the Global Account Teams can help to achieve a more agile, design thinking innovation approach and how the Global Account Teams can help to drive a lean start-up implementation.

The study also contributes to insights regarding the global accounts’ needs. The study shows that the global accounts are used as a reference to many other smaller firms in their respective industries, due to their big, internationally famous brands. Thus, the study shows that smaller customers are likely to have the same needs as the global accounts in the future, but further research is recommended in this area.

6.5 Suggestions for Future Research

The area of service innovation through the Global Account Teams is somewhat unexplored and further research is suggested in this area.

It is recommended to do a benchmarking and see how other companies use the Global Account Teams to initiate and drive new service developments. It is also recommended to measure the business impact from this kind of customer-driven service innovation.

Further studies are also recommended on the needs of the global accounts. It is suggested to see how much the needs of the global accounts should be used to drive innovation; if global accounts often are lead users and to which extent their needs resemble other customers’ needs.

Further studies are also recommended on the deployment through central agreements and what role it can have to speed up the implementation phase of the innovation process.

In future studies, it is, in addition, recommended to capture the customer’s point of view. Due to this master thesis’ time limit of 20 weeks, the empirical data was collected only within the MNC and no interviews were held with the MNC’s customers. Thus, interviews with customers are suggested to gain a deeper understanding of how to drive service innovation based on their needs.

Furthermore, driving innovation only based on the customer’s needs might lead to less radical innovation. This is because the supplier might become more reactive to the customers’ requests, rather than proactively meeting the customers’ long-term needs. Further studies are recommended in this area to build a deeper understanding around the negative effects and risks on the company’s radical innovation related to driving service innovation based on the global accounts’ needs.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the customer engagement that the global account management function can contribute with to the service development
work, is an indirect form of customer engagement. The customer is only engaged and involved via the Global Account Teams, as the Global Account Teams have the role to internally represent the customer. Further studies are therefore recommended regarding service innovation using this indirect form of customer engagement and how it differs from service innovation when the customer is directly involved.

6.6 Final Remarks

This master thesis has focused on how the service business at a manufacturing company can become more customer-driven and accelerate the service innovation by making better use of the Global Account Teams.

The informants had many suggestions, opinions and beliefs that were aligned with the theory presented in Chapter 3. There was also a common view among the informants that the Service Organisation can make better use of the Global Account Teams and that they could be more customer-oriented. The fact that many informants both from the service development projects and from the Service Organisation’s management teams shared this view could mean that it might be easier to drive a change towards a more customer-driven service innovation. To secure future competitive advantage and future service business growth, it is now critical that the Service Organisation embraces the recommendations presented in this thesis; that they start to drive service innovation based on true customer needs and that they let the Global Account Teams play a role to increase relevance and speed in service developments.

Interviewing the directors from the Global Account Teams might have been the most fascinating part of the master thesis study. Listening to the Global Account Teams makes one understand how strategically close the MNC is to some of the global accounts, as the MNC is sharing strategies with these customers and driving joint innovation projects with them. The Global Account Teams have the role to represent the voice of the global accounts within the MNC and it was fascinating to hear insights from their vast customer knowledge. If the central unit of the Service Organisation would take better advantage of this knowledge, which is both cross geographical and cross business units, the Service Organisation can come closer to the customer and they can then drive the service innovation more based on the global accounts’ needs. This would increase customer satisfaction, as more services would meet the customers’ needs and requirements, which would drive growth of the service business.
References


Appendices

Appendix A – List of Informants
Appendix B – Description of Informant Groups
Appendix C – Interview Guide to Informant Group 1
Appendix D – Interview Guide to Informant Group 2
Appendix E – Interview Guide to Informant Group 3
# Appendix A – List of Informants

## Table 3: List of informants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant Group</th>
<th>Title / Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Informant Group 1 - Service Development Project Teams** | Project Manager  
Business Developer  
Project Manager  
Technical Expert  
Business Developer, Consultant  
Past Project Manager |
| **Informant Group 2 - Service Strategy and Management Teams** | Director  
Manager  
Senior Project Manager  
Manager  
Director  
Manager  
Business Development Manager  
Manager  
Director |
| **Informant Group 3 - Global Account Teams** | Global Account Project Manager  
Past Global Account Technical Director  
Global Account Director  
Global Account Director  
Global Account System Performance Analyst  
Global Account Technical Director  
Global Account Technical Director  
Global Account Technical Director  
Global Account Technical Director |

Appendix B - Description of Informant Groups

See Table 3 for the list of informants and informant groups.

Informant Group 1 - Service Development Project Teams
The first group of informants consists of informants from the service development project teams. From this informant group, many project managers were interviewed but also other project team members, e.g. business developers, technical experts etc. All the project managers worked on different projects. Some project members had experience from many different service development projects and some had experience from mainly one service development project.

Informant Group 2 - Service Strategy and Management Teams
From this group of informants, managers and directors on a central and local level were interviewed. The Service Department X’s central management team were all interviewed as well as the manager responsible for the whole Service Organisation and its portfolio. This was to get a holistic understanding of how the MNC today sets the service roadmap and if/how the MNC, from a process perspective, today uses the Global Account Teams to initiate and drive new service development projects.

Informant Group 3 - Global Account Teams
This group of informants consists of people from the Global Account Teams. There are several global accounts within the MNC and there are many people working only towards the respective global accounts. The Global Account Directors and the Global Account Technical Directors’ role is to have a holistic, strategic view of the global account. These were therefore important informants. All Global Account Technical Directors were interviewed to get a holistic understanding of the global account management from a service perspective. That they all represented different global accounts led to a broader image of how the different Global Account Teams work and how the global accounts’ needs are used for service development projects. If all representatives would be from one global account, the results might not reflect how the other global accounts’ needs are used as input to service developments. Apart from the Global Account Directors and Global Account Technical Directors, also a Global Account Project Manager was interviewed as well as a Global Account System Performance Analyst. This was to get input from other roles from other levels of the Global Account Teams and to increase the understanding of how the whole Global Account Teams work, also in the local organisations.
Appendix C - Interview Guide to Informant Group 1

Background / Introduction

1. Is it okay if I audio-record this interview?
2. How would you describe your role?
3. What service development project/projects have you been working on recently?
   a. How would you describe your role in this (these) project (projects)?

*If informant has experience from more than one project: start from question 9
*If informant has experience mainly from one project: skip question 9-14

Customer Involvement in Service Development

4. What is the scope and background of the project?
   a. How was the project initiated?
   b. Was there any investigation done prior to starting the project to analyse the demand? If so, how was it done?
5. Have any customers been involved in the development of this service?
   a. If so, can you explain their involvement (e.g. what customers, how often, what kind of involvement/interaction)?
6. Have the global accounts played any role in the development of this service?
   a. If yes:
      i. Can you explain their involvement?
      ii. How would you describe the collaboration between the service development project and the Global Account Team?
      iii. How have the global accounts’ needs and requirements been managed?
   b. If no:
      i. Why not?
      ii. Do you think you would benefit from having bigger customers on board when developing the service?
Overall Project Progression

7. How has the project progressed?
   a. Would you say it has been a successful project? Why/why not?
   b. How has the speed been? When did it start? When will it finish?
   c. Anything that has gone particularly well?
   d. Anything that has not gone so well?
   e. What can we learn from this service development project?

8. How would you describe the customer demand of the service being developed?

Differences between the Projects

Questions 9-14 are questions to ask if the informant has experience from more than one service development project.

9. How were the projects initiated?
   a. Was there any investigation done prior to starting the project to analyse the demand? If so, how was it done?
   b. How does it differ between the projects?

10. What would you say is the biggest difference between the projects?
    a. What do you think is the reason behind this difference?

11. How would you describe the difference in terms of customer involvement between the different projects?
    a. What has this led to?

12. How would you describe the customer demand of the different services?
    a. How does it differ between the different projects?
    b. What is the reason for this?

13. How would you describe the speed of the different service development projects?
    a. How does it differ between the different projects?
    b. What is the reason for this?

14. How would you describe the challenges that the teams have faced in the different projects?
    a. How do they differ between the different projects?
    b. What is the reason for this?
    c. What do you think we can learn from the different projects?

Collaboration with the Global Account Teams

15. How would you describe the relationship/collaboration between the service development organisation and the Global Account Team?
    a. How do you work together?
    b. Is it important to have a close collaboration? If so, why?
    c. What works well?
    d. What could be improved?
16. How do you think the Global Account Team can play a role to increase the relevance / secure demand for the services being developed?
17. How do you think the Global Account Team can play a role to speed up the development of new services?
18. If the global account technical directors would instead belong to the Service Organisation, what would that lead to?
   a. Would it be beneficial? Why/Why not?
   b. What would the drawbacks be?

**Challenges / Potential Drawbacks**

19. What downsides could there be of driving the service development projects more based on the global accounts’ needs?
   a. Why don’t we do it more than we do today?
20. What do you think are the main challenges when working with the global accounts’ needs and requirements?

**Final Questions**

21. What main challenges do you see in the development of a new service?
22. What do you think the Service Organisation must improve in when it comes to service development?
23. Do you have any other comments?
   a. Anything you feel like I haven’t asked about?
Appendix D - Interview Guide to Informant Group 2

Background / Introduction

1. Is it okay if I audio-record this interview?
2. How would you describe your role?

Service Development from a Management Perspective

3. What do you think the Service Organisation must improve in when it comes to service development?
4. How are the service development projects initiated?
   a. Who do you take input from when planning what services to develop?
5. How are the customers involved?
   a. How do we know that the services meet their needs?
   b. How do we know the developed services are the ones of the biggest value to the customers?
6. How is the demand estimated?
7. How do you prioritise?
   a. Do you have a prioritisation for global accounts as they are the biggest, most important customers?
      i. If so, how?
      ii. If not, why not?
8. Is there a process for capturing global needs among the global accounts?
   a. If, so, how can you describe the process?
   b. If not, why is there not a process for this? Do you think it should be one?
9. How would you describe the collaboration between the different service departments?
   a. How do you think it can be improved?
Collaboration with the Global Account Teams

10. How would you describe the relationship/collaboration between the service development organisation and the Global Account Team?
   a. How do you work together?
   b. Is it important to have a close collaboration? If so, why?
   c. What works well?
   d. What could be improved?

11. How do you think the Global Account Team can play a role to increase the relevance / secure demand for the services being developed?

12. How do you think the Global Account Team can play a role to speed up the development of new services?

13. If the Global Account Technical Directors would instead belong to the Service Organisation, what would that lead to?
   a. Would it be beneficial? Why/Why not?
   b. What would the drawbacks be?

Challenges / Potential Drawbacks

14. What downsides could there be of driving the service development projects more based on the global accounts’ needs?
   a. Why don’t we do it more than we do today?

15. What do you think are the main challenges when working with the global accounts’ needs and requirements?

Final Questions

16. What main challenges do you see with developing a new service?

17. What main challenges do you see with setting the service strategy/roadmap?

18. Do you have anything to add?
   a. Anything you feel that I haven’t asked about?
Appendix E - Interview Guide to Informant Group 3

Background / Introduction

1. Is it okay if I audio-record this interview?
2. How would you describe your role?
3. How would you describe the Global Account Team’s role within the company?
4. How would you describe the Global Account Technical Director’s role?
5. Why is global account management needed?
6. How would you describe the relationship between the MNC and the different global accounts?

Collaboration with the Service Development Organisation

7. How would you describe the relationship/collaboration between the service development organisation and the Global Account Team?
   a. How do you work together?
   b. What is the most important with having a close collaboration?
   c. What works well?
   d. What could be improved?
8. What do you get out of a close collaboration with the service development organisation?
   a. How can the service development organisation help and contribute to your work?
9. How do you give input to the service development organisation today?
   a. Do you have meetings / workshops together?
   b. Do you give input to the service roadmap? If so, how?
   c. Do you give input to / work with specific service development projects? If so, how?
   d. How do you think this can be improved?
10. What role did the Global Account Team play in Project A?
11. Do you feel that the global accounts’ needs are being prioritised?
   a. Do you think they should be prioritised? Why / why not?
   b. Do you feel that the service development organisation listens to the global accounts’ needs and captures the input you give?
   c. How could this be improved?
12. How do you think the Global Account Team can play a role to increase the relevance / secure demand for the services being developed?
13. How do you think the Global Account Team can play a role to speed up the development of new services?
14. If the Global Account Technical Directors would instead belong to the Service Organisation, what would that lead to?
   a. Would it be beneficial? Why/Why not?
b. What would the drawbacks be?

**Challenges / Potential Drawbacks**

15. What downsides could there be of driving the service development projects more based on the global accounts’ needs?
16. What do you think are the main challenges when working with the global accounts’ needs and requirements?

**Final Questions**

17. What do you think the Service Organisation must improve in when it comes to service development?
18. Do you have any other comments?
   a. Anything you feel that I haven’t asked about?