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**The Corporate Accelerator as a new Phenomenon of
Organizational Separation in Ambidexterity**

A Single Case Study

**Exploring the Factors influencing the Exploratory Capability
of a Corporate Accelerator**

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Abstract

Title: THE CORPORATE ACCELERATOR AS A NEW PHENOMENON OF ORGANIZATIONAL SEPARATION IN AMBIDEXTERITY: A Single Case Study Exploring the Factors influencing the Exploratory Capability of a Corporate Accelerator

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Keywords: Organizational Ambidexterity, Exploration, Exploratory Capability, Organizational Separation, Structural Ambidexterity, Contextual Ambidexterity, Accelerator, Corporate Accelerator, Corporate-Startup Collaboration, Facilitators, Barriers

Research question/s: What are the factors influencing the exploratory capability of a corporate accelerator and how do these factors influence the exploratory capability of a corporate accelerator?

Methodology: The study was conducted through a single case study and followed a qualitative research strategy on the corporate accelerator as a new phenomenon of organizational separation. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews and was analyzed according to the recommendation by Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2012).

Theoretical perspectives: In order to understand the context of this research, literature regarding ambidexterity and corporate accelerators was reviewed. Moreover, literature relating to exploration as well as characteristics and design elements of corporate accelerators was used to understand the relationships between the factors influencing the exploratory capability of a corporate accelerator.

Conclusions: The corporate accelerator was identified as a separate exploratory unit, which belongs to the ambidextrous form of organizational separation. The limited duration represents a key characteristic of corporate accelerators and leads to their distinction from existing forms of organizational separation. Therefore, this study extends ambidexterity research by investigating the corporate accelerator as a new phenomenon of organizational separation. In addition, the findings contribute to corporate accelerator research by broadening their understanding through the identification of factors influencing the corporate accelerator's exploratory capability. The facilitating effects of personal drive, structure, culture, external knowledge and experimentation were found to be mostly aligned with the facilitating conditions of exploration. However, a dual influence of limited duration and corporate involvement on the corporate accelerator's exploratory capability was identified. The understanding of the influencing factors identified through this research can be used to enhance the design of corporate accelerators to foster their exploratory capability.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Organizations evolve over periods involving incremental and revolutionary change (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). By continuously improving the performance of the organization (Koryak et al., 2018), incremental change mostly produces positive returns (March, 1991), secures the organization's current viability (Levinthal & March, 1993) and enhances its stable performance (He & Wong, 2004). However, incremental change does not allow organizations to respond to a dynamic environment, which requires larger organizational changes to sustain the organization's long-term success (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996) and secure its future viability (Levinthal & March, 1993). Therefore, organizations need to pursue incremental change by exploiting their current competencies while also exploring new opportunities to survive by responding to their dynamic environments. This balancing act between exploration and exploitation is referred to as 'Organizational Ambidexterity' (Levinthal & March, 1993; March, 1991).

The main difficulty of achieving organizational ambidexterity by balancing exploitation and exploration lies in the contrary nature of those two capabilities (Benner & Tushman, 2003; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008). Exploitation focuses on using and developing existing knowledge (Levinthal & March, 1993) to refine competencies and enhance efficiency (March, 1991), whereas exploration requires the acquisition of new knowledge (Levinthal & March, 1993) through search, discovery and experimentation with new opportunities (March, 1991). Hence, the paradoxical relationship between exploration and exploitation creates tensions regarding the opposing structures, processes, cultures, strategies and goals that are required to facilitate both activities in an organization (He & Wong, 2004; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008). Due to the more certain and proximate returns and the nature of adaptive processes within organizations, companies tend to focus on exploitation at the expense of exploration, (March, 1991; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996), which sets them at risk of failing in the long term (Tushman & O'Reilly, 2008).

In contrast to the exploitative focus of most established organizations (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996), startups out-perform their competition by inventing new technologies and constantly reinventing the market (Deloitte, 2015), thus, excelling most established organizations in exploration. For this reason, an increasing number of organizations is now outsourcing, partnering, sponsoring and collaborating with startups, with the aim to benefit from their

creativity, knowledge and innovative capacity (Richter, Jackson & Schildhauer, 2017). Since 2010, the corporate accelerator has emerged as a new form of startup-corporate collaboration that organizations leverage to benefit from startups' complementing characteristics (Kohler, 2016; Kupp, Marval & Borchers, 2017; Weiblen & Chesbrough, 2015). Almost 80 programs for different organizations worldwide were developed since, helping both partners collaborate and develop innovative products and services, while supporting established organizations in harvesting innovation, organizational learning and engaging in entrepreneurial activities (Moschner & Herstatt, 2017).

While the goals of organizations implementing corporate accelerators may vary, the main objectives have been identified as the exploration of trends and opportunities, testing of ideas and development of new products (Kanbach & Stubner, 2017; Moschner & Herstatt, 2016; Weiblen & Chesbrough, 2015). Hence, many companies with corporate accelerators aim to foster their exploratory capability through this new organizational form.

Corporate accelerators offer unique programs by providing support to a cohort of selected startups through providing intensive mentorship, coaching, working space and seed capital during a limited time period (Hathaway, 2016; Kohler, 2016; Miller & Bound, 2011), thus, allowing their clear distinction from other forms of startup-corporate collaboration (Cohen & Hochberg, 2014). Consequently, corporate accelerators represent a new way of organizations to foster exploration through the collaboration with startups.

1.2 Problem Discussion

Past ambidexterity literature has defined several forms of organizational ambidexterity, including temporal, organizational or domain separation between exploratory and exploitative activities as well as the simultaneous pursuit of both activities within one unit, referred to as contextual ambidexterity (Jansen et al., 2009). Organizational separation aims at simultaneously pursuing exploration and exploitation in separate, autonomous units that provide different structures, procedures, cultures, systems and competencies to facilitate either capability (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008).

By offering flexibility, simple structures and decentralized decision-making (Kohler, 2016) while aiming at exploring trends or testing and developing new ideas (Kanbach & Stubner, 2016), corporate accelerators conform with several key characteristics of separate organizational units for exploration. However, the limited duration of this type of corporate-

startup collaboration (Kohler, 2016) distinguishes the corporate accelerator from existing organizational separation as it has been studied in past ambidexterity research. Therefore, the corporate accelerator represents a new phenomenon of organizational separation for ambidexterity, which has not been studied as such yet. Indeed, scholars have underlined the limited application of scientific theories to the corporate accelerator context (Bauer, Obwegeser & Avdagic, 2016), confirming the need for deeper investigations of the corporate accelerator phenomenon.

The increasing number of corporate accelerators (Kohler, 2016) and the current lack of studies confirming its effectiveness in reaching their implementation goals (Bauer et al., 2016; Richter et al., 2017) fortifies the importance to shed light on the capability of the corporate accelerator to foster exploration. In contrast, all other forms of ambidexterity have been subject to academic scrutiny in the past, providing academia and industry with valuable insights regarding their facilitators and barriers. Yet, the recent emergence of corporate accelerators entails a limited scope of research to date (Bauer et al., 2016). Accordingly, most studies on corporate accelerators (e.g. Bauer et al., 2016; Richter et al., 2017) draw on findings from the overall field of accelerators, which corporate accelerators are situated in, as all accelerators share similar key characteristics, in providing intensive support, large networks and seed capital for startups during a limited duration (Pauwels et al., 2016).

Past studies have mainly contributed to corporate accelerator research through the identification of underlying characteristics and design elements (e.g. Kohler, 2016; Richter et al., 2017), thus, leaving organizations with a trial and error approach (Moschner & Herstatt, 2017) to find out whether the corporate accelerator is effective in reaching the corporate goals behind its implementation. While some studies on independent accelerators have examined their impact on accelerated ventures (e.g. Hallen, Bingham & Cohen, 2017; Hochberg, 2015), the applicability of these findings is limited in the corporate accelerator context, especially when corporate employees form the venture teams of the corporate accelerator. Hence, further empirical studies are needed to elucidate the currently limited field of corporate accelerator research and provide evidence for the corporate accelerator's effectiveness, which is emphasized by multiple scholars (e.g. Kanbach & Stubner, 2016; Moschner & Herstatt, 2017; Richter et al., 2017).

By viewing the corporate accelerator through the lens of ambidexterity research, corporate accelerators that have been implemented with the corporate goal to foster exploration

classify as a separate organizational unit for exploration. Consequently, corporate accelerators form a new phenomenon of organizational separation. While mature organizations typically aim to enhance their ambidexterity through separate, autonomous units that accommodate the contrary needs for exploration and exploitation, scholars have identified several limitations of this mode and expressed the need to identify alternative structural solutions facilitating ambidexterity (De Araujo Burcharth & Ulhoi, 2011; Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004).

For this purpose, this study aims to contribute to the field of ambidexterity research by examining the corporate accelerator as a new phenomenon of organizational separation. Since the corporate accelerator is an emerging organizational form, studies have neither examined its effectiveness in fostering exploration, nor investigated corporate accelerators that accelerate employee startups in combination with external ventures. Thus, this study aims to address these gaps in corporate accelerator literature by studying the factors influencing the exploratory capability of a corporate accelerator, which accelerates employee startups. The aim of the thesis is to provide empirical evidence for the identification of factors influencing the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator. By clarifying the influence of these factors, this research further seeks to provide insights regarding the effectiveness of the corporate accelerator concerning the organizational goal of enhancing exploration through this separate unit. Finally, by defining the relationship between factors of the corporate accelerator and its exploratory capability, this research aims to offer valuable insights for managerial implications regarding the appropriate design of corporate accelerators to foster exploration.

The case company represents an especially relevant case for this study, as it established a corporate accelerator in 2016 with the aim to explore ideas outside the company's core business while accelerating equal numbers of internal and external startups in each batch. Hence, the effectiveness of the corporate accelerator in the case company depends on its exploratory capability, requiring an understanding of the influential factors as provided by this study.

1.3 Purpose and Research Question

Ambidexterity research has identified organizational separation as a means for fostering exploration and exploitation in separate organizational units. This study investigates the corporate accelerator as a new phenomenon of organizational separation, thus, making a

novel connection between ambidexterity and corporate accelerator theories. As the corporate accelerator represents a separate organizational unit for exploration, this research aims to explore the factors influencing the corporate accelerator's exploratory capability. Therefore, this study examines the presence of factors influencing the exploratory capability of the case company's corporate accelerator and their effect on the corporate accelerator's exploratory capability. For this purpose, the research question contains the following two foci:

What are the factors influencing the exploratory capability of a corporate accelerator and how do these factors influence the exploratory capability of a corporate accelerator?

The purpose of this research is to explore the corporate accelerator through the lens of ambidexterity research in order to define, how factors inherent in the corporate accelerator influence its exploratory capability. As the exploratory capability is grounded in the conditions provided within the corporate accelerator, this study aims to identify those factors and investigate their influence on the unit's exploratory capability. Therefore, the research question aims to provide a meaningful contribution to ambidexterity and corporate accelerator literature, by filling the current gap regarding the effectiveness of corporate accelerators in fostering its exploratory capability and extending ambidexterity research through the investigation of the corporate accelerator as a new separate unit for exploration.

1.4 Case Company

The research design represents a single case study on the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator. The case company was chosen due to its implementation of a corporate accelerator in 2016 with the overall aim of exploration and its admission of internal and external startups. Thus, the choice of the case company allows this study to address the identified gaps in existing corporate accelerator research, while permitting the application of ambidexterity theory to the corporate accelerator as a separate exploratory unit. In the following section, background information on the case company, its corporate accelerator, activities and conditions that are relevant for this specific study are provided.

The case company is privately-owned and operates globally in an industry that has been characterized by stability and oligopoly in the past. The case company represents one of the leading companies in its market and operates in more than 30 countries to serve its almost 35 million customers. In the past, the stability of its environment allowed the company to successfully operate by focusing on exploitation (Lavie, Stettner & Tushman, 2010).

However, recently the industry has been experiencing a change caused by the emergence of startups introducing new and innovative ideas. Hence, the competitive intensity and dynamism of the industry have increased (Lavie et al., 2010), necessitating exploration to drive change and adapt to the dynamic environment (Levinthal & March, 1993).

In reaction to the changing environment, the case company established their own corporate accelerator in 2016. The overall aim of the accelerator is to explore new internal and external business ideas that lie outside the core business in combination with the initiation of a cultural change within the company. Employees and early- to mid-stage external startups can apply to the 5-month accelerator program and equal numbers of each are admitted to each accelerator batch.

Since its establishment, three accelerator batches have been completed and the fourth batch is currently in the process. The following table provides an overview of dates and admissions of internal teams to each batch. The number of teams admitted to each batch varies, as it strongly depends on the applications received.

Batch	Dates	No. of internal teams
1	February 2016 - June 2016	1
2	October 2016 - February 2017	2
3	August 2017 - January 2018	3
4	February 2018 - June 2018	2

Table 1: Overview of Corporate Accelerator Batches at the Case Company

In the beginning of the 5-month acceleration program, the external startups receive funding in the amount of 15.000€ and an additional 15.000€ in return for a share subscription right. The internal startups leave their current position at the case company for the time of the accelerator program, while still receiving their monthly salary plus an additional funding of 30.000€ for their business idea. The intellectual property (IP) rights for the ideas of internal teams are fully owned by the case company.

During the accelerator program, all startups are provided with work space in an external co-working space, where most coaching sessions and activities are hosted. Furthermore, all teams receive continuous and intense support through coaching, mentorship and access to a network of industry and startup experts. Each startup is assigned to an internal mentor with

the aim to form a connection to the case company. The 5-month acceleration program ends with a demo day, where all startups pitch in front corporate employees, executives and external partners. After completion of the accelerator program, corporate executives make a decision about the further procedure with the accelerated startup teams.

Hence, the case company established the corporate accelerator to foster exploration as a reaction to the changing environment, which aligns with the need for exploration to ensure the future viability of the business (Levinthal & March, 1993). Therefore, the case company represents a revelatory case for studying the corporate accelerator as a separate unit for exploration. The lack of metrics for accelerator performance (Bauer et al., 2016; Moschner & Herstatt, 2017) and the required long-term evaluation of corporate accelerator success (Kupp et al., 2017) currently hinder the assessment of the impact produced by corporate accelerators. This also applies to the case company. However, the examination of the corporate accelerator's exploratory capability and its influential factors can give an organization valuable insight regarding the effectiveness of a corporate accelerator aiming at fostering exploration. Therefore, this study aims to not only contribute to the identified gaps in research literature, but also to provide support for organizations implementing corporate accelerators to foster exploration, by determining the factors influencing the corporate accelerator's exploratory capability.

1.5 Outline of Thesis

The thesis contains 6 different chapters, covering the following parts. After the introduction to the research topic and the case company, the second chapter provides a detailed overview of relevant theories and concepts from existing literature. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology that has been applied for data collection and analysis in this research. Subsequently, chapter 4 presents the main research findings, which are analyzed and discussed in chapter 5. Finally, chapter 6 concludes the research based on the analysis and outlines managerial implications, research limitations and suggestions for future research.

2 Literature Review

In order to view the corporate accelerator through the lens of ambidexterity research and arrive at its classification as new phenomenon of organizational separation, the concept of ambidexterity, its paradox and relevant forms of ambidexterity are explained in the following section. Subsequently, the young field of corporate accelerator research is examined to provide an understanding of this new form of corporate-startup collaboration. Lastly, a relation between the concepts of ambidexterity and corporate accelerators is established to clarify the approach taken by this research.

2.1 Ambidexterity

2.1.1 Concept of Ambidexterity

Organizational ambidexterity has been defined as a cornerstone of organizations' long-term success and represents the organization's capability to pursue both, the efficient exploitation of current business competencies and the exploration of new business opportunities in order to adapt to the changing environment (Cao, Gedajlovic & Zhang, 2009; Gavetti & Levinthal, 2000; Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; Jansen et al., 2009; Levinthal, 1991; Levinthal & March, 1993; Lubatkin et al., 2006; March, 1991; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008; Raisch et al., 2009; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). While incremental change through exploitation is needed to improve an organization's efficiency over time, it does not allow for adaption to a dynamic environment in times of revolutionary change (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). Therefore, every organization needs "to engage in sufficient exploitation to ensure its current viability and, at the same time, to devote enough energy to exploration to ensure its future viability" (Levinthal & March, 1993: 105).

Accordingly, exploration and exploitation represent paradoxical organizational capabilities, that not only comprise opposing activities producing different outcomes, but also pose contrary organizational demands on an organization aiming to be ambidextrous (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009, 2010; Jansen, 2008, Jansen et al. 2009; Lewis, 2000; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008; Papachroni, Heracleous & Paroutis, 2014; Koryak et al., 2018; Raisch & Zimmermann, 2017; Smith & Lewis, 2011). Therefore, different structures, cultures, processes and strategies are required to enable exploration and exploitation, making the achievement of ambidexterity a major challenge for organizations (e.g. Benner & Tushman, 2003; March, 1991; Levinthal & March, 1993; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008, 2013; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008).

As organizations have limited resources available, they are required to make strategic and investment choices between exploration and exploitation (March, 1991) and past research has emphasized the tendency of organizations to focus on exploitation for several reasons. The uncertainty of profits from exploration and the potential need to cannibalize profitable business for uncertain new business enhance managers' tendency to focus on exploitation at the expense of exploration (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996).

The tendency to focus on exploitation is further supported by the nature of adaptive processes within the organization (March, 1991). As increasing experience at an activity leads to higher performance and returns, organizations are likely to find themselves in a cycle of improving existing competences to increase the probability of their returns, thus, further spurring their future focus on exploitation (Argyris & Schön, 1978; David, 1985, Herriott, Levinthal & March, 1985; March, 1991).

However, an excessive focus on exploitation is likely to bring the company into "suboptimal stable equilibria" (March, 1991: 71), which might not be viable in the future, whereas a focus on exploration at the expense of exploitation is likely to lead to high experimentation expenses without many benefits. Therefore, the optimal balance between exploitation and exploration forms one of the managers' main responsibilities to build a business with long-term success (March, 1991; Smith & Tushman, 2005).

Based on the described paradox inherent in ambidexterity, the importance of this organizational capability can be summarized as follows:

"This capability, to both explore and exploit, helps organizations to reconfigure existing assets and capabilities to sense and seize new opportunities. Without it, path dependence dynamics or structural inertia drive organizations toward continued successful exploitation – and, in the face of changing markets and technology – toward failure."

(O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008: 200)

2.1.2 Exploration vs. Exploitation

Scholars have emphasized that exploration and exploitation are relative to organizations, as exploration by one organization may be perceived as exploitation by another, depending on whether certain knowledge, markets or technology are new or familiar to the organization (Lavie et al., 2010). As this research aims to identify factors influencing the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator, a thorough understanding of the opposing nature of exploration and exploitation at a holistic level is required. Therefore, the following section provides a comparison of the contrary activities, required organizational conditions and outcomes of exploration and exploitation.

2.1.2.1 Comparison of Activities

One of the earliest researchers on ambidexterity and often cited scholar March (1991: 71) has defined exploration as “things captured by terms such as search, variation, risk taking, experimentation, play, flexibility, discovery, innovation” and exploitation as related to “refinement, choice, production, efficiency, selection, implementation, execution.” Later, Levinthal and March (1993: 105) narrowed the definition of exploration to “the pursuit of new knowledge, of things that might come to be known” and defined exploitation as “the use and development of things already known.”

Therefore, the acquisition of new knowledge has been identified as major characteristic of exploration and received further attention by scholars (Lavie & Rosenkopf, 2006; Lavie et al., 2010; Smith & Tushman, 2005). In their empirical research, Rosenkopf and Nerkar (2001) studied the explorational impact of sourcing knowledge from inside and outside the organization has on exploration. Their findings provide evidence that exploration spanning organizational boundaries creates higher impacts than exploration taking place only within organizational boundaries.

Moreover, authors have emphasized that exploration and exploitation form subsequent stages regarding the use of knowledge. Thus, an organization acquires and experiments with new knowledge when performing exploration, which will later contribute to the development of exploitative routines once the organization repeatedly applies the knowledge (Lavie et al., 2010). Consequently, existing and new knowledge need to be integrated to fully enhance ambidexterity (Cao et al., 2009).

2.1.2.2 Comparison of Organizational Demands

Since exploration and exploitation have a paradoxical relationship, both pose contrary demands on an organization regarding required structures, procedures, culture, incentives, and customer orientation (e.g. Benner & Tushman, 2003; Cao et al., 2009; He & Wong, 2004; Levinthal & March, 1993; March, 1991; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008, 2013; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008). An outline of the opposing organizational demands of exploration and exploitation is provided in the following segment.

Structures and Procedures

The tensions that exploration and exploitation pose for an organization regarding their procedural and structural requirements have been underlined by many scholars in ambidexterity research (e.g. Benner & Tushman, 2003; Chang, Yang & Chen, 2009; Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; Koryak et al., 2018; McGrath, 2001; Siggelkow & Levinthal, 2003; Tushman et al., 2010; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). Scholars have linked rather mechanic structures involving routines, bureaucracy, control and path dependence to exploitation allowing for successful operation in stable markets (Ancona et al. 2001; Beckman et al., 2004; Benner & Tushman, 2003; Brown & Eisenhardt 1998; He & Wong, 2004; Koryak et al., 2018; Lewin, Long & Carroll, 1999; March, 1991). Exploration on the contrary has been linked to more organic structures facilitating autonomy, decentralization and flexibility through loose systems that allow for competition in emerging markets (He & Wong, 2004; Jansen et al., 2009; Koryak et al., 2018; Rosenkopf & Nerkar, 2001). Hence, structures and processes for exploration aim to facilitate flexibility, radical innovation and speed (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996).

Cultures

The organizational culture generally captures the underlying values and norms of an organization (Denison, 1990; Schein, 1985) that create a social control system for the people within it (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). The implications of an organizational culture can be twofold, as culture can steer people through institutional values and norms to effectively foster the firm's success in stable environments, yet, it can become a barrier when discontinuous change is needed (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). Thus, "openness, autonomy, initiative, and risk taking" (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996: 26) have been identified as cultural norms required for innovation, whereas risk aversion has been associated with exploitation, due to the more certain and proximate returns compared to exploration (Lavie et al., 2010;

March, 1991). Similarly, Benner and Tushman (2003) have defined cultures of exploratory units as loose in contrast to tight cultures of exploitative units.

Personal Drivers

Exploration and exploitation entail tensions between personal drivers that were further explored by Andriopoulos and Lewis (2009). In their empirical study, discipline is found to be the personal driver of exploitation, involving “control, accountability and structure” (p.706), as it facilitates speed and efficiency (Benner & Tushman, 2002). In contrast, exploration is driven by passion, which entails “personal expression, challenge and pride” (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009: 706). Moreover, discipline was found to be fostered through “execution, budgeting, and other administrative elements”, while passion was facilitated by “experimentation and ideation” (707). Lastly, Andriopoulos and Lewis’ (2009) findings suggest that discipline and passion are synergistic rather than conflicting, as discipline without passion may result in rigidity (Brown & Duguid, 2001), whereas passion without discipline may lead to inefficiency.

Customer Orientation

Andriopoulos and Lewis (2009) emphasize that exploration and exploitation differ strongly in their customer foci. Thus, exploitation entails strong market orientation and requires the organization to fulfill several market-related capabilities to compete (Judge & Blocker, 2008). These capabilities entail the ability to understand customer needs in order to create value for the customers (Slater & Narver, 1999) and market requirements (Day, 1994), requiring processes for gathering and understanding of market information (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993) in order to respond to market requirements (Day, 1994; Jaworski & Kohli, 1993). Hence, exploitation generally involves tight alignment with current customers (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Judge & Blocker, 2008), which may increase the firm’s likelihood to only focus on incremental improvements to address current customers (Christensen & Bower, 1996), while overlooking opportunities and threats emerging elsewhere (Leonard-Barton, 1992; Danneels, 2003).

In contrast to exploitation, exploration entails rather loose linkages with current customers (Judge & Blocker, 2008). This allows the organization to be more flexible and adaptable to the market and to spot opportunities and threats outside their existing market (Danneels, 2003). Hence, exploration entails experimentation and risk-taking to identify and target new markets (Covin & Sleving, 1989). However, Judge and Blocker (2008) draw attention to the

financial risks involved in this loose customer linkage as it might be more difficult for a firm to capture value from these innovations. Lastly, an excessive focus on technology at the expense of market feedback may result in the development of products and services that the market does not demand (Kotler & Armstrong, 1996). Therefore, Andriopoulos and Lewis (2009) found that effective teams often iterate between being close to the customer to understand project constraints and exploring new domains by freeing themselves from constraints. Danneels (2003) referred to this procedure as tight and loose coupling between organization and customer to enable exploration while ensuring commercial success.

2.1.2.3 Comparison of Outcomes

Similar to the contradicting activities and organizational demands of exploration and exploitation, both entail different outcomes for an organization (He & Wong, 2004). Exploratory activities generally aim to discover new business opportunities and facilitate new product and service development (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). Therefore, exploration facilitates the development of radical innovations, which target the needs of new customers (Levinthal & March, 1993; March, 1991; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996; Tushman & Smith, 2008).

On the contrary, exploitation produces incremental innovations, which generally entail minor changes to current products or services (Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008) and the enhancement of existing knowledge regarding technologies and customers (Danneels, 2002; Jansen, van den Bosch & Volberda, 2006). Hence, incremental innovations aim to address current customer needs (Benner & Tushman, 2003; He & Wong, 2004; Tushman & Smith, 2002) and improve the organization's performance and growth (Koryak et al., 2018). As a result, exploitation is likely to lead to superior performance in the short-term, but not in the long-term (Judge & Blocker, 2008).

The difference in explorative and exploitative activities and aims leads to a high divergence between their outcomes (Lavie et al., 2010). The contrary nature of returns achieved by exploration and exploitation further contributes to the paradoxical relationship. March (1991: 85) describes returns associated with exploitation as "positive, proximate, and predictable", while returns associated with exploration are rather "uncertain, distant, and often negative". For this reason, He and Wong (2004: 481) argue that "explorative firms generate larger performance variation by experiencing substantial success as well as failure, while exploitative firms are likely to generate more stable performance".

2.1.2.4 Overview of Exploration vs. Exploitation

The following table provides a summary of the opposing activities, organizational demands and outcomes of exploration and exploitation found in ambidexterity literature.

Factors	Exploration	Exploitation	Sources
Activities	Search, variation, risk taking, experimentation, play, flexibility, discovery, innovation	Refinement, choice, production, efficiency, selection, implementation, execution	March, 1991
	Acquisition of new knowledge	Use and refinement of existing knowledge	Levinthal & March, 1993
Structures & Procedures	Organic structures facilitating autonomy, decentralization, flexibility through loose systems allowing for competition in emerging markets	Mechanic structures involving routines, bureaucracy, control and path dependence allowing for successful operation in stable markets	Exploration: He & Wong, 2004; Jansen et al., 2009; Koryak et al. 2018; Rosenkopf & Nerkar, 2001; Tushman & Anderson, 1997 Exploitation: Ancona et al. 2001; Beckman et al., 2004; Benner & Tushman, 2003; Brown & Eisenhardt 1998; He & Wong, 2004; Koryak et al., 2018; Lewin et al. 1999; March, 1991
Culture	Open, autonomous, risk taking and initiative	Risk averse	Exploration: Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996 Exploitation: Lavie et al., 2010; March, 1991; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996
	Loose culture	Tight culture	Benner & Tushman, 2003
Personal Drivers	Passion through personal expression, challenge and pride	Discipline through control, accountability and structure	Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009
Customer Orientation	Loose linkages with current customers	Strong market orientation	Judge & Blocker, 2008
	Experimentation and risk taking to identify and target new markets	Tight alignment with current customers	Exploration: Covin & Sleving, 1989 Exploitation: Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Judge & Blocker, 2008
Outcomes	Radical innovations for new customers addressing new opportunities	Incremental innovations addressing current customers' needs	Exploration: Levinthal & March, 1993; March, 1991; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996; Tushman & Smith, 2008 Exploitation: Benner & Tushman, 2003; He & Wong, 2004; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008; Tushman & Smith, 2002
	Long-term performance	Short-term performance	Judge & Blocker, 2008
	Uncertain, distant and often negative returns	Positive, proximate and predictable returns	March, 1991

Table 2: Overview of Exploration vs. Exploitation

2.1.3 Forms of Ambidexterity

While consensus in past research exists regarding the need for organizational ambidexterity, conceptualizations differ concerning how exploration and exploitation ought to be pursued to achieve ambidexterity (Cao et al., 2009). Within this research, organizational separation and contextual ambidexterity have been identified as relevant for the corporate accelerator context and will be elaborated in the following sections.

2.1.3.1 Organizational Separation

Organizational separation, also referred to as structural ambidexterity, involves the formation of separate autonomous units, with one focusing on exploration and the other focusing on exploitation, thus, allowing the organization to simultaneously pursue high levels of exploration and exploitation (e.g. Cao et al., 2009; Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; Gupta et al., 2006; Jansen et al., 2006; Lavie & Rosenkopf, 2006; Lubatkin et al., 2006; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008). The two autonomous units are therefore lead by different managerial teams (Lavie et al., 2010; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008; Taylor & Helfat, 2009) and adopt “different competencies, systems, incentives, processes and cultures” (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008: 193) that are internally aligned within each unit. Hence, organizational separation facilitates consistency within units regarding their culture, organizational design and tasks to be performed, while inconsistency exists across units regarding the activities performed in each (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996).

To clarify the differences between both units, scholars (e.g. Benner & Tushman, 2002, 2003; Christensen, 1998; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996, O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008; Lavie et al., 2010; Raisch et al., 2009) have defined their distinctive characteristics. Hence, exploratory units are characterized by smaller size, loose cultures, decentralization and flexible structures to allow experimentation and the generation of innovation. By keeping units small and autonomous, employees are more likely to develop a sense of ownership and responsibility, which could not be provided in a large organization (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). Same authors suggest that this setting will enhance a culture of autonomy and risk taking. Exploitation units on the other hand are larger and characterized by centralization, tighter structures and cultures focusing on increasing efficiency and control (e.g. Benner & Tushman, 2002, 2003; Christensen, 1998; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996, O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008; Lavie et al., 2010; Raisch et al., 2009). The separation of units protects exploratory units from inhibiting structures, processes and cultures of exploitative units, thus, providing

facilitative organizational conditions for the aim of each unit (Benner & Tushman, 2003; Christensen, 1998, Lavie et al., 2010).

O'Reilly and Tushman (2008) have defined the potential for friction, insufficient coordination between the two distinct subunits and disagreements between the senior teams as potential challenges of organizational separation. Therefore, shared values and a common strategy have been identified as important mechanisms to link both units and justify the ambidextrous form (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996).

As separate exploratory and exploitative units are only tightly linked within each unit, but loosely coupled across units, there is some unclarity regarding the integration of innovation to enhance later commercialization (Benner & Tushman, 2003). Thus, the need to recombine exploration and exploitation in order to capture value (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000, O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008, Raisch et al., 2009; Teece 2007) and the required integration across units ensured by top management teams (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996; Smith & Tushman, 2005) are mainly named as key issues of organizational separation.

2.1.3.2 Contextual Ambidexterity

Contextual ambidexterity connotes the simultaneous pursuit of exploration and exploitation within the organization, involving the ability of an organization to concurrently foster alignment across the business and adaptability to a dynamic environment (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; Lavie et al., 2010; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013). Contextual ambidexterity mainly differs from other forms of ambidexterity by focusing on individuals enabling ambidexterity, not units (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013), as it requires individuals to “make their own choices as to how they divide their time between alignment- and adaptability-oriented activities” (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004: 221).

O'Reilly and Tushman (2013) point to the lack of clarity in ambidexterity research regarding the organizational conditions enabling individuals to undertake exploration and exploitation. Gibson and Birkinshaw (2004: 214) have defined an organizational context promoting “stretch, discipline, support, and trust” as facilitating condition for the simultaneous pursuit of exploration and exploitation. Similarly, other scholars have identified a culture that allows for flexibility and control to enable creativity and execution as required by contextual ambidexterity (Bueschgens, Bausch & Balkin, 2010; Khazanchi, Lewis & Boyer, 2007; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013).

Due to the contrary nature of exploration and exploitation and the lack of clarity regarding facilitating conditions for contextual ambidexterity, Kauppila (2010) criticizes that contextual ambidexterity rather assumes that exploration and exploitation are undertaken within the organization instead of determining how the simultaneous pursuit is fostered. As radical forms of exploration and exploitation have been identified as mutually exclusive within the same unit (Gupta et al., 2006), Kauppila (2010) strongly questions the effectiveness of contextual ambidexterity.

Raisch et al. (2009) further challenge contextual ambidexterity by considering the individual level. As all individuals in the organization adhere to the same organizational values, capabilities and knowledge base, the simultaneous pursuit of exploration and exploitation is constrained by the individuals. Similarly, Gupta et al. (2006) emphasize that the effective undertaking of exploratory and exploitative activities poses a challenge for individuals. Accordingly, it requires the managers' capability to cope with friction and contradicting goals (Smith & Tushman, 2005).

2.2 Corporate Accelerator

2.2.1 Evolution of Corporate Accelerators

Accelerators are organizations that intensively support new ventures through mentorship, education and networks during a time-limited program, with the limited duration being the distinguishing characteristic compared to other types of startup collaborations (Bauer et al., 2016; Cohen & Hochberg, 2014; Miller & Bound, 2011).

The first accelerator, Y Combinator, was founded in 2005 (Pauwels et al., 2016) and served as inspiration for later adaptations, by providing seed capital in return for a small equity stake, networking opportunities and advice for startups participating in the three-month program (Kohler, 2016). As the speed, flexibility, scalability and innovation power of startups complements the experience and execution focus of large organizations, corporations have identified the value in startup-collaborations to explore opportunities outside their core business (Kohler, 2016; Kupp et al., 2017; Weiblen & Chesbrough, 2015). To benefit from these complementing characteristics and foster corporate innovation through startup-collaboration, organizations have recently adapted the independent accelerator model to the needs of the organization (Kohler, 2016). Since the establishment of the first corporate accelerator by Citrix in 2010, the number of corporate accelerators has been rising (Kohler, 2016). According to the Corporate Accelerator Database (Heinemann, 2016), a total of 71 active corporate accelerator program have been registered in 2016 worldwide.

While corporate accelerator literature indicates that the objectives of corporate accelerators may vary widely among organizations (e.g. Jung, 2017; Moschner & Herstatt, 2017; Weiblen & Chesbrough, 2015), the primary objectives have been identified to be of either explorative or exploitative nature (Kanbach & Stubner, 2016). Therefore, Kanbach and Stubner (2016) proposed a differentiation between four different types of corporate accelerators based on their primary objectives: listening post, value chain investor, test laboratory, and unicorn hunter. The first three corporate accelerator types focus on exploration by aiming at understanding new trends (listening post), identifying, developing, and integrating products or services (value chain investor) and creating a protective environment for testing new external or internal ideas (test laboratory). In contrast, the unicorn hunter applies an exploitative strategy by focusing on the achievement of financial returns through enhancing the value of startups during the program.

Thus, the corporate accelerator can be seen as a new cost-effective form of corporate-startup collaboration, which offers mutual benefits for both parties, by supporting new ventures in execution and facilitating innovation at the corporation (Kohler, 2016).

2.2.2 Characteristics of Corporate Accelerators

As corporate accelerators represent an adaptation of independent accelerators, both startup-support programs share similar characteristics (Kohler, 2016). Generally, accelerators offer programs of limited duration, in which selected early-stage ventures are supported through intensive mentorship and training opportunities, a large network, working space and seed capital in order to accelerate the new venture cycle (Cohen & Hochberg, 2014; Hathaway, 2016; Kohler, 2016; Miller & Bound, 2011). The main characteristics of accelerators are elaborated in the following part.

Duration

While accelerators exhibit certain similarities to other startup assistance organizations or programs, one distinguishing factor is the limited duration of accelerator programs (Cohen & Hochberg, 2014). Usually, a cohort of ventures is supported during a period of three to six months, before the accelerator program ends with a pitching event, the “demo day” (Cohen & Hochberg, 2014, Clarysse & Yusubova, 2014).

Selection

The application for accelerator programs is usually open to any venture, resulting in a competitive selection process due to the vast amount of applications (Cohen & Hochberg, 2014; Kohler, 2016; Miller & Bound, 2011). A cohort or batch of ventures is then selected into the program, thus, fostering strong bonds between the founders participating in the same accelerator program (Cohen & Hochberg, 2014; Clarysse & Yusubova, 2014).

Mentorship

One of the most valuable aspects of accelerator programs and main reason for startups to participate in the accelerator is the provided mentorship (Clarysse & Yusubova, 2014). During the program, participating startups are mentored during workshops, seminars, face-to-face mentoring and get the opportunity to accumulate valuable knowledge and skills to help them grow their ventures. Yet, Cohen and Hochberg (2014) mention that the mentorship can vary significantly among different accelerator programs.

Networks

Another important aspect of accelerators is the opportunity for startups to grow their networks by attending a variety of events, which allow founders to get in contact with investors (Clarysse & Yusubova, 2014). In addition to regular events during the program, all accelerators end with the ‘Demo Day’, on which the ventures present their business models. Usually this is an open event with a number of investors and stakeholders attending, thus, allowing founders to convince investors for potential future investments. (Clarysse & Yusubova, 2014; Cohen & Hochberg, 2014)

2.2.3 Design Elements of Corporate Accelerators

Accelerator programs are structured and organized differently, depending on the specific type and aim of the accelerator (Pauwels et al., 2016). To support managers in designing an effective corporate accelerator program and enhance stakeholder legitimacy, scholars have suggested different design building blocks and success factors for corporate accelerators (Clarysse & Yusubova, 2014; Isabelle, 2013). Due to the young research area, most design/success factors were examined for accelerators in general, without a focus on corporate accelerators (e.g. Clarysse & Yusubova, 2014; Isabelle, 2013; Pauwels et al., 2016; Miller & Bound, 2011). Therefore, success of the program is defined as effective startup development within the program (Clarysse & Yusubova, 2014; Hallen et al., 2017). While the large overlap found between corporate and general accelerator literature suggests a similar overlap in their success and design factors, scholars have pointed out that “not all success factors can be applied to all types of corporate accelerators” (Bauer et al., 2016: 7). Therefore, the design framework for corporate accelerators by Kohler (2016) was used to relate all identified design and success factors from accelerator literature to one of the four dimensions: proposition, process, people and place.

Proposition

The proposition of the corporate accelerator builds a frame for all other design dimensions by defining the aim of the program, the offering and needs while aligning corporate and startup objectives (Kohler, 2016). Kohler (2016) emphasizes that the proposition must clarify the corporate-startup collaboration in order to align both parties’ interests to create a mutually beneficial accelerator program. Therefore, the definition and communication of clear goals is crucial for designing a corporate accelerator program that matches the needs of participating startups and the organization (Kohler, 2016; Kupp et al., 2017). In addition,

the proposition requires a clear vision and strategy to serve as a guideline for the design of the accelerator program (Pauwels et al., 2016). Consequently, the value proposition and the expected output of the program should be clearly communicated to the startups to ensure the integration of innovation created within the program (Weiblen & Chesbrough, 2015).

Process

The process defines the program of the accelerator from selection phase until the demo day, which marks the end of the program and the final pitch event for participating startups. Thus, a company must decide on the duration, structure and flexibility of the program as well as training provided. (Kohler, 2016)

The short duration of accelerator programs compresses the usually longer corporate innovation cycle and calls for intensive support combined with continuous collaboration with accelerator alumni after the program to create an effective accelerator program (Kohler, 2016). Moreover, Kohler (2016) highlights the importance of simple procedures allowing for startup-friendly operations within the accelerator. Thus, decision making should be decentralized with an autonomous accelerator team and startups must be shielded from bureaucratic processes of the organization. Kohler (2016) further suggests that companies should achieve a balance between structure and flexibility.

Multiple scholars have defined intensive support provided through intensive mentorship, education, workshops, coaching, office space and potentially seed funding as important design factors, with mentorship being the most valuable aspect for startups participating in the accelerator program (Clarysse & Yusubova, 2014; Kohler, 2016). Additionally, access to the large network provided by the accelerator is identified as highly important, as it provides founders with the opportunity to grow their networks and make connections with potential investors, partners and customers (Bauer et al., 2016; Clarysse & Yusubova, 2014; Isabelle, 2013; Kohler, 2016; Kupp et al., 2017).

Lastly, scholars recommend the use of metrics to assess the performance of accelerators and participating startups (Haines, 2014; Dempwolf, Auer & D'Ippolito, 2014). For this purpose, Dempwolf et al. (2014) developed several short- and long-term metrics, while authors emphasize the importance of long-term metrics for adequately assessing accelerator performance (Dempwolf et al., 2014; Kupp et al., 2017). Not only should managers and

mentors be able to track progress, but the developed metrics should also be communicated to participating startups (Kohler, 2016).

People

People from inside and outside the organization should be involved in the accelerator, including the selection of startups, mentors, accelerator managers who are capable of managing startups and linking them with the organization and corporate resources as well as employees interacting with startups. This dimension also includes the development of a strong network of experts, alumni and entrepreneurs, which is fostered through public events, including the demo day. (Kohler, 2016)

The selection of the most suitable startups requires the use of appropriate selection criteria (Frimodig & Torkkeli, 2013; Kohler, 2016; Radojevich-Kelley & Hoffman, 2012). Therefore, scholars have recommended to focus on startup teams, their diversity (Clarysse and Yusubova, 2014) and their prior knowledge (Wise & Valliere, 2014). Kupp et al. (2017) further advocate the recruitment of accelerator managers with entrepreneurial backgrounds and the involvement of successful founders, experts and investors to build a promising network. For the same purpose, Kohler (2016) and Frimodig and Torkkeli (2013) recommend the selection of internal and external mentors to enhance the network. Finally, Kupp et al. (2017: 52) argue for the selection of “high-ranking internal sponsors from various functions and regions to mentor the startup teams” to facilitate a corporate culture that is open to the corporate accelerator as it challenges the traditional way of doing business, which requires top-management backing.

Place

The place of the corporate accelerator forms the fourth design dimension, which involves four different possibilities, including placing the accelerator inside or outside the organization, using an independent accelerator and having a physical or virtual accelerator. In addition, the space design must be considered within this design dimension, where the creation of an entrepreneurial atmosphere plays a major role.

Kohler (2016) outlines advantages and disadvantages for each choice and emphasizes the importance of providing participating startups with enough autonomy to operate in their own way, regardless where the accelerator is placed. While the corporation has most control over startups if they are placed within the organization and may achieve the highest level of

interactions, startups may be negatively influenced by the strict corporate procedures. In contrast, placing the accelerator outside the corporation enhances the autonomy of startups and their protection from negative corporate influences. Yet, the distance from the organization may limit access to resources, startup-corporate interactions and the influence from the accelerator on the organization. Companies can also choose between establishing their own accelerator or using an independent accelerator. The latter option is likely to entail less implementation costs, while providing an existing ecosystem. Lastly, the virtual accelerator represents a cost-effective option with global reach, but the virtual interaction may cause disadvantages as face-to-face mentorship builds a cornerstone of the most effective accelerator programs. (Kohler, 2016)

Overview of Design Dimensions

The following table provides a summary of the key design and success factors of accelerators identified above, using Kohler's design framework for corporate accelerators.

Design Dimension	Design and Success Factors	Sources
Proposition <i>"What the program offers"</i>	Definition of the aim of the program, the offering and needs while aligning corporate and startup objectives	Kohler, 2016
	Transparent and aligned goals	Kupp et al., 2017
	A clear vision and strategy to serve as a guideline for the design of the accelerator program	Pauwels et al., 2016
	Definition of a clear value proposition and expected output of the program towards the startups	Weiblen & Chesbrough, 2015
Process <i>"How the program is run"</i>	Balance structure and flexibility	Kohler, 2016
	Providing extensive support through mentorship, education, workshops, coaching, office space and potentially seed funding	Clarysse & Yusubova, 2014; Kohler, 2016
	Providing access to a large network	Clarysse & Yusubova, 2014; Kupp et al., 2017; Isabelle, 2013
	Short program duration	Kohler, 2016
	Continue startup-collaboration after program ends	
	Simple, startup-friendly formalities and procedures	
	Use and communication of metrics for accelerator and startup performance tracking	Dempwolf et al., 2014; Haines, 2014; Kohler, 2016; Kupp et al., 2017
People <i>"Who is involved"</i>	Appropriate startup selection criteria, e.g. teams, diversity and founder knowledge	Frimodig & Torkkeli, 2013; Kohler, 2016; Radojevich-Kelley & Hoffman, 2012; Clarysse & Yusubova, 2014; Wise & Valliere, 2014
	Accelerator managers with entrepreneurial backgrounds	Kupp et al., 2017
	A network with successful founders, experts and investors	
	Top-management backing and high-ranking sponsors as mentors	
	Internal and external mentors	Kohler, 2016; Frimodig & Torkkeli, 2013
Place <i>"Where the accelerator is hosted"</i>	Inside the organization for more control and corporate-startup interaction	Kohler, 2016
	Outside the organization for more autonomy and less conflicts	
	Independent accelerator for access to existing ecosystem and increased cost-efficiency	
	Virtual accelerator as cost-effective option with global reach	
	Space design should create an entrepreneurial atmosphere	

Table 3: Overview of Accelerator Design Dimensions

2.2.4 Impact of Corporate Accelerators on Startups

Scholars have identified several positive impacts accelerators can have on participating startups. As the name suggests, an accelerator has the purpose of accelerating a venture's cycle, resulting in faster growth or failure due to the limited program duration (Cohen & Hochberg, 2014, Kohler, 2016). The intensive mentorship provided to participating startups in combination with the large external network are found to be very beneficial during the short program, by helping founders grow their networks, foster their learning and connect with investors (Miller & Bound, 2011). Especially in the corporate accelerator context, the access to corporate resources, including the company network comprising employees, customers or suppliers, may be an advantage for corporate accelerator startups. Consequently, startups may benefit from future collaborations with the corporation beyond the program or gain the company as a customer. (Kohler, 2016)

Additionally, studies have shown that the likelihood of receiving next-round funding sooner, is higher for accelerator graduates in comparison to startups raising angel investments (Hallen, Bingham & Cohen, 2014). Clarysse and Yusubova (2014) propose that the increased likelihood of receiving funding is attributed to the higher legitimacy startups have gained through the participation in the accelerator program in the eyes of stakeholders. Thus, the authors suggest that legitimacy of the startup is an important factor influencing a venture's success, which can be fostered through the support, networks and competitive selection process of any accelerator program. In summary, the effects of accelerators on startups, ecosystems, innovation and economic growth have been found to be largely positive and research suggests that the participation in accelerator programs positively influences the survival rates of startups (Isabelle, 2013).

2.2.5 Barriers of Corporate Accelerators

While the increasing number of corporate accelerators suggests that corporations have identified the potential benefits of corporate-startup collaboration through accelerators, several challenges may limit the mutual benefits for startups and corporations.

Finding a fit between organizations and startups has been identified as a potential challenge for both parties, as the corporate culture and goals are likely to differ largely from the culture and goals of a startup (Jackson & Richter, 2017; KMPG, 2015; Kohler, 2016; Weiblen & Chesbrough, 2016). Similarly, Moschner and Herstatt (2016) argue that collaboration between startups and corporation within a corporate accelerator can be hampered due to

different cultural beliefs. As a result, a possible integration of the startups may be negatively influenced by the cultural gap between corporations and startups (KMPG, 2015). Since the corporate involvement is usually characterized by less flexibility, it may further affect startups negatively by resulting in a slower decision-making process for startups (Weiblen & Chesbrough, 2015; KMPG, 2015).

Kohler (2016) further suggests that startups in a corporate accelerator are required to not only accomplish a product-market fit, but also a product corporate fit. Accordingly, startups may be limited in their ability to pivot and hampered in their progress. Hence, this set up may cause startups to develop a solution that solves a problem for the company instead of the industry and could possibly block startups from successfully partnering with rivals. In order to effectively manage corporate-startup interactions, access to corporate resources and a possible integration, capable internal “bridge-makers” need to be found, which Kohler (2016) identified as a difficult task. Lastly, the industry may influence the effectiveness of an accelerator, as this startup-collaboration form is likely to be challenged in industries involving longer, more complex and capital-intense new product development cycles (Dempwolf et al., 2014).

2.3 Relations between Theoretical Concepts

This research aims to make a contribution to the fields of ambidexterity and corporate accelerator research by investigating the corporate accelerator as a new phenomenon of organizational separation. This approach of studying the corporate accelerator through the lens of ambidexterity theory represents a novel relation made in business research. Therefore, this section elaborates on the relations this study establishes between ambidexterity and corporate accelerator research.

The comparison of ambidexterity and corporate accelerator literature indicates a manifold overlap between the characteristics of the corporate accelerator and separate organizational units for exploration. Firstly, scholars have identified the exploration of new business opportunities as major aim of corporate-startup collaborations (Kohler, 2016; Kupp et al., 2017; Weiblen & Chesbrough, 2015) and exploratory goals as present in three major types of corporate accelerators (Kanbach & Stubner, 2016).

Additionally, ambidexterity scholars emphasize that organizational separation aims to protect exploratory units from inhibiting structures, processes and cultures of exploitative units (Benner & Tushman, 2003; Christensen, 1998, Lavie et al., 2010). Thus, exploratory units have been characterized by a smaller size, loose cultures and flexible structures (Benner & Tushman, 2002, 2003; Christensen, 1998; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996, O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008; Lavie et al., 2010; Raisch et al., 2009). Similarly, Kohler (2016) emphasizes the importance of simple, startup-friendly procedures within the corporate accelerator, decentralized decision making and the protection of startups from bureaucratic corporate processes, which is fostered by placing the corporate accelerator outside the organization. The admission of startups to the corporate accelerator and selection of mentors with entrepreneurial backgrounds (Kohler, 2016) suggests a similar overlap with the cultures required for exploration, involving flexibility, initiative and risk-taking (Benner & Tushman, 2003; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996).

Based on the above comparison between concepts, the corporate accelerator is found to fulfill many of the organizational demands that exploration poses on an organization and allows the company to pursue exploration independently from exploitation in a separate organizational unit. However, one key characteristic of the corporate accelerator, the limited program duration, leads to a clear distinction from organizational separation as ambidexterity research has only focused on separate, co-existing organizational units in the

past, without taking time limitation into consideration. Accordingly, separate organizational units for exploration provide facilitating organizational conditions to nurture the organization's exploratory capability combined with the provision of a protective environment over an unlimited period of time (Benner & Tushman, 2003; Christensen, 1998; Lavie et al., 2010).

In contrast, the corporate accelerator only provides this protective environment for a limited duration of three to six months (Cohen & Hochberg, 2014; Clarysse & Yusubova, 2014; Kohler, 2016). Since the limited duration has not been subject to ambidexterity research in the past, an objective judgement regarding the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator cannot be made based on existing ambidexterity research. This study aims at filling this gap by providing empirical research investigating the corporate accelerator as a new phenomenon of organizational separation. Additionally, employees applying for the corporate accelerator are required to simultaneously explore new opportunities while working in their job focused on exploitation. Thus, contextual ambidexterity has been considered as relevant for this study.

In order to assess the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator, the view of ambidexterity as organizational capability as applied by different scholars (e.g. Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; Jansen et al., 2009; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008; Zhang et al., 2017) is adopted by this study. O'Reilly and Tushman (2008: 188) emphasize that "organizational capabilities are embedded in existing organizational routines, structures, and processes." Hence, the exploratory capability of an organization depends to a large extent on whether the organizational demands of exploration are fulfilled. Additionally, scholars have underlined that "the notion of exploration-exploitation is subject to relativity because it must be defined from the viewpoint of a given organization or unit. Certain knowledge, technology, or markets may be new to one organization but familiar to another" (Lavie et al., 2010: 115). For the above reasons, this study investigates the factors influencing the corporate accelerator's exploratory capability by looking at the effect of activities and organizational conditions provided within the corporate accelerator, instead of assessing the outcomes of the corporate accelerator as they may be relative to the perception of the firm. Therefore, the identified activities and organizational demands of exploration in combination with the theoretical background of the corporate accelerator were used to guide the further research of this study.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Approach

This study investigates a research topic in the area of social sciences and, thus, involves the investigation of people and organizations. The authors adopt the view that the study of social sciences requires a stance that takes into account the distinctiveness of human behavior in contrast to the study of objects in natural sciences (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Therefore, this research adopts the epistemological position of interpretivism by acknowledging that the social world is meaningful for social actors, whose actions are shaped by the meaning humans attribute to their actions and the actions of others (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Therefore, the study of social sciences requires the interpretation of human behavior and the social world from the perspective of the social actors in it (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Studying the factors influencing the corporate accelerator's exploratory capability requires an understanding of the corporate accelerator and the case company as social entities. Therefore, the researchers view both entities as social constructs that are influenced by their social actors. This approach corresponds to the ontological position of constructionism, which understands that social actors continuously construct and reconstruct the case company and the corporate accelerator (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Hence, the corporate accelerator and the case company are not seen as objective social entities, but as dependent on its social actors, who continuously act on the organization/accelerator, leading to a continuous state of change (Bryman & Bell, 2011). For this reason, the behavior and thoughts of individuals related to the organization/accelerator must be studied and interpreted from the individuals' point of view in order to build relevant knowledge to answer the research question.

3.2 Research Strategy and Design

This study applies a qualitative research approach as the research question addresses a phenomenon, which has not been explored in current literature yet (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Therefore, the study follows an inductive research process with deductive elements to be able to answer the research question (Bryman & Bell, 2011). By applying an inductive reasoning, rich data can be collected, and a theory can be established through empirical research. In addition, the inductive research approach enables the use of an iterative process for the data collection by going back and forth between the data and the theory. This approach allows to make repeated observations, which enable the generalization of the

repeated phenomenon into a probable conclusion. The qualitative research approach is most suitable for this research since the study investigates a phenomenon which is currently lacking research. Depending on the findings from the data collection it also allows to change the research focus. The inductive process is aligned with deductive elements since the theory gathered from the literature helps to understand the empirical findings and make these findings generalizable (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.2.1 Single Case Study Design

This research applies a single case study, which allows the in-depth understanding of a particular case and enables the development of grounded theory. This research design is particularly useful for this study because it can develop high quality theory from the findings. A single case study focuses on “the uniqueness of a case in order to develop a deep understanding of its complexity” (Bryman & Bell, 2011: 61). Therefore, it supports the contribution to the corporate accelerator literature, which is limited due to the newness of the topic. By investigating the corporate accelerator as a new form of organizational separation, the single case study further helps to extend the field of ambidexterity research.

Yin (2003) distinguishes between different types of cases. For the purpose of this study, the revelatory case is used, which opens the possibility to analyze a phenomenon that has not been accessed yet (Bryman & Bell, 2011). According to Glaser and Strauss (1967) a strong and deep connection with empirical reality permits to develop a relevant, testable and valid theory. Therefore, the single case study design is chosen to contribute to the fields of ambidexterity and corporate accelerator research. The information that will be gathered from the single case can help to gain a deeper understanding of how a corporate accelerator influences the exploration of the parent organization.

3.2.2 Research Process

The research process began by making observations in the case company to get a better understanding of their current situation and to get more information about the role of the corporate accelerator for the company. This was followed by a combination of unstructured interviews and an intensive and iterative literature review, which helped us to narrow down the research topic. The role of the theory has been evident from the beginning of the research. It was important to establish a theoretical background in order to create a linkage between the concepts and the collected data. The unstructured interviews were guided by the theory on corporate accelerators and ambidexterity and showed an emergence of particular

events/categories. For the main data collection, semi-structured interviews were conducted according to the suggestion by Bryman and Bell (2011). The semi-structured interviews were supported by the interview guide, which included particular categories that have emerged through unstructured interviews and theoretical concepts. Before the semi-structured interviews were undertaken, a pilot interview with a selected employee was conducted in order to test the interview guide (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The interview guide was adjusted accordingly to eliminate certain errors that were discovered during the pilot interview. The collected data was then analyzed according to the framework suggested by Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2012), which provides a detailed overview on how data has been analyzed. The findings from the data analysis were then discussed in relation with the literature and a conclusion has been drawn. Lastly, the study used an iterative research process in order to allow the theory to become apparent as an outcome from the collected data.

3.3 Data Collection Method

3.3.1 Case Company

For the single case study design a purposive sampling method was chosen, since the goal is to sample a case and their participants in a strategic way (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The case company that was chosen was of academic interest as it established a corporate accelerator in 2016 with the aim of exploring ideas outside the core business. Thus, conforming with a separate organizational unit for exploration, which forms the counterpart of the organization's exploitative business. In addition, it was of academic interest since the accelerator involves both, internal and external participants, which has not been covered in the current literature yet. The gathered information from the case company can provide the research with meaningful insights in order to answer the research question.

3.3.2 Unstructured Interviews

The form of unstructured interviews was chosen as a data collection method to generate rich qualitative data through open-ended questions (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The purpose of these interviews was to understand the corporate accelerator, its purpose, goals and challenges.

In order to understand the design, achievements as well as issues of the corporate accelerator and to narrow down the research topic, unstructured interviews have been conducted with the following employees in order get the perspective of participants and the corporate managers.

Corporate Managers who are involved in the corporate accelerator			
Department	Position	Date	Recorded
Business Innovation	Head of Innovation	15.03.2018	x
	Accelerator Operations Manager	21.02.2018	
		09.03.2018	
		13.03.2018	

Table 4: Unstructured Interviews with Corporate Managers

Employees who have participated in the corporate accelerator				
Batch	Team	Interviewee	Date	Recorded
1: February 2016- June 2016	Team 1	Member 1	19.03.2018	x
		Member 1	03.04.2018	x
2: October 2016- February 2017	Team 1	Member 1	16.03.2018	x
	Team 2	Member 1	20.03.2018	x
3: August 2017- January 2018	Team 1	Member 2	16.03.2018	x
	Team 2	Member 1	20.03.2018	x
	Team 3	Member 1	20.03.2018	x
		Member 2	21.03.2018	x
4: February 2018- June 2018	Team 1	Member 1	23.02.2018	x
		Member 2	23.02.2018	x
	Team 2	Member 1	08.03.2018	x
		Member 2	08.03.2018	x

Table 5: Unstructured Interviews with Corporate Accelerator Batches

The unstructured interviews were held in form of a simple conversation with the focus on the corporate accelerator, while not following a specific guide line.

The findings showed that the program of the corporate accelerator corresponds to the characterizations of corporate accelerators, which were identified in the literature. The accelerator was found to serve exploratory activities for the company and increase idea generation within the company.

Furthermore, the unstructured interviews showed that all participants of the accelerator passed through four different events; the time before the accelerator, the time during the

accelerator, the transitioning from the accelerator back to the case company and the time after the accelerator. It was discovered that within each event there were certain facilitators and barriers that influenced the corporate accelerator as new exploratory unit. All unstructured interviews were recorded in order to enhance credibility and transparency (Bryman & Bell, 2011) but were not transcribed since they were not a source for the developed theory.

3.3.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were selected in order to investigate and address the specific topic with a clear focus (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Using semi-structured interviews provided the researchers with flexibility to ask follow-up questions, which are not necessarily covered in the interview guide, since answers from the interviewees can lead to an interesting topic, which can be relevant for the research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This form of interviews provides the study with rich data by using the grounded theory approach by Gioia et al. (2012). It was important to allow the interviewees to express their interpretations in order to develop a theory that is grounded in the interviewees' interpretations.

The specific data is gathered through interviews with employees from different departments and positions who have participated in one of the three batches and corporate managers who have been involved in the corporate accelerator. Within the interviews, it was important that the respondents were able to freely express their thoughts and understanding about this particular topic.

3.3.4 Interviewee Selection

Within this study, individuals of the case company who have participated in and are part of the corporate accelerator program have been chosen for the data collection. The sampling of the chosen participants was guided by the research question. In addition, the purposive sampling method was applied since it allows the researchers to select the participants that are relevant for this study. However, according to Bryman and Bell (2011: 442) purposive sampling “does not allow the researcher to generalize a population”, which can be a limitation for this study.

The following table presents the interviewee selection of accelerator participants and corporate managers for the conducted semi-structured interviews.

Group	Position/Batch	Interviewee	Quote Label	Date	Recorded
Accelerator	Batch 1: February 2016- June 2016	1	I.1	16.04.2018	x
	Batch 2: October 2016- February 2017	2	I.2	16.04.2018	x
		3	I.3	19.04.2018	x
	Batch 3: August 2017- January 2018	4	I.4	18.04.2018	x
		5	I.5	18.04.2018	x
		6	I.6	19.04.2018	x
		7	I.7	19.04.2018	x
Corporate Manager	Head of Innovation	8	M.1	07.05.2018	x
	Accelerator Operations Manager	9	M.2	08.05.2018	x

Table 6: Semi-Structured Interviews

So far, 3 batches of teams have been accelerated since 2016 and the fourth batch started in February 2018. Since the teams within the fourth batch have not experienced the whole process yet, they were excluded as potential interviewees. In addition, it has to be considered that batch 3 just recently finished the program; which is why they are in a different after-stage compared to the participants in batch 1 and 2. Nevertheless, the after-stage process is not relevant to this study and will therefore not be a limitation for this study. In order to understand the factors that influence the exploratory capability of a corporate accelerator it was important to include a broad variety of interviewees with different perspectives. We have interviewed all available internal employees from four batches that have participated in the accelerator during the unstructured interviews and discovered that not all employees were suitable for our research since they either quit in the middle of the program, have not finished the program yet or do not work in the case company any more. Furthermore, we selected two corporate managers that are in charge of the corporate accelerator in order to get a different perspective of the factors facilitating the exploratory capability of a corporate accelerator and get a deeper understanding of role of the corporate accelerator in the case company.

The following figure visualizes how interviewees from the past three accelerator batches were selected to include members of all internal accelerated startups teams.

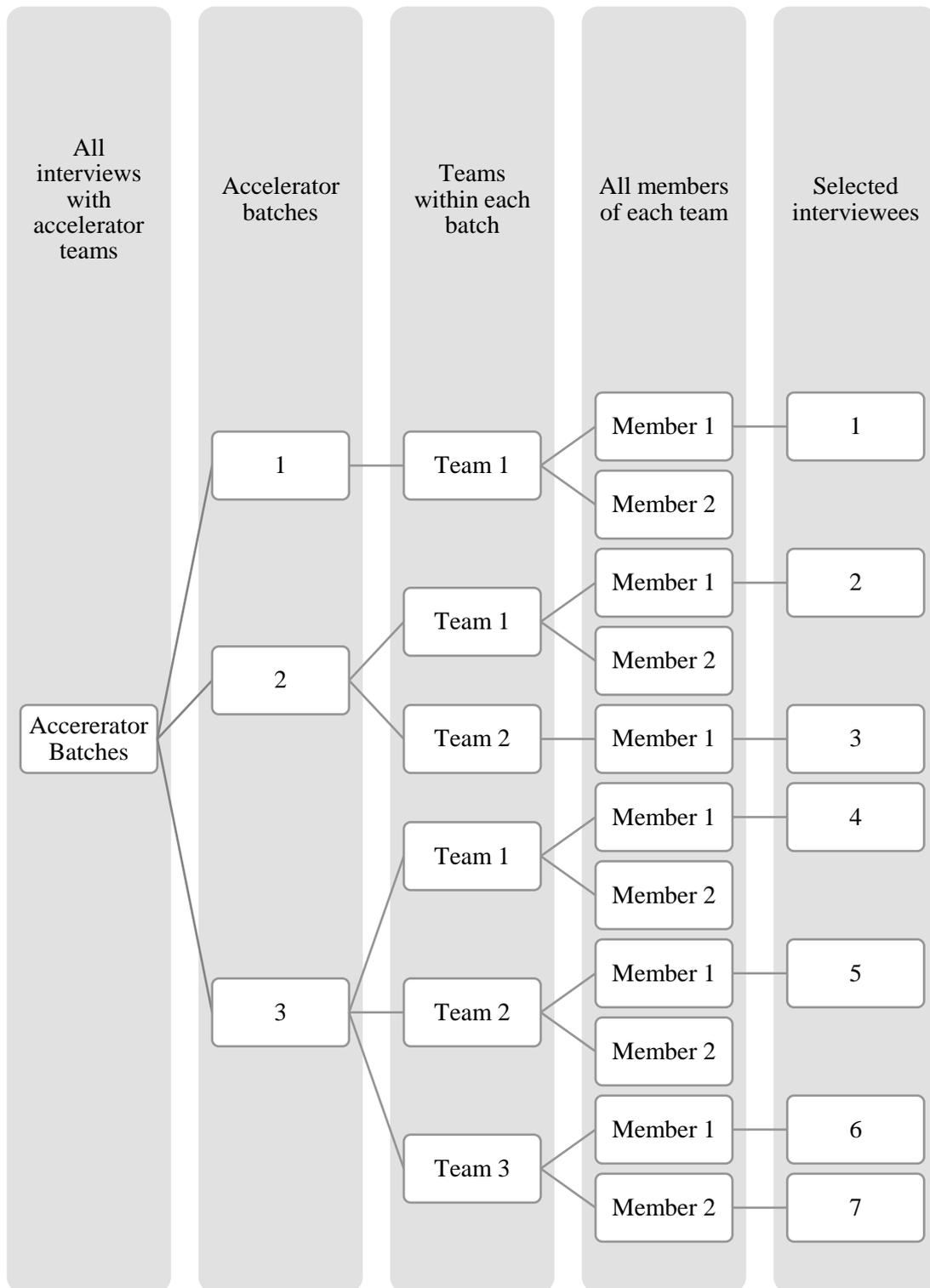


Figure 1: Overview of Interviewee Selection (Accelerator Batches)

3.3.5 Interview Guide

The interview guide for this study was designed according to the recommendations by Bryman and Bell (2011) in regard to semi-structured interviews. Using this type of interview method allows for the combination of flexibility and structured outline during the conduction of interviews. Having flexibility within a structured outline gave us the possibility to follow up on specific questions in order to collect detailed information from the interviewees in regard to the research topic (Bryman and Bell, 2011). As we interviewed both, participants and managers, two different interview guides have been created.

The first interview guide relates to the participants of the accelerator program and was built around five main categories: (1) background, (2) time before the accelerator, (3) time during the accelerator, (4) transition from the accelerator to the case company and (5) time after the accelerator.

In category (1), ‘facesheet’ information was collected as recommended by Bryman and Bell (2011). Thus, the questions within the first category related to the employees’ main job position and work duties in the case company. The aim of these questions was to get an understanding of whether the work activities of the employees are exploration or exploitation focused. In addition, questions regarding the nature of the participants’ ideas, which they have worked on during the accelerator program, were included in order to identify how the ideas compare to the core business of the case company.

Category (2) was included in order to gain an understanding of whether the awareness of the accelerator stimulated the thoughts and actions of the participants to actively search for new ideas. As the literature review suggests that employees who apply for the corporate accelerator are required to engage in exploratory activities at their job before being selected to join the program, this category aimed to explore the corporate accelerator in regard to contextual ambidexterity.

The questions within category (3) and (4) aimed to explore the influencing factors on the exploratory capability in a corporate accelerator. The questions were established based on the reviewed theories from ambidexterity and corporate accelerator literature as well as from emergent concepts that have been discovered from unstructured interviews. Category (3) was focusing on getting answers on how the design and characteristics of the corporate accelerator have influenced the progress of the participants. It included questions in regard

to culture, structure, working process, interaction with externals, and new knowledge acquisition. We also included a question regarding how the duration of the program influenced the participants, since this represents the main factor differentiating the corporate accelerator from existing forms of organizational separation. Category (4) was more focused on the management involvement and how this involvement affected the participants.

Category (5) focused on getting answers regarding what happened with the ideas/projects and the participants after the accelerator (e.g. the outcome). Nevertheless, the data that has been collected in category (5) was found to be not relevant to answer the research question. Thus, this data set did not allow for the establishment of grounded theory and generalizable findings. Therefore, the data obtained in category (5) has been excluded from this research. In order to stay objective and not be exclusively guided by the theory, follow-up questions were included after each category to ensure a rich data collection. (Bryman & Bell, 2011)

The second interview guide relates to the corporate managers and applies to the whole process (before, during and after stages). The goal of this interview guide was to get answers which require management perspective and cannot be answered by the participants of the corporate accelerator. Questions in regard to management alignment, shared values and strategic goals were asked due to their importance identified in ambidexterity research and to get a deeper understanding of management involvement in the accelerator and what role the accelerator plays for the case company.

3.3.6 Interview Preparations

A total amount of nine semi-structured interviews were conducted. Eight interviews were conducted face-to-face. Face-to-face interviews were chosen, as they give the interviewer the possibility to collect both, verbal and non-verbal data, which facilitated richer and deeper collection of data (Bryman & Bell, 2011). One interview has been conducted through skype, as the interviewee was located at a different office in the north of Sweden and the researchers were not able to travel to the location due to time and costs. However, Bryman and Bell (2011) state, that interviews conducted through the phone or skype can lower the quality of the interview compared to face-to-face. All interviews were conducted at the corporate office of the case company in the south of Sweden. By firstly conducting the unstructured interviews, we learned that the interviewees were most comfortable to do the interviews within their work environment. In order to ensure that the interview will not be interrupted by other people or phones, the interviews were conducted in quite meeting rooms.

Due to the international background of both interviewers, the interviews were conducted in English. As all interviewees were fluent in English on a professional level, this did not influence to validity of the study (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

All interviews were conducted by two interviewers. One interviewer had an active role and the other interviewer a rather passive role. The role of the active interviewer involved to lead the interview while the role of the passive interviewer involved to ask follow-up questions if needed and to make sure that the interview stayed relevant (Bryman & Bell, 2011). All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

3.3.7 Ethical Considerations

Various ethical considerations were taken into consideration in order to ensure validity throughout this study. Due to the qualitative study, the considerations were mainly dealing with interactions between the interviewees and the researchers. Bryman and Bell (2011) identified four categories of ethical principles which have been used as a guideline in order to ensure integrity and quality.

Avoid harm to participants: In order to avoid harmful complications from the information that was gathered from the interviewees, anonymity and confidentiality was guaranteed throughout the whole research process. Anonymity and confidentiality were also considerate in order to ensure openness from the interviewees toward the topics (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Informed consent: Before the interviews were conducted, the interviewees were informed about the research topic and it was clearly explained to them how the data is going to be gathered. To fully ensure informed consent, the interviewees were also informed about the recording equipment (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Invasion of privacy: With the link to informed consent, the privacy of the interviewees was protected. Each case was treated individually and with high sensitivity in order to give the interviewees the possibility to withdraw (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Avoid deception: Every interviewee was well informed about the research techniques that were used in the study (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.4 Data Analysis

Since the study is of exploratory nature, it requires an open approach for the data analysis to discover new theories from the gathered data and to let new concepts and interdependencies emerge that are grounded in the theory. By taking this into consideration for the data analysis, the framework provided by Gioia et al. (2012) was used, which focuses on the individual aspect of the subject that is studied by analyzing each data set that was gathered from the interviews individually. In addition, evolving patterns can be recognized through collective analysis, which leads to building and establishing a theory (Gioia et al., 2012). The use of Gioia et al.'s (2012) framework provides transparency within the study.

The framework by Gioia et al. (2012) will be explained and illustrated in detail in order to ensure qualitative rigor, increase validity and make the analysis more transparent. The advantage of Gioia's method is that it allows a systematic presentation of the 1st order analysis, 2nd order analysis and aggregate dimensions. An illustration of the process from our raw data to our 1st order concepts, 2nd order themes and aggregate dimensions is shown in the following figure.

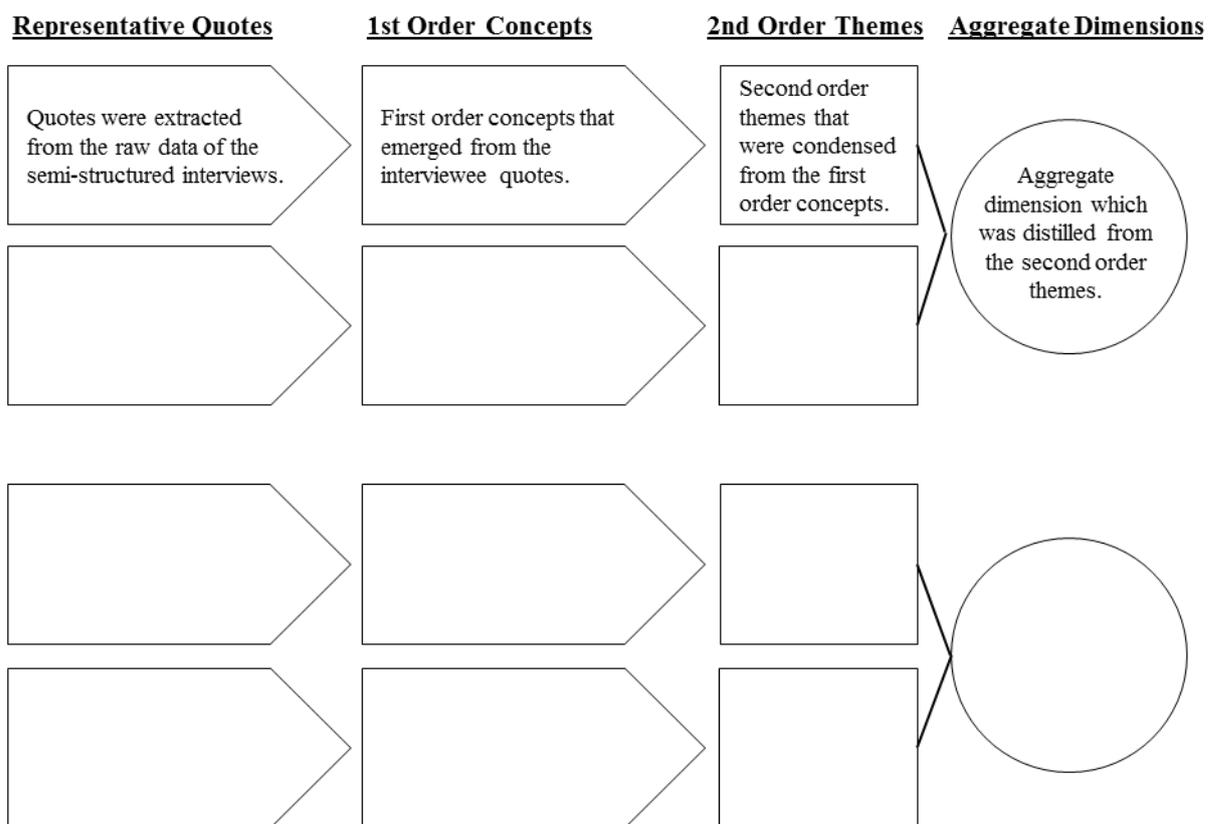


Figure 2: Data Structure used for Data Analysis

The process for the data analysis started with the coding of direct quotes that appeared to convey influencing factors for the accelerators' exploratory capability. All relevant quotes have been extracted from the semi-structured interviews. In the next step, all relevant quotes have been compared in order to identify similarities but also differences between the influencing factors, to then narrow them down into 1st order concepts. The terms in the 1st order concepts were established using informant-centric terms from the interviewees. Afterwards, the 2nd order themes were established, which were research-centric concepts and more related to literature. The purpose of these themes was to describe the different influencing factors for the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator. In the final step, all 2nd order themes have been compared between each other and with the literature in order to form the aggregate dimensions. The aggregate dimensions represent the primary view of influencing factors on the exploratory capability and therefore also answer our first research question: What are the factors influencing the exploratory capability of a corporate accelerator?

Later in chapter five (Discussion), we compared all the findings and established relationships regarding the way, in which these factors have influenced each other and the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator, which answers the second research question: How do these factors influence the exploratory capability of a corporate accelerator?

3.5 Validity and Reliability

As the study is of qualitative nature, it is rather difficult to achieve external reliability, as the social environment within the case company is constantly changing, which makes it challenging to replicate it entirely (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Nevertheless, adopting similar roles in a social setting can be a good strategy to tackle the requirements of external reliability (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

To achieve internal reliability, it is important to have a good match between the observations of the researchers and the theoretical concepts that they have established. Within this study it was possible to accomplish internal reliability as the research team only consisted of 2 individuals who have worked closely together over a period of 4 months.

Internal validity in this study is ensured, since the researchers participated in the social life of a group over an extended period of time, which allowed the researchers to achieve a certain level of resemblance between observations and concepts (Bryman & Bell, 2011). To

ensure internal validity it is recommended to include a broad variety of different perspectives to get a wider lookout of a certain situation, but also to see, whether the data that was collected is contradicting. In this case, we have selected seven interviewees who had different backgrounds, have worked in different teams within different batches and two managers, who had different positions at the case company and backgrounds.

3.6 Generalization

External validity might be difficult to accomplish since a single case study is rather focused on investigating a particular social setting within a single case (Bryman & Bell, 2011). However, Gioia et al. (2012) state that it is possible to generalize a case if it generates principles and concepts which are relevant to another domain. Through the approach of Gioia et al. (2012) for the data analysis, we were able to generalize our findings with the theory, which enhanced the generalizability of the study as well the importance of the contribution. The findings within the study can be applied by other corporations who have established a corporate accelerator and aim to enhance the exploratory capability of this unit.

4 Findings

This chapter provides a detailed presentation of interview findings that resulted from the data analysis applying the Gioia Methodology for inductive research (Gioia et al., 2012). In the beginning of each chapter, representative quotes from interviewees are enclosed to provide evidence for the relations made from the data to the emerging theory in form of concepts, themes and aggregate dimensions (Gioia et al., 2012). For transparency purposes, the developed data structure will be presented and disclose how first order concepts, second order themes and aggregate dimensions were developed from the interview data. Overall, 16 second order themes emerged from the data and were distilled into 7 aggregate dimensions, including: Personal drive, structure, culture, external knowledge, experimentation, limited duration and corporate involvement. According to these aggregate dimensions, the findings from the data analysis are presented and the contained second order themes are elaborated.

4.1 Personal Drive

The corporate accelerator was found to enhance the personal drive of participants in two related ways. Thus, it triggered employees’ idea generation at work and allowed employees to work on something they are passionate about.

Representative Quotes	2nd Order Themes
<p>“I started following things, but maybe getting a little bit more interested in that kind of world, whereas before I didn’t know anything about startups or innovation or anything like that, but once you kind of open your eyes to it” (I.2)</p> <p>“I spent more thoughts about how I’m going to apply and a bit more about my idea.” (I.3)</p> <p>“When I heard about it the first time, I started to think more about what kind of ideas I have in my mind and if I can come up with something. It triggered me to more actively think about that and not just let it pass. When some idea crossed my mind, I noticed that and thought, could I do something with it, to then bring you into the accelerator?” (I.4)</p> <p>“I would never have realized it if it weren’t for the accelerator.” (I.1)</p> <p>“Then I could actually do this through accelerator.” (I.1)</p>	<p>Trigger for idea generation and realization</p>
<p>“I have seen this as an opportunity to really do things that I believe in and work with things in a way that I believe is a good way” (I.4)</p> <p>“We worked so much, but it was worth it. You become more passionate about it when you really have the freedom” (I.6)</p> <p>“I was spending like weekends and evenings working on the business idea. So, I mean, you’re more flexible, you’re more free, but you still want to work with your idea more maybe because you’re more passionate about this idea than your daily work because it’s your idea and you want it to succeed.” (I.5)</p> <p>“If you commit yourself, you can achieve a lot of things.” (I.1)</p> <p>“You can do almost whatever you like if you just put your mind to it.” (I.1)</p> <p>“You want to change it because you have your heart invested in it.” (I.2)</p>	<p>Passion</p>

Table 7: Representative Quotes of Personal Drive

Trigger for Idea Generation and Realization

The corporate accelerator was found to be a trigger for employees to generate ideas and get a particular interest in the startup environment. Interviewees stated that the establishment of the accelerator stimulated them to look more into the startup world and learn more about innovation. In addition, they have spent more time thinking about new ideas that could be interesting in order to apply for the accelerator. Lastly, the employees expressed that they would have not been able to realize their ideas without the accelerator.

Passion

Within the accelerator the participants were able to work on an idea that they were strongly passionate about. The passion for the idea stimulated them to work more in the accelerator, such as spending weekends working. The employees mentioned the extra work in a positive

matter, since they could work on something they believed in during their time in the accelerator.

Data Structure

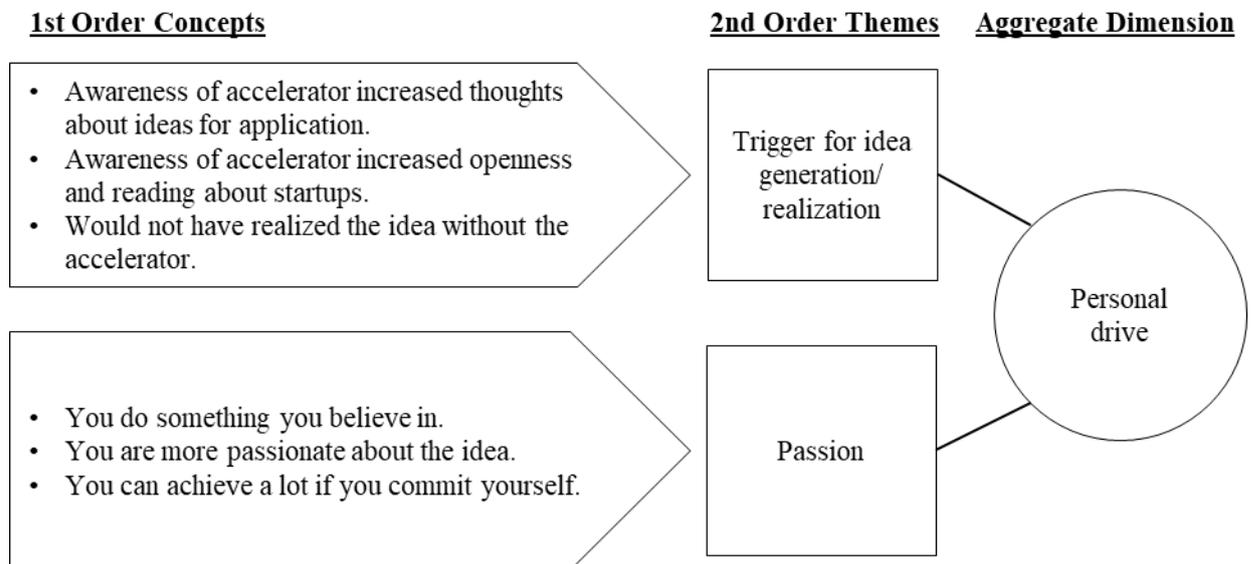


Figure 3: Data Structure of Personal Drive

4.2 Structure

This dimension combines facilitators that result from structural conditions provided within the accelerator. Hence, the structure within the accelerator allows participants a high degree of autonomy and full responsibility for their work.

Representative Quotes	2nd Order Themes
<p>“There are no structures and no boundaries. People in the accelerator act differently and are more free.” (I.3)</p> <p>"The accelerator is one of the areas where we have the loosest set of rules" (M.2)</p> <p>“You have a lot more freedom” (I.6)</p> <p>“It helped me and my partner quite a lot to have that freedom.” (I.7)</p> <p>“Because if I had hierarchy then somebody would have said, focus on this or don't do that or do this, but here the focus was to solve the problem yourselves and work as a team. So it was much more free” (I.5)</p> <p>“We have the weekly guiding from our mentors, but we could basically be free and do what we wanted.” (I.7)</p> <p>"You actually just get coached, you don't get managed, which I think is a really good thing, but you still have frames" (I.6)</p> <p>“It was much more free in that way, I could do more or less what I want to do.” (I.3)</p> <p>“You don’t have to ask permission from anybody” (I.1)</p> <p>"Within the accelerator we can give the employees free mandate." (M.2)</p> <p>“But here at the accelerator I am free to do whatever I want and can take my own decisions.” (I.4)</p> <p>“It was like, today we invest to get the customer and to find out about this customer. Tomorrow we start developing something for that customer. So, it is a very short decision process.” (I.1)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Autonomy</p>
<p>“You have to take so much on responsibility and work with it.” (I.5)</p> <p>“In the accelerator you have more responsibility" (I.6)</p> <p>“If you don't do it, if you don't feel it, nothing is going to happen with it, just throw it in the bin.” (I.2)</p> <p>“You are still accountable for your own results.” (I.6)</p> <p>“You have your own responsibility, your own mandate, but you still have to deliver.” (I.6)</p> <p>“We always had to do everything ourselves, which is fantastic” (I.2)</p> <p>"We learned that we can do things faster and prioritize better because it means if you do this, it means you're not going to do this. So that's super important that you actually make conscious decisions and that you realize that you can't do everything at the same time. You first have to do one thing and before this is not done you can't start with the next thing." (I.2)</p> <p>“We have been good at avoiding some irrelevant bullshit” (I.1)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Responsibility</p>

Table 8: Representative Quotes of Structure

Autonomy

The high autonomy provided to teams in the accelerator allowed them to take their own decisions on what to do, without the need to ask someone for permission. While some guidance is provided through mentors and coaches, the final decision is taken by the team itself. The high autonomy was found to positively affect the teams' progress as it fostered quick decision making and helped them to get their work done.

Responsibility

The employees expressed that they had full responsibility in the accelerator regarding their work and the results they had to deliver, which was underlined as a positive aspect within the accelerator. Being fully responsible required the participants to work very efficiently, prioritize their activities and make conscious decisions regarding their work, as they could not do everything at once.

Data Structure

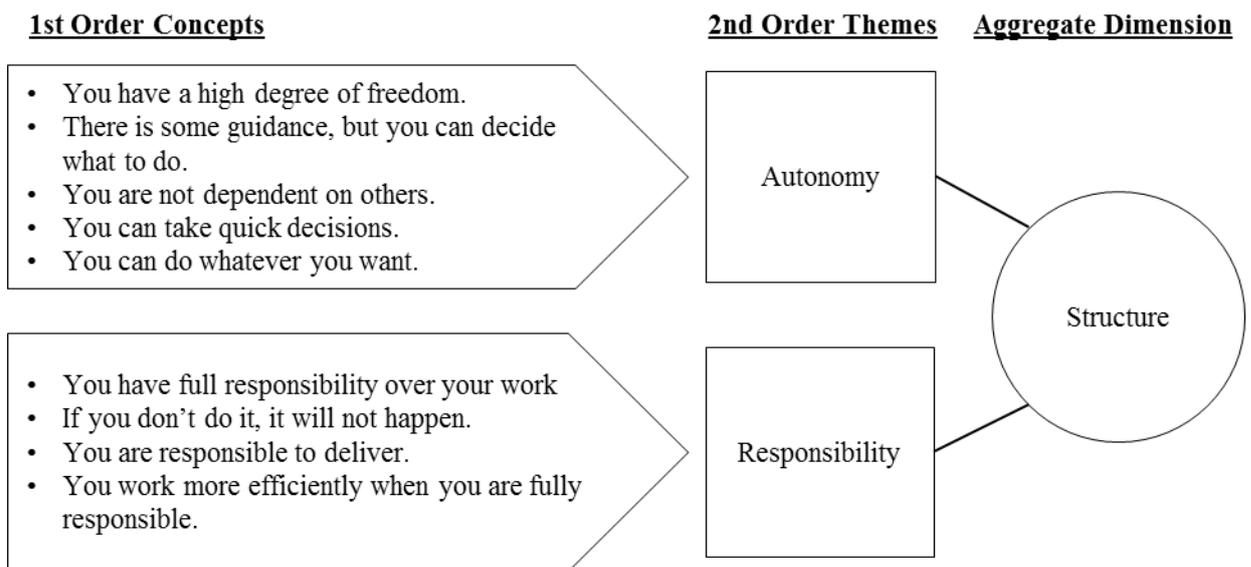


Figure 4: Data Structure of Structure

4.3 Culture

The culture within the accelerator was found to have a facilitating effect on the teams and comprises two components. While the culture itself is characterized as being energizing and supportive due to the surrounding environment in the accelerator, the outside location of the accelerator was found to enhance the facilitating culture.

Representative Quotes	2nd Order Themes
<p>“It’s full of energy and people who want to get things done and can get things done and nothing is a problem. They just make things happen.” (I.2)</p> <p>“They energize you, when you see what they’re doing. You want to do that also and you can get energized.” (I.2)</p> <p>“You get inspired by different people and talks which helps you to come up with new ideas. That gives you a lot of energy.” (I.6)</p> <p>“Everybody was very supportive and we helped each other out.” (I.3)</p> <p>“I mean, much more helping each other, I would say” (I.5)</p> <p>"Everybody's well like, how can I help you, you help me, I help you, we help each other, we cooperate in any way" (I.1)</p>	<p>Energetic and supportive culture</p>
<p>“We were sitting away from the office, which I think is good, to move away from what we have here and feeling that we are outside with all the other people, who are in kind of the same situation. They are startups as well and that was a bit of a culture.” (I.2)</p> <p>“But when you make your creative process, it’s perfect to be somewhere else. If you are surrounded by other people that are in the same phase as you it is perfect because you can discuss things with them.” (I.6)</p> <p>“And I think also being offside was a good thing. It felt really good to be in a creative environment. You start associate it with different things.” (I.6)</p> <p>“There was the whole big community that you don’t even know about until you’re in it.” (I.2)</p>	<p>Outside location</p>

Table 9: Representative Quotes of Culture

Energetic and Supportive Culture

The interviewees characterized the culture within the accelerator as energizing and supportive. Energizing in the respect that the people within the accelerator have the drive to make things happen and inspire participants. The supportive aspect of the culture is underlined by the helping environment inherent in the accelerator. Hence, interviewees emphasized that everyone in the accelerator is very helpful and supportive for each other. Taken together, the surrounding people in the accelerator mainly contributed to the energizing and supportive culture.

Outside Location

Multiple interviewees emphasized that being located outside the corporation had a positive impact on them from a cultural perspective. By moving into a co-working space where a number of other startups is situated, the outside location was found to promote a cultural

change. Thus, the teams were surrounded by other startups, which were in a similar phase as the accelerator teams. Due to the outside location, the accelerator teams became part of a big community and could work in a creative environment.

Data Structure

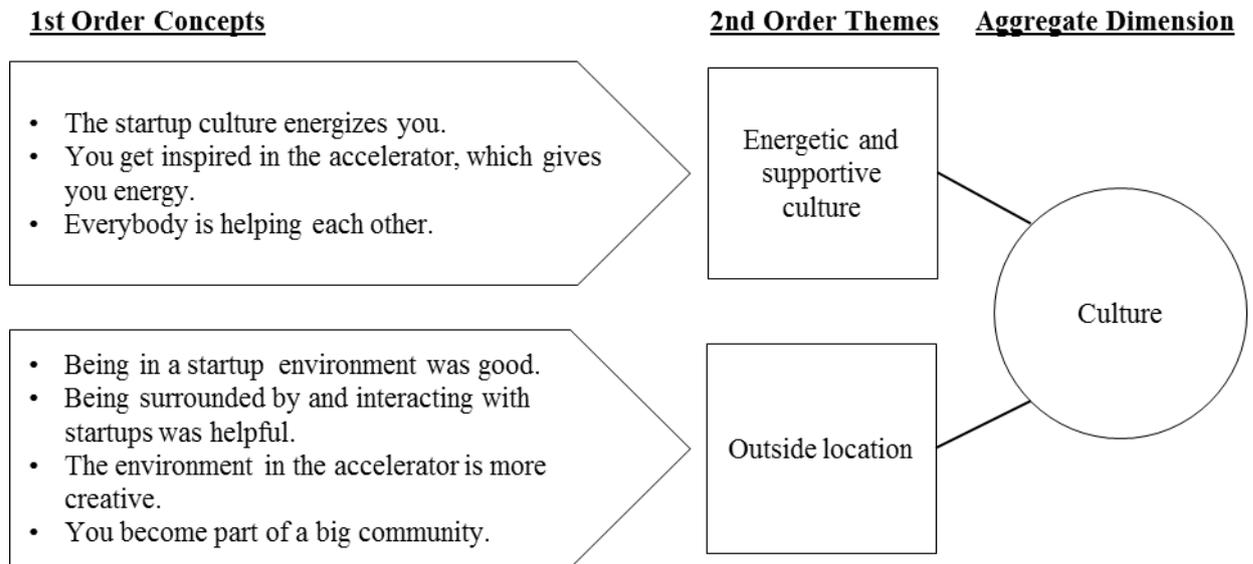


Figure 5: Data Structure of Culture

4.4 External Knowledge

The weekly coaching provided during the accelerator program and the interactions with externals exposed the accelerator teams to external knowledge. Both factors were found to facilitate the teams' progress during the accelerator program.

Representative Quotes	2nd Order Themes
<p>“There were the workshops and coaching that we received on a weekly basis. That helped us quite a lot.” (I.7)</p> <p>“I got a lot of help from the coaches” (I.5)</p> <p>“What affected us mostly during the accelerator, were all the resources that the case company paid for, like the coaches we had.” (I.1)</p> <p>“And also, if we had an issue we could get help and advice from the group coach.” (I.6)</p> <p>“Every week on Monday and Friday, we had meetings and got coaching and it was more direct feedback on the way of working.” (I.3)</p> <p>“Most of the coaches were very inspiring.” (I.5)</p> <p>“After every meeting with the people coaching, I got new energy and new ideas.” (I.3)</p> <p>“So, we have the weekly guiding from our mentors, but we could basically be free and do what we wanted.” (I.7)</p> <p>“With the freedom no one bothered us with what we were doing, except our coach, who wanted to help us and we wanted to get help of course. It's not nice to be feeling like you're floating in space either, that no one cares and that you're just free.” (I.2)</p> <p>“If I would have been by myself without any coaches and without the tools I have learned here, we would have never come that far with the idea.” (I.6)</p>	<p>Coaching</p>
<p>“I met a lot of people and created a great network.” (I.3)</p> <p>“I got a lot of help from the coaches and different teams, since we were discussing solutions to our challenge.” (I.5)</p> <p>“This discussion I would say is quite valuable because people often want to help each other. So that was really good I think” (I.5)</p> <p>“Yes the fact to make things happen and to meet new people. New opportunities wouldn't have happened, if I didn't have those meetings.” (I.4)</p> <p>“I think that's important. So group coaching is also good because you get some feedback from the others because they're in that phase. So you don't just get feedback from the coaches, but also from fellow accelerator members.” (I.6)</p> <p>“So, you can always talk to someone who knows someone.” (I.6)</p> <p>“So I think one good thing is that you don't just have internal people in those accelerators. That's very beneficial to get also the outside competence.” (I.6)</p> <p>“There are some startups that I met, some people that I met, that both, have inspired me with ideas.” (I.3)</p> <p>“Actually, we did do quite a bit of networking and meeting other initiatives for startups in the region, like connecting with investors, with startups, we met them. Then, you got to know the whole network of startups in the region and some of them we met during the acceleration.” (I.1)</p> <p>“It also gave us inspiration. We had different agendas with different people.” (I.7)</p>	<p>Interaction with externals</p>

Table 10: Representative Quotes of External Knowledge

Coaching

The coaching provided within the accelerator forms a key facilitator for the progress of all teams. Thus, interviewees stressed that the weekly coaching provided them with valuable feedback and advice regarding how to proceed and guided them during the accelerator program. Additionally, the coaches served as inspiration and energized the participants. Taken together, the coaching supported the employees throughout the process.

Interaction with Externals

The accelerator teams described that they were able to establish a large external network in the accelerator, which was very valuable for their progress as the externals could help them with their ideas, support them in the identification of new opportunities and gave them inspiration. The inclusion of externals in the accelerator network was frequently stressed as facilitating factor. Additionally, the interaction with other startups in the same batch provided them with helpful feedback regarding their ideas and challenges, serving as further inspiration.

Data Structure

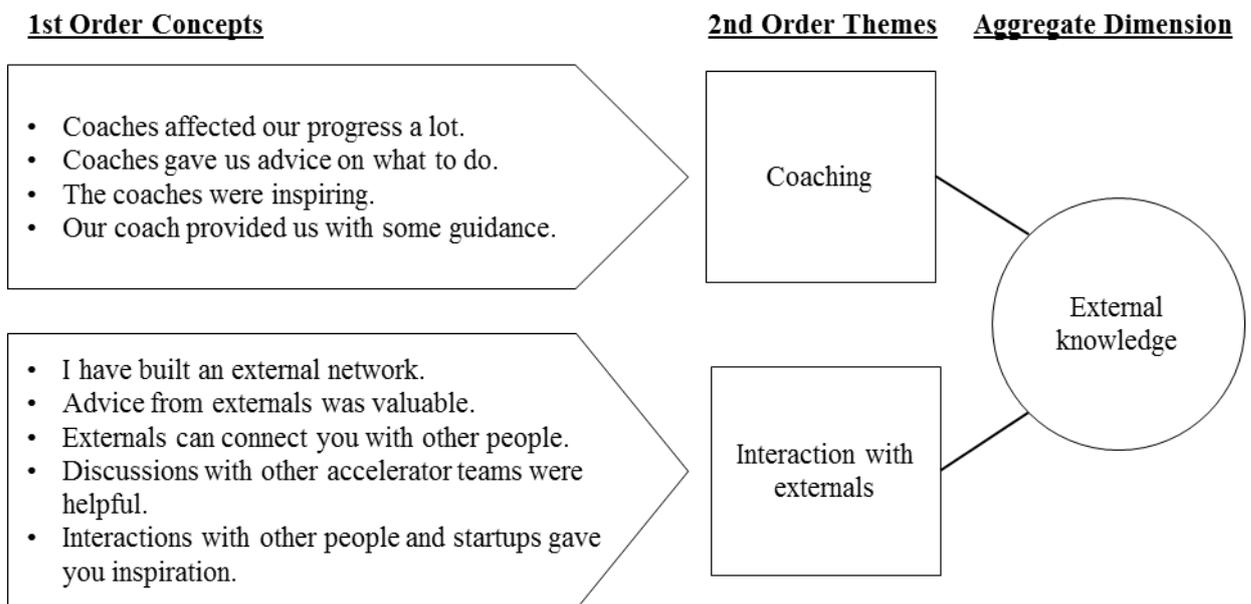


Figure 6: Data Structure of External Knowledge

4.5 Experimentation

Experimentation was found to be an important facilitator of the teams' progress during the accelerator program. The high tolerance for failure in combination with customer testing have been identified as important factors to enhance experimentation within the accelerator program.

Representative Quotes	2nd Order Themes
<p>“Test and try stuff without the fear of failing.” (I.5)</p> <p>“It's all a blur, ups and downs, come forward and try new things and fail fast.” (I.7)</p> <p>“You become much more experimental, test and try stuff without the fear of failing.” (I.5)</p> <p>“We go out the same week, test it a lot and then you realize I failed. It's really a bad idea. So we stopped and we didn't spend three or four months and ten people working on this idea.” (I.5)</p>	Tolerance for failure
<p>“The customers that was the best information and interaction and influenced my progress with the idea a lot. I got direct feedback and could test if my product is working or not and if it didn't, I could go back and change it and then try again.” (I.3)</p> <p>“Maybe they complain about something, then we can iterate and improve it and it's not going to be the end of the world. You have to get out to ask customers.” (I.1)</p> <p>“Expose it to the customers and see what kind of feedback you get and then do another iteration of improvement.” (I.1)</p> <p>“I would say that was a very important part of the work, to really be out and talk to potential customers.” (I.4)</p> <p>“We learned that you actually have to go out and talk to customers, that's the first thing you have to do. Some guys might like this, but is anyone going to buy it?” (I.2)</p> <p>“And then we had another customer with slightly different challenges. It was this kind of back and forth iterative approach.” (I.4)</p> <p>“The mindset there is that you shouldn't develop anything before you go out and talk to the customer. You can talk about your idea. You can fake it and say that I have this great product with these ABC features.” (I.3)</p>	Customer testing

Table 11: Representative Quotes of Experimentation

Tolerance for Failure

Failure was found to be highly tolerated and even encouraged in the accelerator. Hence, the high tolerance of failure facilitated teams to try new things, test their ideas and experiment without the fear of failing. If testing the idea resulted in failure, this is seen as a learning experience in the accelerator that facilitates the further development of the idea.

Customer Testing

Early customer testing plays an important role in the accelerator and enables participants to experiment, test and iteratively develop their ideas within the accelerator. The interviewees emphasized the importance of talking to customers early in order to test their assumptions and learn about the customers' needs. This information is then used to adapt the idea in order to further test it with the customer. Hence, customer testing entails a very iterative process of talking to customers, learning about customers, applying those learnings in order to improve the idea and repeating the process. The interviewees emphasized that the information gathered from customer interactions and testing helped them improve their products or services during the accelerator program.

Data Structure

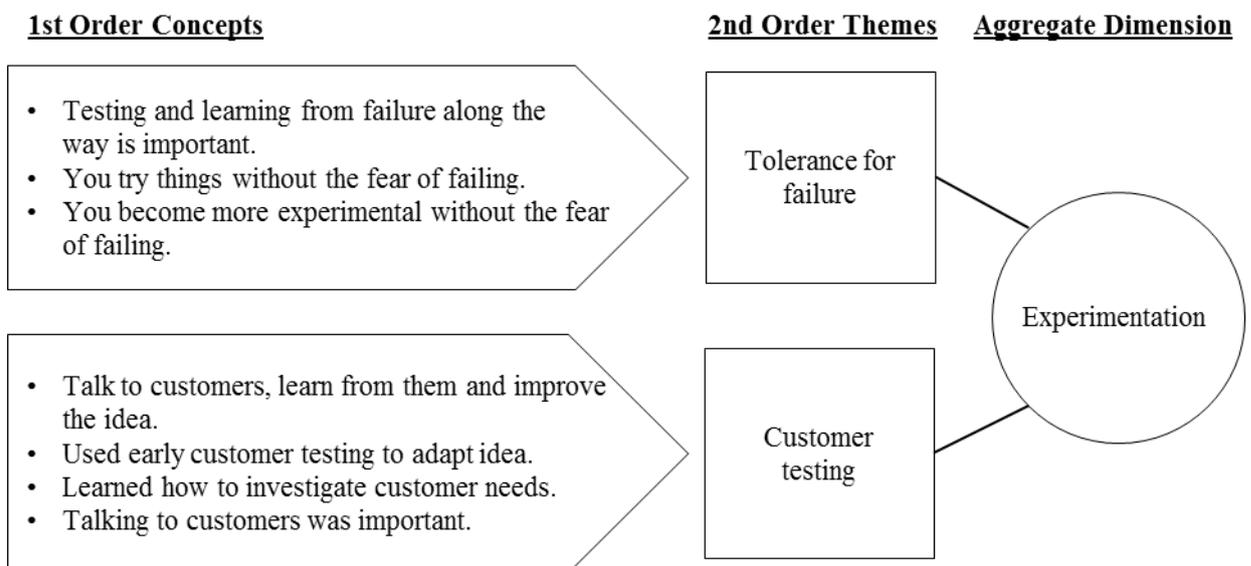


Figure 7: Data Structure of Experimentation

4.6 Limited Duration

The findings show that the limited duration of the accelerator program has a dual effect on the accelerator teams. On the one hand, the time pressure pushed the teams to make progress, whereas the limited duration also limited the overall development of the ideas to the acceleration period of five months.

Representative Quotes	2nd Order Themes
<p>“So regarding the limited time, it kind of stressed you because I didn't know, how far we were expected to come in five months.” (I.5)</p> <p>“Limited time, of course, gives you pressure.” (I.1)</p> <p>”The limited time you had during the accelerator program? Well, I guess it pushed you into achieving in short time because if you have this time, you do whatever you can.” (I.1)</p> <p>“Of course I felt the pressure but you want to make the best of it. We felt pressure during the accelerator.” (I.6)</p> <p>“You are still kind of stressed anyway because you want to be there.” (I.5)</p> <p>“You felt some sort of pressure to actually do things in every minute of your time, since we are here.” (I.2)</p> <p>“It just felt like you could achieve a lot in a very short time.” (I.1)</p> <p>“It pushed you forward quite quickly.” (I.6)</p>	<p>Time pressure</p>
<p>“I think it could have been a bit longer, as it takes a while until you really get started and when you do get started, it is almost over.” (I.7)</p> <p>“Six months is quite short, and to be honest, it wasn't six months. It was more five and a half and there was a Christmas break in between. And there were a lot of activities that were not really work time.” (I.4)</p> <p>“This time was way too little, five months is nothing. If you want to start a company, you don't get anywhere in five months, you need at least a year.” (I.5)</p> <p>“Six months is quite short, and to be honest, it wasn't six months. It was more five and a half and there was a Christmas break in between. And there were a lot of activities that were not really work time, this pitch event for instance, it took a lot of preparations and traveling time.” (I.4)</p> <p>”When you're in the program it's a warm and protected place where you have support from us, but it's time limited project. When you're out there, then it's still a big gap before you can get your first revenue.” (M.1)</p>	<p>Limited development time</p>

Table 12: Representative Quotes of Limited Duration

Time Pressure

Due to the limited program length of five months, the participants felt time pressure during the accelerator program. This time pressure had a positive twofold influence on the progress of the teams. On the one hand, the limited time pressured the teams to make fast progress in order to have a deliverable at the end of the accelerator program. On the other hand, interviewees mentioned the limited time as motivational factor to achieve a lot in the short

amount of time. Hence, the awareness of the program end date pressured and motivated participants to make good use of their time in order to progress fast.

Limited Development Time

Several interviewees stressed the limited duration of the accelerator as a limiting factor. Thus, the development of all ideas within the accelerator ends with the last day of the program. However, interviewees described the program duration of five months as too short to develop a business from the initial idea and indicated that the final deliverable at the end of the program is still far from generating revenue. Thus, the interviewees indicated that more time would have allowed them to develop their ideas further.

Data Structure

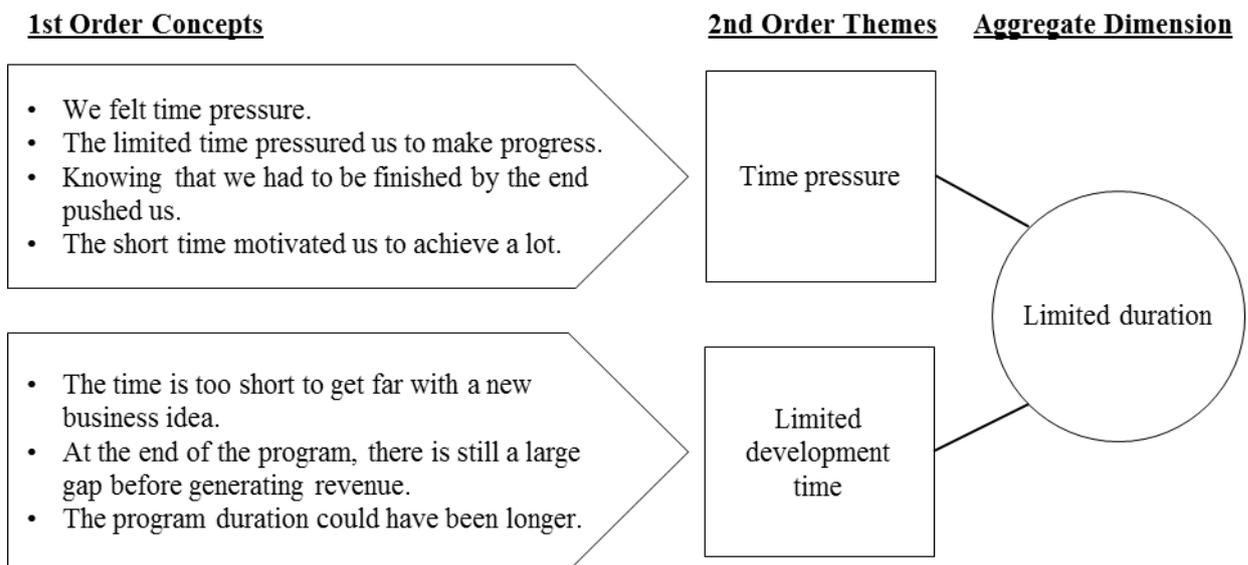


Figure 8: Data Structure of Limited Duration

4.7 Corporate Involvement

Corporate involvement was found to have a manifold effect in the context of the corporate accelerator. Therefore, the access to corporate resources has been identified as a facilitator, whereas IP issues and the clarification process concerning the future of the startup teams were found to have negative effects. Lastly, the final management decision regarding the future of the startups was found to play a key role at the end of the accelerator program.

Representative Quotes	2nd Order Themes
<p>“If the case company hadn't helped us, that would have been a real issue.” (I.2)</p> <p>“It made all the change because we could start selling it. “ (I.2)</p> <p>“We talked to people here at the case company who were fantastic and helped us a lot.” (I.2)</p> <p>“The internal connection that my mentor could give to me, that was really, really helpful and it meant a lot.” (I.3)</p> <p>“I could connect with other people within the case company, that could give me good advice.” (I.3)</p> <p>“Their knowledge, that's what we used basically.” (I.7)</p> <p>“I got help from both, IT and legal” (I.3)</p> <p>“The case company was a potential client and we had many people here that we could speak to about using the product.” (I.7)</p> <p>“But we interviewed a lot of people that we thought would be beneficial for the product or could be potential users. So I think we did maybe 40-45 interviews, with the different people inside the case company because our product could be used in different kind of operative ways.” (I.6)</p> <p>"So, then it's fantastic that we had people here that know about every specific detail, about everything. So it makes you also realize that that's valuable. That's very valuable.” (I.2)</p>	<p>Access to corporate resources</p>
<p>“No one is going to fund us if the idea is still owned by the case company.” (I.6)</p> <p>“The case company told us that we can't get any investment because they own the idea as they paid for the development. So it just crashed.” (I.6)</p> <p>“Since our idea was owned by the case company, we couldn't talk to investors.” (I.7)</p> <p>“We couldn't get funding from the investor, which was a critical success factor” (I.6)</p> <p>“We had this discussion with the Operations Manager about how will it be with the IP, so that was also a potential showstopper.” (I.4)</p> <p>“And I know that we also discussed this quite much with the others a few months before the program, what will happen now? Who owns the IP and what will happen with me? Will I get this idea, will the case company take it? How much will it cost? What options do I have?” (I.4)</p>	<p>Intellectual property issues</p>

Representative Quotes	2nd Order Themes
<p>“No, that was a really black whole. That didn't work well at all. That is also something we put up as feedback. We didn't know what will happen with the idea. what are the options? What does it mean for us?“ (I.6)</p> <p>“Yes, because it took too much time and energy to think about that. Worrying about this unclearness and realizing that it's really up to try, to sort this out and play this political game.” (I.4)</p> <p>“The only thing, what held us back the last two months, was that the case company had their procedures and everything to decide what will happen with us.” (I.7)</p> <p>“It was a period of a month, where we didn't have so much progress because we spend a lot of time and effort to work with internal things and clarifying things.” (I.4)</p> <p>"The last month or two we were more busy with finding out, what will happen with our idea after the accelerator." (I.7)</p> <p>“We lost a lot of time, a lot of energy and we also needed to figure out what the next step is.” (I.6)</p> <p>"You lose energy. Yeah, you lose a lot of energy and momentum." (I.2)</p> <p>“I think the biggest negative thing for us was that we were held back by the case company that had to make a decision, and we were in this kind of lost momentum.” (I.7)</p> <p>“Worrying about this unclearness and realizing that it's really up to try, to sort this out and play this political game. You just need to know, how to play the cards to make sure that this will have a go.” (I.4)</p>	<p>Clarification process</p>
<p>“Back then it was the guy who managed the accelerator and he reported to one manager, who was very positive. And then the manager of business innovation and the country CEO were also involved in the decision making. So those were the ones who made the decision” (I.1)</p> <p>“The Operations Manager and I are involved. And when the decision becomes a bit larger, we then also have a manager of a specific unit, depending on the idea, that is involved in the decision.” (M.1)</p> <p>"We had some meetings with the Head of Innovation and he went through this paper and said that we needed to change a little bit. But here, all he asked was more questions. So then I guess we realized that he might be interested in investing." (I.2)</p> <p>"We had meetings the Operations Manager of the accelerator and the Head of Innovation at the case company to talk about my idea, could it be something that the case company would like to be part in." (I.3)</p> <p>“It's the same set of criteria on which we select the teams and ideas before the accelerator program. We believe in the team members and we look for ideas that can tackle our core challenges in different areas. And if an idea comes close to tackle one of these challenges, it increases our interest a lot.” (M.1)</p> <p>"And it also depends on how far they have come in the 5 months. Some people are able to develop a prototype and some people do not make it to that stage. But it also depends on what kind of idea they have." (M.2)</p>	<p>Management decision</p>

Table 13: Representative Quotes of Corporate Involvement

Access to Corporate Resources

Since the accelerator belongs to the corporation, all participants had access to the corporate resources of the company and were assigned a company mentor who facilitated the connection between startups and the company. Interviewees frequently stressed the benefit of having access to employees and in turn company knowledge. Thus, the case company could provide valuable information and advice to the accelerator teams from a company and from a client perspective.

Intellectual Property Issues

The participants expressed negative experiences in regard to the IP rights of their ideas. Thus, one major issue was that the idea belonged to the case company, which was not clear to participants in the beginning of the accelerator program. This made it difficult for the participants to talk to investors, since they could not receive any funding. Consequently, the lack of clarity regarding IP rights as well as the case company owning the IP rights had negative consequences for the progress of accelerator teams.

Clarification Process

The clarification process entails a lack of clarity and a prolonged decision process by the organization regarding the future of the startups. Due to the lack of clarity about the future of their startups, the teams experienced a negative consequence for their progress towards the end of the accelerator program as it slowed them down. Through the long decision process by the corporation, which involved time-consuming corporate procedures and politics, the participants expressed to have lost a lot of time and energy thinking about what will happen with their idea and clarifying the next steps.

Management Decision

At the end of the acceleration period, the management takes the decision regarding whether an idea of the corporate accelerator gets integrated into the company, receives further investment, a cooperation agreement with the company or if it is not further pursued by the corporation. The management takes their decision based on the team's overall progress within the accelerator program, whether the people that developed the idea can drive it further and whether the idea is tackling one of the core challenges that the company is currently facing. Multiple managers are found to be involved in the final decision, including the Head of Innovation, the accelerator's Operations Manager and managers of specific units, for whom the idea might be of interest.

Data Structure

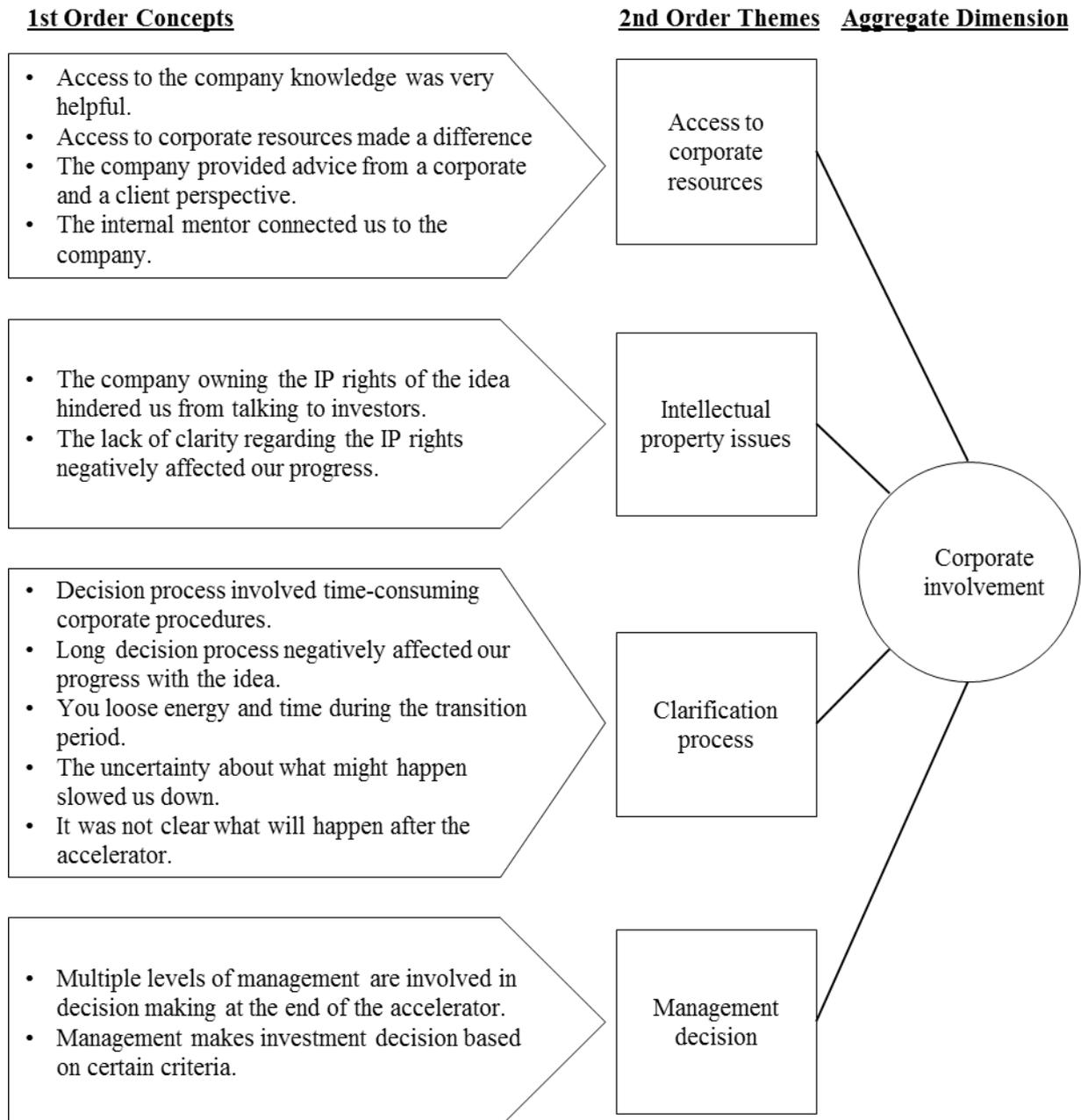


Figure 9: Data Structure of Corporate Involvement

5 Discussion

The identified aggregate dimensions comprise facilitators and barriers influencing the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator, which answers the first research question. The second research question requires an understanding regarding the dynamic interrelationships between identified barriers and facilitators as well as their influence on the overall exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator. Therefore, this chapter will discuss the dynamic interrelations between all identified influencing factors of the corporate accelerator's exploratory capability by drawing from interviewee quotes depicting these interrelations and relating the findings to existing ambidexterity and corporate accelerator literature.

To illustrate the dynamic interrelations between facilitators and barriers of the corporate accelerator's exploratory capability, a grounded theory model was developed and is presented in the following section. Subsequently, the interplay between all factors is discussed in detail, while connecting the findings to existing ambidexterity and corporate accelerator research.

5.1 Grounded Theory Model

The developed data structure and the evidence for interrelations between aggregate dimensions provided through interviews led to the development of the grounded theory model (see figure 10). The grounded theory model illustrates the dynamic interrelations between the aggregate dimensions and depicts their influence on the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator, indicating facilitators with a (+) and barriers with a (-).

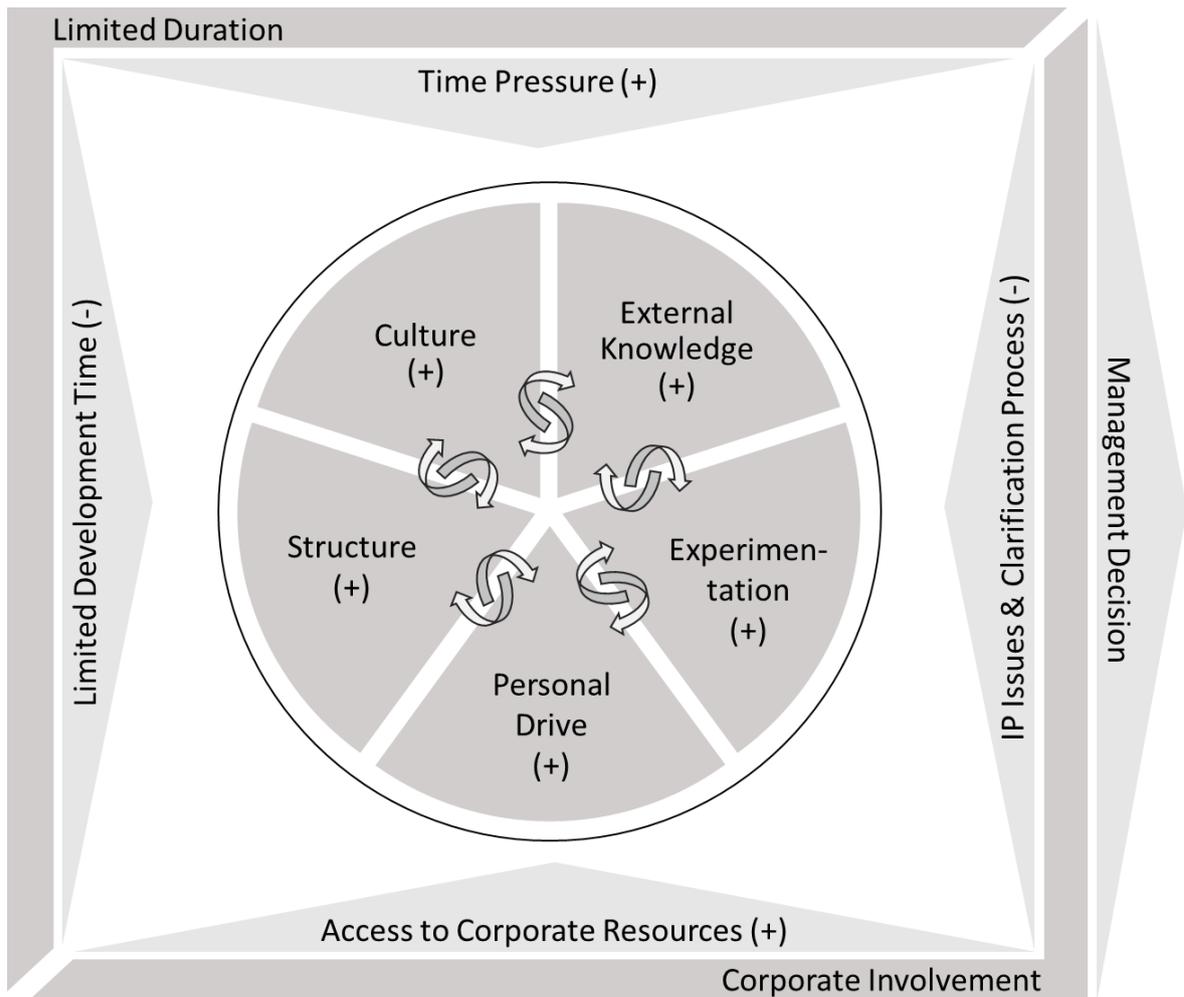


Figure 10: Grounded Theory Model

The inner circle of the grounded theory model illustrates the facilitators found in the corporate accelerator regarding its exploratory capability. These facilitators comprise the aggregate dimensions personal drive, structure, culture, external knowledge and experimentation. All these factors were found to not only enhance participants' progress with their business ideas within the accelerator, but also reinforce each other. Therefore, the

dynamic arrows connecting the facilitators of the inner circle depict their interrelationships. These reinforcing interrelations suggest that the given conditions within the corporate accelerator provide a powerful engine that drives the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator if all conditions are given.

However, this facilitating engine is affected by two other factors inherent in corporate accelerators: limited duration and corporate involvement. These two aggregate dimensions exert a dual influence on the facilitators of the corporate accelerator.

The limited duration dimension comprises two second order themes, which have contrary influences on the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator. The time pressure that the limited duration exerts on the accelerator teams creates a push, by pressuring and motivating teams to make quick progress. Therefore, the time pressure facilitates the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator. In contrast, the limited development time restricts the teams in their overall progress, by setting an end date to the idea development. Hence, it represents a limiting factor to the overall progress, as the protective environment of the corporate accelerator is only provided for the duration of the program.

A similar dual influence is found to be exerted by the corporate involvement in the accelerator, which comprises four second order themes. On the one hand, the corporate resources provided by the organization running the corporate accelerator are found to be a main driver of the teams' progress within the accelerator. Hence, corporate resources complement the facilitators within the corporate accelerator represented in the inner circle by further driving the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator. However, the IP issues and clarification process that result from the corporate involvement hinder the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator by limiting accelerator teams. Hence, IP issues and clarification process represent barriers that limit the positive facilitating effect of the accelerator engine. Lastly, the management makes the final investment decision at the end of the accelerator program. Therefore, management decision is neither a facilitator nor barrier for the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator but represents a gate regarding the re-integration of exploration into the organization.

In summary, the grounded theory model reveals informative insights regarding the interplay of factors influencing the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator. The reinforcing interaction between facilitating conditions provided within the corporate accelerator creates

a powerful engine that drives the corporate accelerator's exploratory capability forward. Yet, the exploratory capability is positively or negatively influenced by the limited duration of the program and the corporate involvement, as they can either drive or hamper the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator. Lastly, the decision about what follows the accelerator program depends on the management, which therefore represents the final gate.

The following discussion is divided into three parts that arise from the grounded theory model. First, the interplay between facilitators forming the engine of the corporate accelerator's exploratory capability is discussed. Subsequently, the dual influence of limited duration and corporate involvement is debated in relation to existing literature.

5.2 Facilitators of the Corporate Accelerator

The inner circle of the grounded theory model and engine of the corporate accelerator's exploratory capability comprises the five facilitators: personal drive, structure, culture, external knowledge and experimentation. Each facilitator, its influence on the overall exploratory capability and its effect on other facilitators is discussed in detail in the following parts.

5.2.1 Personal Drive

The findings show that the awareness of the accelerator influenced employees at their work within the case company by enhancing their thoughts about ideas and their openness towards new knowledge in order to apply to the program, as supported by the following statements.

"I started following things, but maybe getting a little bit more interested in that kind of world, whereas before I didn't know anything about startups or innovation or anything like that, but once you kind of open your eyes to it and you can accept that." (I.2)

"When I heard about it the first time, I started to think more about what kind of ideas I have in my mind and if I can come up with something. There was a route forward and so it triggered me to more actively think about that and not just let it pass." (I.4)

Above evidence suggests that the awareness of the corporate accelerator influenced employees' choice to engage in exploration in addition to their normal work duties, which relates to the concept of contextual ambidexterity (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004). This finding suggests that the corporate accelerator may serve as a facilitator for employees to

engage in exploration and enhance contextual ambidexterity, thus, complementing the gap in ambidexterity research regarding facilitating mechanisms for contextual ambidexterity (Kauppila, 2010). However, further studies are required to examine the influence of a corporate accelerator on the contextual ambidexterity of an organization.

Triggering idea generation and realization of employees enabled the accelerator teams to work on something they were passionate about, thus, fostering employees' passion. Taken together, both factors act as personal drivers that were found to positively influence the employees progress during the accelerator program, while complementing the structure within the accelerator, as following evidence underlines.

“At the mid time of the accelerator period and the end time, I was spending like weekends and evenings working on the business idea. So, I mean, you're more flexible, you're more free, but you still want to work with your idea more maybe because you're more passionate about this idea than your daily work because it's your idea and you want it to succeed.” (I.5)

“Whereas here in the accelerator it's you and your colleague and if you don't do it, if you don't feel it, nothing is going to happen with it, just throw it in the bin.” (I.2)

“You can do almost whatever you like if you just put your mind to it and if you know what you want to do, you can do it.” (I.1)

Ambidexterity literature supports this finding as scholars have identified passion as driver of exploration and emphasized a synergistic relationship between discipline and passion (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009). Thus, passion without structure and vice versa is likely to result in suboptimal results (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Brown & Duguid, 2001). In turn, Tushman and O'Reilly (1996) describe the aim of small, autonomous exploratory units as to enhance employees' sense of ownership, which further suggests a mutually reinforcing relationship between personal drivers and structures.

Based on above evidence, personal drivers are found to have a facilitating effect on the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator, while forming a synergistic and facilitating interplay with the flexible structure and guidance provided by coaches within the corporate accelerator.

5.2.2 Structure

The structure within the corporate accelerator was found to promote autonomy and high responsibility among accelerator teams, which enabled the startups to progress fast during the accelerator program. Likewise, Tushman and O'Reilly (1996) have emphasized the need for structures and processes to facilitate speed and flexibility to foster exploration, thus, directly supporting the facilitating influence of the structure provided within the corporate accelerator. Yet, the evidence of this study sheds further light on the underlying facilitating mechanisms inherent in the structure provided, which deepens the understanding of this facilitator in the corporate accelerator context.

Decentralization has been identified as an essential condition for exploratory organizational units in ambidexterity research (e.g. Benner & Tushman, 2003; Christensen, 1998; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996, O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008; Lavie et al., 2010; Raisch et al., 2009) and has also been suggested as design characteristic of corporate accelerators (Kohler, 2016). The evidence of this research supports this recommendation, as interviewees have repeatedly stressed the importance of quick decision making, by statements such as:

“making quick decisions was quite important” (I.2)

“the decisions that I believe is the right thing to do and act quickly upon that to feel that I have made progress. I feel that I take steps in its momentum.” (I.4)

The ability to take quick decisions and move fast was found to be especially important in the context of the corporate accelerator, in order to balance the restraint of limited resources and time. Interviewee 1 emphasized this by underlining:

“you have very limited resources and limited money, but you can do exactly whatever you want. You don't have to ask permission from anybody. If you want to set up a web page, set up a web page, it can be done in 24 hours.” (I.1)

Hence, the evidence of this study indicates that the autonomy provided within the accelerator acts as an important countervailing force against the hindering influence of the limited development time, by enabling accelerator teams to achieve a lot in a short amount of time. This relation is further emphasized by the statement:

“Limited time, of course, gives you pressure. I don't think we felt a lot of pressure. We didn't feel like the time was so short. It just felt like you could achieve a lot in a very short time because you could do whatever you like.” (I.1)

The high degree of autonomy provided to accelerator teams was also found to foster their focus on relevant activities, as underlined by interviewee 4 *“When you are not limited with any boundaries, you ask yourself, what is really the right thing to do?”* This evidence is supported by former research, addressing the need to protect startups in corporate accelerators from bureaucratic processes within the organization to enable the teams to progress quickly (Kohler, 2016). Hence, the findings support the recommendation by scholars to provide simplified and startup-friendly procedures within the corporate accelerator (Kohler, 2016).

Accordingly, the structures within the corporate accelerator are found to facilitate its exploratory capability, while enabling the teams to progress fast, as *“things are happening so much faster in the accelerator than at the case company, where everything is so slow.”* (I.5). The latter facilitating effect is especially important in the corporate accelerator context due to the limited program duration.

Additionally, the structure was found to foster the personal drive of accelerator participants, as interviewee 6 stated, *“We worked so much, but it was worth it. You become more passionate about it when you really have the freedom.”* Similarly, Tushman and O'Reilly (1996) defined the logic behind small, autonomous units for exploration as to foster the sense of ownership and responsibility among employees, which cannot be provided within large organizations. Thus, this study's evidence not only supports Tushman and O'Reilly's (1996) statement, but identifies the autonomy provided to employees in the accelerator as a facilitator for their passion. Consequently, the organic structure within the corporate accelerator is found to reinforce the personal drive of accelerator teams.

Further evidence indicates a reinforcing relationship between the loose structure within the corporate accelerator and the ability of teams to experiment. Interviewee 6 emphasized this by saying:

“I think it influenced me a lot. Yeah, if it was too rigid and strict, I think I would have been feeling trapped. And I think the agile way of working also means that you should have like an open mind and you try things out. It is still structured, but you try different things in

different alternatives, both when it comes to product, but also the markets and the value proposition that you have.” (I.6)

In comparison to the tight guidelines provided within the corporation, interviewee 7 stated that *“it’s the complete opposite in the accelerator, there is no straight line there. It’s all a blur, ups and downs, come forward and try new things and fail fast and no guidelines on how to do anything.”* This loose structure not only fostered the participants’ ability to move fast and experiment, but also allowed them freedom regarding the development of their ideas, as interviewee 7 underlined by saying *“the freedom helped me a lot to develop the idea in the way I wanted.”*

Above claims regarding experimentation and freedom find further support in the following management statement.

“The accelerator is one of the areas where we have the loosest set of rules, more outside of the box thinking and external involvements. So the accelerator helps the company to get out of the comfort zone and helps the company to move. Within the accelerator we can give the employees free mandate. There are no specific rules in terms of how to proceed with the idea.” (M.2)

Hence, the freedom provided to participants enabled them to actually undertake experimentation within the corporate accelerator and develop their ideas further. Past ambidexterity research has highlighted the need of structures allowing for experimentation within exploratory units (Benner & Tushman, 2002, 2003; Christensen, 1998; Tushman & O’Reilly, 1996, O’Reilly & Tushman, 2008; Lavie et al., 2010; Raisch et al., 2009), thus, supporting the facilitating effect of the structure provided within the corporate accelerator on its exploratory capability.

In summary, the loose structure within the corporate accelerator promotes autonomy and responsibility of the startups, enabling them to be flexible, experimental and fast. Thus, the structure can be characterized as organic, which ambidexterity research has identified as crucial to foster exploration (He & Wong, 2004; Jansen et al., 2009; Koryak, 2018; Rosenkopf & Nerkar, 2001). Therefore, the structure within the corporate accelerator is found to be a strong facilitator of the unit’s exploratory capability and multiplier of experimentation and personal drive facilitators.

5.2.3 Culture

The culture within the accelerator was found to be supportive and energetic, which was promoted through the outside location of the accelerator. The findings further indicate a clear distinction between the cultures of the case company and the corporate accelerator. Thus, the culture within the case company is more risk averse, which limits the employees in their exploratory work, as interviewee 5 emphasized:

“Sometimes in a corporate environment I think I can feel a bit limited in that, because there's also a risk-thinking in the corporate environment. The big corporate companies need to think about the risks in doing something.” (I.5)

The manager supports the above employee statement, but at the same time identifies the corporate culture as suitable for the mature business, by explaining:

“Our values and culture are the absolutely right ones for maintaining and operating a mature business. Those values are very helpful. But when you want to drive change, then what you are good at is not going to help you. So that is the dilemma.” (M.1)

Supporting the above findings, several scholars stated that risk aversion is more common in an exploitative environment, while more risk taking is required for innovation in an explorative environment (Lavie et al., 2010; March, 1991; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996).

In addition, this research discovered the culture within the accelerator to be very supportive, further enhancing its facilitating effect. Since the teams go through the same process and have similar experiences, they are more likely to support and help each other, which was confirmed by interviewee 3, stating that *“Everybody was very supportive and we helped each other out”*, and interviewee 5 *“I mean, much more helping each other, I would say”*.

Moreover, the study discovered valuable findings regarding the location of the corporate accelerator, which can either be inside or outside of the corporation; with both options having advantages and disadvantages (Kohler, 2016). The interview findings provide evidence that being in an outside location helped the accelerator teams to interact with different people, startups and grow their networks, thus, facilitating the access to external knowledge, which is supported by the following interviewee statements.

“I mean, of course we did a lot of networking with the rest of the co-working environment, where it's full of startups. As we were sitting inside the co-working space, you had different startups all around you.” (I.1)

“We spoke a lot to people from other companies at the co-working space.” (I.7)

Finally, the outside location was found to support the creative process of the teams as indicated by interviewee 6:

“But when you make your creative process it's perfect to be somewhere else. If you are surrounded by other people that are in the same phase as you it is perfect because you can discuss things with them. So that's my recommendation. So if you have an accelerator, put it outside of the company.” (I.6)

Supporting this finding, scholars have emphasized the facilitating effect a flexible culture has on creativity (Bueschgens et al., 2010; Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; Khazanchi et al., 2007; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013).

Based on above evidence, the culture within the corporate accelerator is identified as a strong facilitator for the unit's exploratory capability with a reinforcing effect on the external knowledge facilitator.

5.2.4 External Knowledge

The external knowledge dimension was found to be mainly facilitated through coaching and the interaction with externals. This study found evidence for the manifold facilitating effects of both factors on other facilitators of the corporate accelerator's exploratory capability.

The provided guidance through coaching and frame of deliverables was identified as complement to the loose structure within the corporate accelerator. Teams are provided with guidance, while leaving them in full control over their working process. The following quotes underline this complementing effect.

“In the accelerator you have more responsibility and you actually just get coached, you don't get managed, which I think is a really good thing but you still have frames. You still have the deliverables that you have to do, so it's still structured, which I like because it forces you to deliver and explore all the different things, but you still have full control over it.” (I.6)

“With the freedom no one bothered us with what we were doing, except our coach, who wanted to help us and we wanted to get help of course. It's not nice to be feeling like you're floating in space either, that no one cares and that you're just free” (I.2)

This finding fortifies the suggestion by scholars to use and communicate metrics to the startup teams (Haines, 2014; Dempwolf et al., 2014; Kohler, 2016). Prior research made this recommendation with a main focus on assessing accelerator performance and track the startup progress (Haines, 2014; Dempwolf et al., 2014; Kohler, 2016). Yet, this line of research is mainly focused on assessing overall accelerator performance and therefore suggests a focus on long-term metrics (Dempwolf et al., 2014; Kupp et al., 2017), without investigating the impact those metrics have on the startups. Contributing to this line of corporate accelerator research, this study provides evidence for the positive effect of setting and communicating deliverables with startups. The deliverables actually serve as a frame for the startups, thus, complementing the freedom provided through loose structures within the accelerator.

Furthermore, findings suggest that the coaches within the accelerator were encouraging the participants to experiment with their ideas and test them with the customer.

“He made us talk to customers. We didn't want to talk to customers in the beginning, we wanted to sit in our office, have coffee and think, but he was like, now you have to go out and talk to them, you should do this now and you can try this, why don't you do this. He was really pushing us to do all these things. So yeah, he was very good to push us to try different things, try new things and make us go further, like now you should have you thought about this.” (I.2)

“But in the accelerator, you would start thinking about the idea and then the coaches say, okay, how can you test this idea, so hey, give you an idea of how to test it and we go out the same week, test it a lot” (I.5)

This finding is supported by Claryssee & Yusubova (2014), who stressed mentorship/coaching as one of the most valuable aspects of an accelerator by providing participants with valuable new knowledge and skills in order to develop and grow their startups. Hence, coaches are likely to teach and encourage startups to experiment, thus, acting as a facilitator for experimentation within the accelerator.

Additionally, the interactions with startups were identified to give participants inspiration for their ideas, while also enhancing their personal drive to achieve more. The evidence for this relation is grounded in the following exemplary interviewee statements.

“Possibly networking with other startups gave you a bit of inspiration, I would say. So that’s actually important that you could be inspired by all the startups around you and see if they were making progress and were achieving stuff and you were thinking oh, I could be one of those, who actually make an exit and like me or some other startup. So it’s a bit of inspiration.” (I.1)

“There are some startups that I met, some people that I met, that both, have inspired me with ideas.” (I.3)

Furthermore, participants were found to value the multifaceted backgrounds and expertise provided by the networks of the corporate accelerator, which further enhanced their progress. The following statements provide evidence for the valuable advice these networks offered to the participants.

“And what is good about the mentors is that they come from so many different areas. Most of them are actually entrepreneurs from before as well as serial entrepreneurs in IT, technology, services and more. So you can always talk to someone who knows someone. That was awesome. And everyone’s really interested in just helping you develop.” (I.6)

“A startup guru from the region was there, who was also fantastic to talk to. He would say, but you should do this and why don’t you think about that. It’s fantastic, what you know from talking to him for five minutes”. (I.2)

Both of the above findings related to networking with externals find support in corporate accelerator literature. Thus, scholars emphasized the importance of providing startups with the opportunity to grow their networks by connecting them with experts, founders, investors or potential partners (Bauer et al., 2016; Clarysse & Yusubova, 2014; Isabelle, 2013; Kohler, 2016; Kupp et al., 2017).

Concluding this chapter, this research found that coaching and the interactions with externals within the accelerator program provide the accelerator teams with new knowledge and inspiration, which facilitated their progress within the accelerator. This finding is supported by the enhancing effect that the sourcing of external knowledge has on exploration

(Rosenkopf & Nerkar, 2001). As ambidexterity scholars have defined new knowledge acquisition as key characteristic of exploration (Lavie & Rosenkopf, 2006; Lavie et al., 2010; Smith & Tushman, 2005), this study identified the access to external knowledge as a strong facilitator for the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator with a facilitating effect on structure, experimentation and personal drive.

5.2.5 Experimentation

The findings show that the tolerance for failure was positively associated with the progress that the participants made within the accelerator, since they were able to test their ideas quickly and make improvements accordingly, thereby narrowing down their target market, as interviewee 5 expressed:

“We go out the same week, test it a lot and then you realize I failed. It's really a bad idea. So we stopped and we didn't spend three or four months and ten people working on this idea. You only spend one person's work in one week on the bad idea. That was a big difference.”
(I.5)

Experimentation and risk taking are defined as key activities of exploratory units (e.g. Benner & Tushman, 2003; March, 1991; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996) and allow for the identification of new target markets (Covin & Sleving, 1989). Hence, the facilitating effect of tolerance for failure and experimentation on the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator finds support in ambidexterity research.

Yet, this study also discovered that the approach of the accelerator to be close to the customers contradicts some of the suggestions of ambidexterity literature. The following statements underline the importance of staying close to the customer in the accelerator:

“like talking to customers about this certain problem and then eventually make some kind of mock up or prototype and expose it to the customer. And it's just about being daring to do that, taking the feedback and applying it for improving your promise to whatever you're doing.” (I.1)

“So the first thing that we did, was testing the market for this idea and see what the market wants.” (I.7)

However, Andriopoulos and Lewis (2009) highlight that strong market orientation is important for exploitation, but entails the risk of overlooking opportunities and threats emerging elsewhere (Danneels, 2003; Leonard-Barton, 1992), while focusing on the needs

of current customers (Christensen & Bower, 1996). In contrast, exploration is more common to have a loose linkage to the current customers (Judge & Blocker, 2008), in order to discover new opportunities and threats outside the existing market (Danneels, 2003). However, the loose customer linkage found in exploration involves a financial risk, since it might be difficult to capture value from the customers (Judge & Blocker, 2008) and increases the likelihood of developing products that may experience a lack of market demand (Kotler & Armstrong, 1996).

The risks of loose customer orientation as identified by Judge and Blocker (2008) and Kotler and Armstrong (1996) may account for the increased customer orientation found in the corporate accelerator as the interviewees frequently underlined that customer testing enabled them to validate the market for their idea.

“You could validate your idea during the accelerator. People were willing to sign up for pilots and willing to take an interview with us.” (I.6)

“And if I don't use that method of working as we did, we might have just not focused on that market, but instead would have tried to do everything. So it helped us find our market niche.” (I.1)

Based on the above theory and findings of this study, the reason for close customer orientation within the corporate accelerator may lie in the aim of the corporation to circumvent the development of products or services that are not likely to produce revenue in the long run. As the limited duration of the program limits the development time for participants, early customer testing enables the teams to validate the market faster and improve their products and services. In turn, this process enables the participants to present a validated product or prototype to management at the end of the program, which is then taken into consideration for their investment decision.

Therefore, experimentation was found to be enhanced through customer testing in the accelerator, which contradicts existing recommendations for exploration in ambidexterity research. Yet, the evidence indicates that customer testing is an important facilitator in the context of the corporate accelerator due to the limited development time available. In line with existing research, the high tolerance for failure was found to be an important enabler for experimentation. Taken together, experimentation is identified as a strong facilitator for the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator.

5.3 Dual Influence of the Limited Duration

The corporate accelerator of the case company accelerates startups over a period of five months. Thus, it lies within the 3-6 months time period suggested by scholars (Cohen & Hochberg, 2014, Clarysse & Yusubova, 2014). In the past, corporate accelerator literature has viewed the limited duration as a key characteristic and design factor of corporate accelerators and emphasized its importance in regard to accelerating startups' progress over a limited period of time (Cohen & Hochberg, 2014; Kohler, 2016). However, these statements regarding the facilitating effect of limited time lack empirical evidence due to the recent emergence of corporate accelerators. Thus, Kohler's (2016, p.352) recommendation of a short program duration is based on "the success of private accelerators and [...] the lessons of business incubation". Therefore, the dual influence of time that this study has brought to light represents a highly interesting contribution to corporate accelerator research.

5.3.1 Time Pressure

On the one hand, the limited program duration exerts pressure on the accelerator teams, which indeed accelerates the teams' progress during the acceleration period, thus, confirming its facilitating effect as claimed by scholars (Cohen & Hochberg, 2014; Kohler, 2016). Hence, the findings provide evidence that the time pressure caused by the limited program duration pushed the teams to make fast progress and utilize their time most efficiently as underlined by the following quotes.

"The limited time you had during the accelerator program? Well, I guess it pushed you into achieving in short time because if you have this time, you do whatever you can." (I.1)

"You felt some sort of pressure to actually do things in every minute of your time, since we are here." (I.2)

Our findings further provide evidence regarding the causation of time pressure being a facilitator within the corporate accelerator. Thus, the facilitating effect is grounded in the ambition of teams to develop their business ideas as far as possible during the program in order to enhance their chances to receive further investment at the end of the program, as the following quotes underline.

"So regarding the limited time, it kind of stressed you because I didn't know, how far we were expected to come in five months. Like, should we be able to sell our company for \$10 million? But once we realized, we're not expected to have a ready business by five months,

then it kind of calmed us down a little bit, but you are still kind of stressed anyway because you want to be there.” (I.5)

“Of course, when we found it, there were so many things we wanted to do before we finished because we didn't know what would happen after that. So that was quite stressful. If you do these things, then there's a high likelihood that we will continue, that people will see that it's a good investment.” (I.2)

Thus, scholars' claims of the short duration of corporate accelerators leading to faster growth or failure of new ventures and compressing the usually extended corporate innovation cycle (Cohen & Hochberg, 2014; Kohler, 2016), finds support in the empirical findings of this study regarding the facilitating effect of time pressure.

5.3.2 Limited Development Time

However, this study also provides evidence, which challenges above made claims by existing corporate accelerator literature regarding the positive effect of a limited program duration (Cohen & Hochberg, 2014; Kohler, 2016). Thus, the limited duration was found to limit the development time of startups to the fixed period of the program, which creates a barrier for the teams' progress. Interviewee 5 illustrated the major issue seen in the limited duration by the following statement and draws attention to the role of the idea stage.

“In the beginning, it felt like a really long time, but later it felt like we have no time left at all. This time was way too little, five months is nothing. If you want to start a company, you don't get anywhere in five months, you need at least a year. The three other accelerator teams that were external, they had gotten much further with their business idea, but the teams from the case company, they started in a very early stage, which means that your business idea is not good. So you have to change your business. So at the end of the accelerator, it's good if you have a good business idea, then you've gotten far. Maybe you are testing your new business idea.” (I.5)

Hence, the final deliverable that the teams achieve within the limited acceleration period also depends on the stage of their startup at the outset of the accelerator program. As accelerators generally accept early-stage startups into the program (Cohen & Hochberg, 2014; Hathaway, 2016; Kohler, 2016; Miller & Bound, 2011), the limited development time may result in developed ideas and prototypes, rather than a final product that is ready for commercialization. The findings of this study provide evidence supporting those

assumptions, as interviewees viewed the limited development time as a barrier limiting their overall progress during the accelerator program and consequently the outcome that is to be delivered at the end of the program.

5.3.3 Implications of Limited Duration for Exploration

Past ambidexterity research has emphasized that organizational separation enables a corporation to simultaneously pursue high levels of exploration and exploitation by running separate and independent units focusing either activity (e.g. Cao et al., 2009; Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; Gupta et al., 2006; Jansen et al., 2006; Lavie & Rosenkopf, 2006; Lubatkin et al., 2006; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008). Since these separate units co-exist in an organization, limited duration has not been a focus of ambidexterity research regarding organizational separation in the past.

Therefore, the facilitating effect of time pressure on the progress of accelerator teams brings forward the new finding that exploratory activities may be accelerated within exploratory units that involve a limited duration like the corporate accelerator. This theory is grounded in the evidence that time pressure resulted in the teams working more efficiently and progressing faster due to their ambition of developing their business ideas as far as possible before the end of the program. Consequently, exploratory activities within the accelerator, involving experimentation (March, 1991) and new knowledge acquisition (Levinthal & March, 1993) are undertaken faster, leading to faster growth or failure (Cohen & Hochberg, 2014; Kohler, 2016) and indeed compressing the otherwise longer corporate innovation cycle (Kohler, 2016). If successful, exploratory outcomes, such as the discovery of new business opportunities and development of new products and services (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996), may thus be achieved faster within time-limited exploratory units, as outcomes need to be delivered at the end of the time period.

However, scholars have underlined the need to recombine exploration and exploitation in order to capture value (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008; Raisch et al., 2009; Teece, 2007). In relation to the findings of this study, the recombination of exploration and exploitation is likely to represent a main challenge of the corporate accelerator due to the limited development time, which in turn forces teams to deliver outcomes at the end of the limited time period and may result in an outcome that is still far from commercialization, a prototype rather than a final product or service. Thus, the outcome of the accelerator may not be ready for re-integration in the exploitation focused

organization. This organizational challenge is captured by the following management statements.

“And it also depends on how far they have come in the 5 months. Some people are able to develop a prototype and some people do not make it to that stage.” (M.2)

“When you're in the program it's a warm and protected place where you have support from us, but it's a time limited project. When you're out there, then it's still a big gap before you can get your first revenue. And that's a challenge that we have with the accelerator in terms of how do we develop it further.” (M.1)

Hence, the influence of the limited duration of the corporate accelerator program on the unit's exploratory capability is two-fold. Time pressure positively impacts the overall progress of startups, thus, accelerating exploratory activities and the delivery of outcomes, representing a facilitator of the corporate accelerator's exploratory capability. However, the limited development time confines the teams' progress to the set end date of the program, and in turn the development of the final outcome, thus, representing a barrier for the corporate accelerator's exploratory capability. As a result, the engine of the corporate accelerator enhances its exploratory capability, whereas the limited duration acts as facilitator as well as barrier for the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator.

5.4 Dual Influence of Corporate Involvement

The corporate involvement inherent in the corporate accelerator was found to have a multifaceted, positive as well as negative effect on the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator. The following discussion elaborates on the findings according to the four main influencing factors found in this study.

5.4.1 Access to Corporate Resources

The access to corporate resources has been defined as potential advantage for participating startups in corporate accelerator research (Kanbach & Stubner, 2017; Kohler, 2016). Our findings support this statement by demonstrating a manifold facilitating effect of the access to corporate resources provided to the startups. Thus, corporate resources were found to complement several other facilitators of the corporate accelerator, creating an overall facilitating effect on the progress of the teams. Interviewee 2 stressed that the access to employees or company knowledge was highly supportive for their progress:

"If the case company hadn't helped us, that would have been a real issue, because then we couldn't have sold and we couldn't have bought the product. We're not the company, so them providing us with this, made us actually sell it for real." (I.2)

In addition, the access to corporate resources was found to be especially helpful to compensate the limited duration of the program and budget provided by the company during the 5 months as the following statement indicates.

"So that's one of the things we actually had to discuss with the legal people here at the case company. That was good to have that resource. Otherwise it would have eaten up so much of our time and budget. So it was good and beneficial for us to have that access. It's really important." (I.6)

Kohler (2016) fortifies this finding by stating that support from the corporation during a short program facilitates an efficient and effective accelerator program.

Furthermore, the high responsibility entails that the participants have to do everything themselves in order to progress. In turn, the corporate resources were identified as complementing the full responsibility of participants within the accelerator, as emphasized by the following quotes.

"We always had to do everything ourselves, which is fantastic, but also makes you realize here that in the corporation there are so many people with knowledge that we don't have." (I.2)

"So for us it was perfect that we had all of this here at the case company, we could go and asked specific people specific questions and then got that knowledge and then go back, so we had the perfect mix of both worlds." (I.2)

Lastly, the evidence of this study indicates that the access to employees within the case company especially supported the teams in validating and improving their product/service, as expressed by the following statements.

"It got validated and we also got some suggested new features with the product that we could integrate." (I.6)

“So since the case company was a potential client and we had many people here that we could speak to about using the product. So we did maybe 15 or 20 interviews with potential users and at least 20 interactions all over the case company.” (I.7)

Based on the discussion above, it was found that the access to corporate resources is a facilitator for the corporate accelerator’s exploratory capability.

Ambidexterity scholars have not discussed access to corporate resources as significant factor in ambidexterity research, which we attribute to the fact that exploratory and exploitative units in organizational separation represent sub-units of the overall organization (e.g. Benner & Tushman, 2003; O’Reilly & Tushman, 2008; Lavie et al., 2010; Raisch et al., 2009), thus, providing access to corporate resources for both units. Therefore, the access to corporate resources seems to be relevant in the corporate accelerator context as startups receive a limited amount of funding and are placed outside the organization (Clarysse & Yusubova, 2014; Kohler, 2016).

While Kohler (2016) recommends the involvement of internals from the organization in the corporate accelerator to establish a link between startups to the organization, in this case the linkage is also provided by employees participating in the accelerator themselves. In turn, this may account for the superior use and facilitating effect of corporate resources found in this study and explain why the outside location did not limit the teams’ ability to access corporate resources, as suggested by Kohler (2016). Thus, the statement by interviewee 2 *“So we had a lot of interaction with people from the case company that we picked out like the cherries, who we asked and who could help us”* poses the question, whether external startups have the same ability to pick out the right people to talk to at the company.

5.4.2 Intellectual Property Issues

According to existing accelerator research, startups taking part in an accelerator program are more likely to receive next round funding (Hallen et al., 2014). The reason for this positive effect may result from the accelerator connecting participating startups with investors (Miller & Bound, 2011) or be the consequence of the higher legitimacy startups have gained in the eyes of stakeholders (Clarysse & Yusubova, 2014). However, these findings solely take into account independent startups that are not connected to the organization running the accelerator, thus, the corporation may have an equity stake in these startups, but not own these startups as a whole (Kanbach & Stubner, 2017).

Interestingly, this study found a contrary effect on employee teams participating in the corporate accelerator program by providing evidence that the IP rights owned by the organization hinder the progress of employee startup teams within the corporate accelerator. On the one hand, this finding is grounded in the evidence that internal teams are not able to get funding from investors, which hinders their progress within the accelerator, as supported by the following interviewee statements.

“Yeah so, since our idea was owned by the case company, we couldn't talk to investors. It took almost a month and a half after I came back to my old job, when we finally got our paper signed by the case company, saying we don't want to own this, you can have it. So, we've lost three and a half months just there in time, where we actually could have spoken to investors.” (I.7)

“There are so many people that are dependent on you. Because you signed them up for a pilot test. And they were committing their time and even money to be part in this. But the case company told us that we can't get any investment because they own the idea as they paid for the development. So it just crashed.” (I.6)

On the other hand, the negative effect of IP issues results from the lack of clarity regarding their ownership, requiring clarifying discussions and decisions taken by the corporation. Thus, an interrelationship between IP issues and clarification process was identified, as expressed by the following quotes.

“We had this discussion with the Operations Manager about how will it be with the IP, so that was also a potential showstopper.” (I.4)

“And I know that we also discussed this quite much with the others a few months before the program, what will happen now? Who owns the IP and what will happen with me? Will I get this idea, will the case company take it? How much will it cost? What options do I have?” (I.4)

Based on the above evidence, the IP rights owned by the case company are identified as barrier for the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator, as they are found to negatively affect the progress of the internal teams. Existing research has pointed to the risk that the close connection to the organization inherent in a corporate accelerator program may hinder startups from partnering with rivals (Kohler, 2016), but does not take into account a

negative consequence regarding the likelihood of receiving funding. Thus, the above findings reveal a new barrier found in the corporate accelerator context.

Issues regarding IP rights of innovations developed in exploratory units are not discussed in ambidexterity literature regarding organizational separation. Since scholars describe organizational separation as the co-existence of two different sub-units focusing on either exploration or exploitation (e.g. Benner & Tushman, 2003; Christensen, 1998, O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008; Lavie et al., 2010; Raisch et al., 2009), both units are still part of the overall organization. This organizational setup suggests that each unit has an organizational budget available and that the IP rights are owned by the overall organization, thus, there is no lack of clarity regarding the ownership of IP rights among employees of both units. Hence, the barrier of IP rights owned by the organization is found to be unique for the corporate accelerator context.

5.4.3 Clarification Process

Corporate accelerator literature has argued that the corporate involvement in the accelerator may negatively impact participating startups as it leads to slower decision making (Weiblen & Chesbrough, 2016; KMPG, 2015). The findings of this study support this argument by revealing a strong negative influence resulting from the clarification process of the corporation regarding the future of participating startups. According to the findings, the negative effect is grounded in several reasons.

First, internal startups experienced a lack of clarity regarding what will happen to them after the accelerator program as expressed by the following quotes.

“It took time for us to know, what's going to happen with us in the future and that made it hard for us or even impossible to seek investment and actually do more to look into the future. So we could have gone much further than we did, because the last two months we were held back.” (I.7)

“So then we were thinking, would the case company want to invest and who is investing? When do they want to decide if they want to invest with us? All of that wasn't clear either.” (I.2)

Hence, the lack of clarity regarding the after-process stifled the progress of teams and also hindered them from talking to investors. In line with the findings regarding IP Issues, this

evidence further emphasizes that differentiation is necessary regarding the likelihood of funding. Only external startups participating in accelerator programs are more likely to receive next round funding (Clarysse & Yusubova, 2014; Hallen et al., 2014; Miller & Bound, 2011).

Consequently, the clarification and decision regarding the re-integration of startups involved a prolonged decision process by the corporation, involving corporate procedures. The teams frequently expressed the negative impact these procedures had on them, by statements such as:

“Okay, there's an end now somewhere, what do they need for that? There's the pitching, where they decide after that what will happen. And then we got this paper and it had to be a business case. It felt like we were back in the case company with all the rules and policies.” (I.2)

“It was a period of a month, where we didn't have so much progress because we spend a lot of time and effort to work with internal things and clarifying things.” (I.4)

“The only thing, what held us back the last two months, was that the case company had their procedures and everything to decide what will happen with us. It took time for us to know, what's going to happen with us in the future.” (I.7)

Thus, the findings provide strong evidence that the decision process regarding re-integration involved rather bureaucratic structures and routines, which scholars have defined as a requirement for exploitation (e.g. Ancona et al. 2001; Brown & Eisenhardt 1998; He & Wong, 2004; Koryak et al., 2018; Lewin et al., 1999; March, 1991). However, these structures are conflicting with the organizational demands of exploration, which requires rather loose structures facilitating autonomy and flexibility (He & Wong, 2004; Jansen et al., 2009; Koryak, 2018; Rosenkopf & Nerkar, 2001). Therefore, it is not surprising that the corporate clarification process hampered the progress of the startups.

Existing ambidexterity research has underlined organizational separation as beneficial in this regard, as the separation of units allows organizations to protect the exploratory unit from inhibiting structures and procedures of exploitative units (Benner & Tushman, 2003; Christensen, 1998, Lavie et al., 2010). Thus, scholars have mainly identified the required recombination of exploration and exploitation as an issue in organizational separation

(Benner & Tushman, 2003; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000, O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008, Raisch et al., 2009), whereas a possible negative influence from structures and procedures of the exploitative unit on the exploratory unit has not been stressed. Therefore, this finding is unique for the corporate accelerator as a new phenomenon of organizational separation, as the limited duration requires the corporation to take a decision regarding the re-integration or termination of startups at the end of every program. As a result, the bureaucratic structures and procedures of the organization running the corporate accelerator spill over to the corporate accelerator, creating tensions with the facilitating structures for exploration provided within the accelerator. Therefore, the unclarity and procedures involved in the clarification process regarding re-integration are found to be a barrier for the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator.

5.4.4 Management Decision

Organizational separation often receives criticism in ambidexterity research when it comes to the need to recombine exploration and exploitation as it is required to capture value from exploratory activities (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008; Raisch et al., 2009; Teece, 2007). Thus, Benner and Tushman (2003) emphasize that the re-integration of innovation developed in exploratory units into exploitative units with the aim of later commercialization lacks clarity in existing research.

The findings of this study provide similar evidence regarding the corporate accelerator as a new phenomenon of organizational separation. Thus, the decision of what will happen to the startups is made on a case by case decision by management, leaving us without clarity regarding the actual recombination of exploration and exploitation. Instead, the evidence draws attention to the different levels of management that are involved in the decision and are found to represent the gate between the corporate accelerator and the case company, taking their decision based on a set of criteria, as supported by the following management statements.

“The Operations Manager and I are involved. and when the decision becomes a bit larger we then also have a manager of a specific unit, depending on the idea, that is involved in the decision.” (M.1)

“It's the same set of criteria on which we select the teams and ideas before the accelerator program. We believe in the team members and we look for ideas that can tackle our core

challenges in different areas. And if an idea comes close to tackle one of these challenges, it increases our interest a lot.” (M.1)

“And it also depends on how far they have come in the 5 months. Some people are able to develop a prototype and some people do not make it to that stage. But it also depends on what kind of idea they have.” (M.2)

This finding corresponds with the suggestion by existing ambidexterity research, that the re-integration of exploration requires the involvement of top management teams (Tushman & O’Reilly 1996; Smith & Tushman, 2005). While Kohler (2016) suggests that startups participating in a corporate accelerator may benefit from possible future collaborations with the organization, this effect is found to be highly dependent on the case by case decision made by the management.

Ambidexterity research often emphasized the tendency of management to focus on exploitation at the expense of exploration (Tushman & O’Reilly, 1996). This tendency is grounded in the opposing nature of the activities’ returns, which are often more positive, proximate and predictable in the case of exploitation (March, 1991) as well as the reluctance to possibly cannibalize profitable business for uncertain new business (Tushman & O’Reilly, 1996). Applying this theory to the corporate accelerator as a new form of organizational separation poses several critical questions regarding the final management decision.

The accelerator’s Operations Manager and the Head of Innovation are already involved in the corporate accelerator program, thus, acting as high-ranking internal supporters as suggested by Kohler (2016). Their positions further indicate their involvement in exploratory units of the organization. Thus, they may be more supportive towards exploration than managers that are involved in the exploitative side of the business. However, the final decision is also dependent on the manager of the specific unit that the business idea might be of interest to. Based on above arguments made by Tushman and O’Reilly (1996) and March (1991), these managers seem to be more likely to focus on exploitation at the expense of exploration and, thus, will be less likely to decide in favor of continuing the startups internally. The following description by interviewee 1 supports this argument by depicting a disparity between the final gate decisions made by the Head of Innovation and a higher ranking manager.

“You did a really good progress here. This is really good. And then he went to his boss and he said no, we don't invest in hardware startups.” (I.1)

Hence, the final re-integration decision seems to be highly dependent on the managers involved in the decision making and their tendency to support exploration or exploitation. Therefore, the final management decision does neither act as facilitator nor barrier for the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator, but represents the final gate, deciding whether the startups are re-integrated into the business or discontinued. As discussed in chapter 5.3, the limited development time may have negative consequences regarding the final management decision. This finding implies that the final recombination of new knowledge gained through exploration in the corporate accelerator and existing knowledge used in the exploitative business, which scholars have identified as essential to fully foster ambidexterity (Cao et al., 2009), is subject to the final management decision.

6 Conclusion and Implications

6.1 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the factors influencing the exploratory capability of corporate accelerators. Therefore, the study applied ambidexterity theory to the context of corporate accelerators and identified the corporate accelerator as separate exploratory unit, thus, belonging to the ambidextrous form of organizational separation. The limited duration of corporate accelerator programs represents a key characteristic of corporate accelerators and leads to their distinction from existing forms of organizational separation. By exploring this new phenomenon through the use of a single case study, an in-depth understanding of the factors influencing the corporate accelerator's exploratory capability could be provided.

This study contributes to the field of ambidexterity research by investigating the corporate accelerator as new phenomenon of organizational separation. The facilitating effects of personal drive, structure, culture, external knowledge and experimentation were found to be mostly aligned with the facilitating conditions of exploration. However, the limited duration was found to exert a dual influence on the corporate accelerator's exploratory capability, extending ambidexterity research through a dimension that has not been considered in past research. The limited duration was found to have a facilitating effect by accelerating exploratory activities, thus, compressing the innovation cycle of an organization. However, the negative consequences of the limited duration entail the overall time constraint regarding the development of exploratory outcomes. Additionally, the limited duration leads to an early spill-over effect of negative influences from the exploitative unit, which counteract the facilitating conditions provided within the exploratory unit.

Moreover, the findings contribute to corporate accelerator research by broadening the understanding of corporate accelerators in regard to exploration through the identification of the factors influencing the corporate accelerator's exploratory capability. As a result, the findings provide implications regarding the investigation of the corporate accelerator's effectiveness in fostering exploration. The discussion depicted the interrelated and reinforcing nature of the factors facilitating the corporate accelerator's exploratory capability. Thus, personal drive, structure, culture, external knowledge and experimentation were identified as enhancing the unit's exploratory capability, while reinforcing each other. However, the discussion highlighted the counteracting force of limited development time and barriers resulting from corporate involvement, implying the need for corporate

accelerator research to focus on these barriers, as they form key characteristics of every corporate accelerator. Thus, this study contributes a much deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms found in the factors influencing the corporate accelerator's exploratory capability. The empirical evidence regarding the interrelationships between facilitators and barriers offers valuable contributions for the design of corporate accelerators. Therefore, this understanding can be used to enhance the design of corporate accelerators to foster their exploratory capability by leveraging the interplay of facilitators and reduce the countervailing effect of barriers inherent in the corporate accelerator context.

6.2 Managerial Implications

This study discovered the interdependence of all identified influential factors of the corporate accelerator's exploratory capability, indicating that management may manipulate these influences through the design of the corporate accelerator. Thus, the findings enhance the management's ability to make conscious decisions regarding the appropriate design of corporate accelerators instead of applying a mere trial and error approach.

Firstly, having an understanding of the corporate accelerator's "engine" for fostering its exploratory capability is crucial. The interrelations between the facilitators identified in this study offer a guidance for management regarding the design of the accelerator program. Therefore, the knowledge of the reinforcing relations between the facilitators personal drive, structure, culture, external knowledge and experimentation should be utilized by management to design an effective corporate accelerator program.

Secondly, the access to corporate resources was found to be of high importance. To facilitate this positive effect, the consideration of how access will be provided is essential. Hence, the access to corporate resources may be fostered through the assignment of internal mentors that can create a meaningful connection between the startups and the organization.

The findings draw attention to the negative influences exerted by the limited time and corporate involvement inherent in corporate accelerators. By countervailing or reinforcing the facilitating effect of the engine, these factors have a crucial role in the effectiveness of any program. As the final outcome highly depends on the duration of the program, management should agree on the desired outcomes of the corporate accelerator and set the program duration accordingly. In addition, the consideration of the industry may be beneficial to set the duration according to the time to prototype. Moreover, the management

should take precautions to circumvent the spill-over effect of negative influences from the corporation. Hence, any lack of clarity should be avoided and procedures that are required towards the end of the program should be designed in a startup-friendly way.

Lastly, the management forms the gate between the corporate accelerator and the organization. As the exploitative focus of a business enhances the risk of discarding exploratory outcomes, top management commitment is required to foster the recombination of exploration and exploitation.

In conclusion, the exploratory capability of a corporate accelerator is found to depend on the interplay of various factors. The awareness of these factors as well as their interrelations can provide management with a guidance for the design of an effective accelerator program.

6.3 Limitations

Several limitations have been identified as relevant for this study. The use of the single case study method poses constraints regarding the generalizability of the findings. Thus, the findings regarding the factors may not be entirely applicable to other organizations that differ in size, industry, country or business context. Moreover, the industry is likely to influence an organization's choice of engaging in exploration or exploitation. Since the case company operates in a rather stable industry, the application of findings may be limited for organizations operating in more dynamic environments. Moreover, the goals of organizations implementing a corporate accelerator as well as the design of the program may vary widely. This implies that the findings of this study are limited to corporate accelerators with similar objectives and design elements as applicable to the corporate accelerator that has been studied within this research. Accordingly, it would have been interesting to investigate another corporate accelerator in order to allow for a comparison between the factors influencing the exploratory capability of a corporate accelerator and see whether similarities or differences are present between the two. However, time and resource constraints prohibited the conducting of a multiple case study. Lastly, this study aimed at addressing the current gap in research regarding the acceleration of internal ventures. However, this focus on internal ventures poses limitations on the applicability of findings to corporate accelerators that accelerate external ventures.

6.4 Future Research

Since this study identified the factors influencing the exploratory capability of the corporate accelerator, it allows for the judgement regarding its effectiveness in fostering exploration, under consideration of the provided conditions. However, the achievement of ambidexterity requires the re-integration of new knowledge gained through exploration into the organization. Therefore, it would be highly interesting to examine how an organization using the corporate accelerator as an exploratory unit may foster ambidexterity as a whole. Secondly, exploration and exploitation are likely to succeed after another in the innovation context (Lavie et al., 2010). Thus, the examination of how the outcome of a corporate accelerator will develop within the organization forms an interesting avenue for future research, as it would shed light on the long-term impact a corporate accelerator has on the ambidexterity of the organization. Thirdly, it would be interesting to test the theory on a larger scale in form of a multiple case study. In particular, the comparison of corporate accelerators operating in different industries would allow for the investigation of differences in factors influencing the exploratory capability of corporate accelerators.

7 Reference List

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8 Appendix

Appendix A: Interview Guide for Accelerator Batches

Interview Guide for Accelerator Batches (Interviewees 1-7)

Category (1): Background Information

- Could you shortly describe your main work duties at the case company?
- Before joining the accelerator program, what was the main focus of your work activities?
- Can you tell us more about the nature of your teams' idea for the accelerator?
- How would you compare that idea to the core business/existing business?

Category (2): Before the Accelerator Program

- How did your awareness of the accelerator affect your work activities at the company before you joined the program?
- Is there anything you would like to add?

Category (3): During the Accelerator Program

Structure:

- How would you compare the work environment within the accelerator to the work environment in the case company?
- How has the change in work environment affected your work within the accelerator?

Autonomy:

- How would you compare your degree of freedom during the accelerator program to your previous work within the case company?
- How did that influence your activities during the accelerator program?

Culture:

- How would you describe the culture in the accelerator compared to the case company?
- How has the cultural change affected your work within the accelerator?

Working Process:

- How would you describe the work methods in the accelerator compared to the work methods in the case company?

- How has the change in work methods affected your work within the accelerator?

New Knowledge Acquisition/New Competencies:

- Could you describe your personal and professional development during the accelerator program?
- What activities/factors stimulated/influenced your development?
- How did your development affect your work within the accelerator?
- How did your development influence your work after your return to the company?

Interaction with external Sources/Networks:

- During the accelerator program, did you interact with people or companies that are not directly employed at the case company?
- If yes, in which way did you interact with those people/companies?
- How did those interactions affect your work within the accelerator?
- How did those interactions affect your work after your return to the case company?

Internal Integration Mechanisms:

- During the program, were there any interactions between your team and the case company?
- If yes, can you explain who was involved in those interactions?
- How did those interactions affect your work progress within the accelerator?

Idea Progress:

- How would you describe the progress you made within the accelerator program regarding your startup/idea?

Duration:

- How did the limited time/duration of the accelerator program affect your work on the idea/progress with your idea?

Closing Question:

- Would you like to add anything regarding your time in the accelerator?

Category (4): Transition from the Accelerator Program back to the Case Company

Future of Idea/Startup:

- While you were in the accelerator, did you know what will happen to your idea/startup after the accelerator program?
- Why/why not?
- How did that influence your working progress during the accelerator program?

Integration Mechanism:

- Could you describe the process of transitioning from the accelerator program back to the case company?
- How did this process affect your working progress towards the end of the accelerator program?

Management Involvement:

- Which parties were involved in the transitioning process?
- How were those parties involved in the transitioning process?
- How did that involvement affect your startup?

Closing Question:

- Would you like to add anything regarding the transitioning process from the accelerator back to the case company?

Category (5): After the Transition from the Accelerator Program back to the Case Company

- Could you describe what happened with your idea/startup after completion of the accelerator program?
- Why did/didn't you continue with the idea after the accelerator program?
- What do you think was the reason for the case company to invest/not to invest in your idea?
- Would you like to add anything about the time after the accelerator program?

Appendix B: Interview Guide for Corporate Managers

Interview Guide for Corporate Managers (Interviewees 8-9)

Category (1): Background Information

- What are your main responsibilities at the case company?
- How are you involved in the accelerator program?

Category (2): Overall Alignment of Business Units

Management Alignment:

- How would you describe the communication between managers of the case company and the corporate accelerator?
- How does that communication influence the corporate accelerator program?
- How does that communication influence the transition from internal startup teams back into the case company after the accelerator program?
- Would you like to add anything?

Shared Values:

- How would you describe the guiding principles of the case company?
- How would you describe the guiding principles of the corporate accelerator?
- Would you like to add anything?

Strategic Intent/Goals:

- How would you describe the overall intentions of the case company regarding the future?
- What role does the accelerator play regarding these overall intentions?
- Would you like to add anything?