Note: we should potentially change the interview type to semi-structured. Although, the majority of the interview was structured, the open question at the end of the interview added an unstructured element.

Response to examiner comments

Comment 1.

The thesis did not use and follow DSV thesis template. Follow the template.

Response to comment 1.

This is not a formal requirement and, therefore, it is inappropriate that the examiner requires this. The guidelines specifically state:

“*Det är möjligt att strukturera en uppsats efter betygskriterierna.*“

Comment 2.

The thesis must also include a filled-in synopsis form (table). Follow what is required in the Thesis instructions (January 2018) and present the synopsis correctly. The current synopsis is the Abstract in Swedish.

Response to comment 2.

This has now been added to the thesis, as requested, on page 8.

Comment 3.

U2 introduction and U5 scientific base should be discussed and presented separately. The same text can not be used for evaluation two criteria. U2 introduction can be simple and short that give sufficient background for the reader to understand the research area, the formulation of research problem and research question. U5 scientific base should be more concrete and intensive for presenting the knowledge that the thesis is built upon.

Response to comment 3.

U2: 105-109. 155-160. 163-172

U5: 65-76. 90-148.

Comment 4.

I am not really convinced by the choice of the research strategy, explorative strategy. The reference (book) is written for marketing research, and how much this can apply to the study context of this thesis is not well argued. If the thesis studied the Company Grade, then why not "case study" strategy?

Response to comment 4.

Due to the fact that exploratory research is a well established and documented research design strategy, it was not deemed necessary to add extensive references to the text to support the description or motivation of the usage of this research design. As it now seems apparent that not all readers are familiar with exploratory research, additional text and references have been added to resolve this issue. Text follows:

Specifically, regarding the examiners recommendation concerning a case study design, in the author’s opinion a case study is not an appropriate fit for this study due to the conclusive nature of case studies. The available resources for this study were too limited for it to be conclusive in nature and therefore an exploratory design was chosen. This is clearly explained in the main text as follows:

“*Studien anses vara explorativ eftersom den främst genererar resultat baserat på ett litet urval och skulle gynnas av uppföljning i en större studie (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). Studien kan också anses vara explorativt eftersom den lägger grunden till metodik för att uppfylla studiens mål och ger möjligheten för vidare metodutveckling i senare studier.*”

Furthermore, the underlying rational for claiming that a study with such characteristics is well suited for an exploratory design can be supported with several references to earlier work outlined below:

1. small sample size

“For smaller scale studies, an exploratory approach may be used. The subject and scope of the exploration can be expressed in a statement of intent. Again, this must be derived from the research problem, imply a method of approach and indicate the outcome.” – Research Methods the Basics, Nicholas Walliman, p. 33

1. development of research method

“Exploratory research is the initial research, which forms the basis of more conclusive research. It can even help in determining the research design, sampling methodology and data collection method. In some cases, exploratory research serves as the formative research to test concepts before they are put into practice.” – Quantitative Social Research Methods, Kultar Singh, p. 63-64

1. supporting future studies

“Exploratory studies are most typically done for three purposes: (1) to satisfy the researcher’s curiosity and desire for better understanding, (2) to test the feasibility of undertaking a more extensive study, and (3) to develop the methods to be employed in any subsequent study.” – The Practice of Social Research, Earl Babbie, p. 92

1. resources

“It is only on the basis of its primary function that a study can be categorised either as an exploratory or descriptive or hypothesis-testing study and accordingly the choice of a research design may be made in case of a particular study. Besides, the availability of time, money, skills of the research staff and the means of obtaining the information must be given due weightage while working out the relevant details of the research design such as experimental design, survey design, sample design and the like.” – Research Methodology, C.R. Kothari, p. 33

“For smaller scale studies, an exploratory approach may be used. The subject and scope of the exploration can be expressed in a statement of intent. Again, this must be derived from the research problem, imply a method of approach and indicate the outcome.” – Research Methods the Basics, Nicholas Walliman

“To gain familiarity with a phenomenon or to achieve new insights into it (studies with this object in view are termed as exploratory or formulative research studies).” – Research Methodology, C.R. Kothari, p. 2

“The objective of exploratory research is the development of hypotheses rather than their testing, whereas formalized research studies are those with substantial structure and with specific hypotheses to be tested.” – Research Methodology, C.R. Kothari, p. 4

“How does one go about developing working hypotheses? The answer is by using the following approach: Exploratory personal investigation which involves original field interviews on a limited scale with interested parties and individuals with a view to secure greater insight into the practical  aspects of the problem.” – Research Methodology, C.R. Kothari, p. 13

“It is only on the basis of its primary function that a study can be categorised either as an exploratory or descriptive or hypothesis-testing study and accordingly the choice of a research design may be made in case of a particular study. Besides, the availability of time, money, skills of the research staff and the means of obtaining the information must be given due weightage while working out the relevant details of the research design such as experimental design, survey design, sample design and the like.” – Research Methodology, C.R. Kothari, p. 33

“Exploratory research studies are also termed as formulative research studies. The main purpose of such studies is that of formulating a problem for more precise investigation or of developing the working hypotheses from an operational point of view. The major emphasis in such studies is on the discovery of ideas and insights.” – Research Methodology, C.R. Kothari, p. 35-36

“Generally, the following three methods in the context of research design for such studies are talked about: (a) the survey of concerning literature; (b) the experience survey and (c) the analysis of ‘insight-stimulating’ examples.”

…

“Experience survey means the survey of people who have had practical experience with the problem to be studied. The object of such a survey is to obtain insight into the relationships between variables and new ideas relating to the research problem.“ – Research Methodology, C.R. Kothari, p. 35-36

\*“Unstructured interview, however, happens to be the central technique of collecting information in case of exploratory or formulative research studies. But in case of descriptive studies, we quite often use the technique of structured interview because of its being more economical, providing a safe basis for generalisation and requiring relatively lesser skill on the part of the interviewer.” – Research Methodology, C.R. Kothari, p. 98\*

“Exploratory research, as the name suggests, is often conducted to explore the research issue and is usually done when the alternative options have not been clearly defined or their scope is unclear. Exploratory research allows researchers to explore issues in detail in order to familiarize themselves with the problem or concept to be studied. Familiarization with the concept helps researchers in formulating research hypothesis. Exploratory research is the initial research, which forms the basis of more conclusive research. It can even help in determining the research design, sampling methodology and data collection method. In some cases, exploratory research serves as the formative research to test concepts before they are put into practice. Exploratory research, as mentioned earlier, explores the issue further, hence it relies more on secondary research, that is, the review of available literature and/or data, or qualitative research approaches such as informal discussions with primary and secondary stakeholders, project staff, donor agencies and more formal approaches, like in-depth interviews, focus groups or case studies. Exploratory research thus cannot provide a conclusive answer to research problems and usually are not considered useful for decision-making, but they can provide significant insights to a given situation. However, the results thus obtained cannot be generalized and should be interpreted with caution as they may or may not be representative of the population being studied.” – Quantitative Social Research Methods, Kultar Singh, p. 63-64

“Exploratory studies are most typically done for three purposes: (1) to satisfy the researcher’s curiosity and desire for better understanding, (2) to test the feasibility of undertaking a more extensive study, and (3) to develop the methods to be employed in any subsequent study.” – The Practice of Social Research, Earl Babbie, p. 92

“Exploratory studies are quite valuable in social science research. They’re essential whenever a re- searcher is breaking new ground, and they almost always yield new insights into a topic for research.” – The Practice of Social Research, Earl Babbie, p. 93

“The chief shortcoming of exploratory studies is that they seldom provide satisfactory answers to research questions, though they can hint at the answers and can suggest which research methods could provide definitive ones. The reason exploratory studies are seldom definitive in themselves has to do with representativeness; that is, the people you study in your exploratory research may not be typical of the larger population that interests you. Once you understand representativeness, you’ll be able to know whether a given exploratory study actually answered its research problem or only pointed the way toward an answer.” – The Practice of Social Research, Earl Babbie, p. 93

“An exploratory report points the way to more-refined research on the topic.” – The Practice of Social Research, Earl Babbie, p. 522

Comment 5.

The study result was obtained from ONLY one interview. Which I question the reliability and validity of the study. I think the magnitude of the results did not reach the level of a bachelor thesis. I suggest that the thesis should search more "secondary" documents from the company as a supplementary source for the results and if possible, to do more interviews. (U8 is not sufficient)

Response to comment 5.

Requirements concerning the “magnitude of the results” are not forthcoming in the formal learning outcomes or the grading criteria for the bachelor’s thesis and, therefore, that is evaluated as insufficient by the examiner is inappropriate. The formal requirement indicated by the examiner to is not be fulfilled states the following:

*“Att resultaten är av sådan omfattning och kvalitet och presenteras på ett sådant sätt att frågeställningen till viss del kan besvaras.”*

Due to the exploratory nature of the study, in this case the result must refer to the expected result of such a study specifically “greater insight into the practical aspects of the problem”.

“How does one go about developing working hypotheses? The answer is by using the following approach: Exploratory investigation which involves original field interviews on a limited scale with interested parties and individuals with a view to secure greater insight into the practical aspects of the problem.” – Research Methodology, C.R. Kothari, p. 13

This is achieved in an exploratory setting via multiple methods typically limited in their scope and sample size. Furthermore, interviews with “people who have had practical experience with the problem to be studied” is a common method employed in studies utilizing an exploratory design. In addition to the references below, multiple references in response to Comment 4 also give credence to this statement.

“Generally, the following three methods in the context of research design for such studies (exploratory) are talked about: (a) the survey of concerning literature; (b) the experience survey and (c) the analysis of ‘insight-stimulating’ examples. … Experience survey means the survey of people who have had practical experience with the problem to be studied. The object of such a survey is to obtain insight into the relationships between variables and new ideas relating to the research problem.“ – Research Methodology, C.R. Kothari, p. 35-36

“Exploratory research, as mentioned earlier, explores the issue further, hence it relies more on secondary research, that is, the review of available literature and/or data, or qualitative research approaches such as informal discussions with primary and secondary stakeholders, project staff, donor agencies and more formal approaches, like in-depth interviews, focus groups or case studies. Exploratory research thus cannot provide a conclusive answer to research problems and usually are not considered useful for decision-making, but they can provide significant insights to a given situation. However, the results thus obtained cannot be generalized and should be interpreted with caution as they may or may not be representative of the population being studied.” – Quantitative Social Research Methods, Kultar Singh, p. 63-64

Furthermore, examiner doesn’t understand the goals of exploratory study and has expectations of conclusive research. i.e. reliability not prioritized, validity shortcommings discussed in discussion as specified in U9 as: “Begränsningar skall diskuteras i termer av reproducerbarhet, validitet, reliabilitet, generaliserbarhet, vidareförbarhet, trovärdighet, etc., beroende på metodval och metodtillämpning.”

“The chief shortcoming of exploratory studies is that they seldom provide satisfactory answers to research questions, though they can hint at the answers and can suggest which research methods could provide definitive ones. The reason exploratory studies are seldom definitive in themselves has to do with representativeness; that is, the people you study in your exploratory research may not be typical of the larger population that interests you. Once you understand representativeness, you’ll be able to know whether a given exploratory study actually answered its research problem or only pointed the way toward an answer.” – The Practice of Social Research, Earl Babbie, p. 93

Comment 6.

U9 is not fully fulfilled. "...ethical and societal  consequences of the conclusions in  the thesis are discussed. " please add this discussion.

Response to comment 6.