Stimulating employee-driven innovation

Exploring enablers for employee-driven innovation and the contribution of formal and informal innovation activities - a qualitative single-case study

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ABSTRACT

Innovation is a concept that has received an increased amount of attention in recent years. The concept of innovation has also developed to include a wider range of participants, including for example both open innovation and customer-oriented innovation. However, this thesis focuses on yet another group of innovators and the involvement of employees in innovation. Employees which are argued to hold in-depth and contextual knowledge valuable for innovation. This thesis adds to the growing interest in exploring the involvement of employees in innovation by further exploring the field of inclusive innovation and more specifically employee-driven innovation (EDI). The concept of employee-driven innovation refers to the involvement of employees, often referred to as front-line employees or 'ordinary' employees, in contributing to innovation. The thesis accounts for further exploration of contextual organizational conditions when exploring enabling factors for employee-driven innovation by focusing on the consultancy industry. The purpose of this study is to explore how employee-driven innovation can be stimulated, by exploring what enabling factors there are for stimulating employee-driven innovation and the contribution of formal and informal innovation activities.

The study is performed qualitatively with a total sample of 15 company employees and four expert interviews. The company interviews include 11 employees and 4 managers at the company Beta which, as the expert interviews, were conducted with a semi-structured approach. In addition, a literature review is conducted to gain insight from prior research within the field of employee-driven innovation. The empirical findings are analyzed using thematic analysis, in relation to the developed theoretical framework, to answer the proposed research question and related sub-questions.

The thesis findings highlight how there is no one way to stimulate employee-driven innovation in consultancy firms. There are enabling factors for employee-driven innovation, which also can be experienced as disabling factors, which include the organizational culture, management support, formal organizational factors and customer orientation. These factors are in turn present through, or experienced by employees through, both formal and informal innovation activities. The thesis adds organizational structure, innovation education as well as internal communication and language as enabling or disabling factors for employee-driven innovation. Finally, the thesis identifies several informal innovation activities which can be difficult to identify within organizations.

Keywords: *Employee-driven innovation, inclusive innovation, consultancy industry, enablers for employee-driven innovation, formal innovation activities, informal innovation activities*

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Julia Karlsson

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1. INTRODUCTION

The following introductory chapter provides the background and problem discussion of this study, which motivates the chosen research topics relevance and outlines its context. Included is also a firm description, the study's purpose, research questions, and delimitations. Finally, a disposition is included which presents an overview of the chapters in this study.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Innovation is a concept that has received an increased amount of attention in recent years. The increased attention stems from the fact that competitive landscapes are becoming more dynamic, which therefore increases the interest in innovation, its related processes, and how it should be managed (Baregheh et al., 2009). The European Union has expressed that innovation plays an important role in our economy (Gouardères, 2020), and in society, innovation is important for driving economic progress (European Central Bank, 2017). For organizations, innovation is a significant factor that enables organizations to constantly evolve and stay competitive in this rapidly changing environment. The concept is directly related to change, as it is a tool utilized by organizations either proactively to change their environment or reactively to cope with the changing environment in which they operate (Damanpour, 1991). Furthermore, the survival of an organization in a competitive landscape is determined by its ability to innovate (Tushman and O'Reilly, 1997). Innovation enables organizations to capitalize on opportunities offered by changing customer demands and technological advances present in an increasingly dynamic competitive landscape (Baregheh et al., 2009).

Innovation is a multifaceted concept and many differing definitions can be found in the literature. As Damanpour and Schneider (2006, p. 216) state: "*Innovation is studied in many disciplines and has been defined from different perspectives*", which highlights the differing definitions of innovation in literature. The differing definitions of innovation do to some extent overlap, however, the number and differences between the definitions result in a situation with no universally established definition of innovation (Baregheh et al., 2009). In this study, the definition of innovation is chosen to be broad, to include innovations of different kinds that can be identified within an organization. The broader definition aligns with the definition by Baragheh et al. (2009, p. 1334) of innovation which is: *"Innovation is the multi-stage process whereby organizations transform ideas into new or improved products, services or processes, in order to advance, compete and differentiate themselves successfully in their market place."*. A definition with proximity to one of the most recognized definitions of innovation that defines innovation as an *"implementation of a new or significantly improved product (or service), or process, a new marketing method, or a new organizational method in business practices, workplace organization or external relations"* (OECD, 2005. p. 46). A definition that captures innovation as a process starting with an idea and that is not restricted to commercialized products or services adding value. However, the multi-stage process mentioned by Baragheh et al. (2009) is, in this thesis, conceptualized rather as a network, more as the spaghetti model by Tidd and Bessant (2009), which aims to reflect how innovation occurs in reality, more unstructured and non-linear. In relation to

discussing the differing definitions of innovation, innovation also comes in different types and degrees. This includes the degree of innovation ranging from incremental to radical (Goffin and Mitchell, 2017), taking into account that innovation does not necessarily have to be a totally new solution. The "newness" can lie in the innovation being novel within the given context of an organization or industry (Nelson and Winter, 1982).

Further, prior research highlights how the range of actors participating in innovation is becoming more inclusive and how innovation is becoming democratized (Hippel, 2005; Chesbrough, 2003; Desouza et al., 2008). Inclusive innovation is an approach that presents an evolution from the more traditional view of innovation (Levidow and Papaioannou, 2018; Bäcktrom & Lindberg, 2018). Within the field of innovation, concepts such as open innovation (Chesbrough, 2003), customer-based innovation (Desouza et al., 2008), and end-user innovation (Hippel, 2005) are examples of the inclusive innovation approach. An approach that not only contributes to a broader range of innovation participants but also highlights where and why new solutions to perceived needs are developed (Lindberg, 2018). However, this thesis has been limited to the inclusion of yet another group of innovators which Voxted (2018) highlights as one of the newer perspectives of inclusive innovation that is receiving growing attention in both research and practice, namely employee-driven innovation (EDI). The concept of employee-driven innovation refers to the involvement of employees, often referred to as front-line employees or ordinary employees, in contributing to innovation (Høyrup, 2012; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010). These employees are argued to hold in-depth and contextual knowledge that is highly valuable in innovation (Buhl, 2018; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010).

1.2 PROBLEM DISCUSSION

Innovation has evolved to include a broader range of participants than previously acknowledged (Høyrup, 2012; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010), with the inclusion of employees receiving attention (Voxted, 2018). Despite the increased emphasis in both practice and research concerning employee-driven innovation, most studies still take a top-down approach to innovation within organizations. Thus, creating a lack of studies that focus on highlighting the role of the employees as innovators within organizations (Rigtering and Weitzel, 2013). Argued is how employees hold in-depth and contextual knowledge that is highly valuable in innovation (Buhl, 2018; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010), although despite their valuable knowledge of various processes, products, and organizational practices, ordinary employees are an underutilized source for innovation (Bäckström and Bengtsson, 2019). Lindland (2018) further highlights that when exploring employee-driven innovation, both formal and informal innovation activities are of importance. Formal innovation activities being top-down initiated, and informal being employee-initiated (Høyrup, 2012). In addition, Lindland (2018) further nuances the topic of formal and informal innovation activities aimed to contribute to employee-driven innovation by emphasizing how employee-driven innovation and innovation activities are dependent on the definition of innovation. What management and individual employees define as innovation will have an impact on employee-driven innovation and the related formal and informal activities (Lindland, 2018).

As highlighted, the definition of innovation is context-dependent and the number and differences between the definitions result in a situation with no universally established definition of innovation (Baregheh et al., 2009). Bäckström (2019) points out that few studies have accounted for the contextual organizational conditions when exploring the stimulation of employee-driven innovation. Within the field of innovation, Woodman et al. (1993) highlight how the interaction between contextual and individual factors may enhance or inhibit creativity and innovation work. Prior research suggests taking organizational context into account to better understand employee-driven innovation (Somech and Drach-Zahavy, 2013). In line with Voxted (2018) and Kesting and Ulhøi (2010), the increased attention to employee-driven innovation to contribute to inclusive innovation calls for further context-conscious research and the possibility to utilize the valuable knowledge that employees are argued to hold (Buhl, 2018; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010).

1.3 PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study is to explore how employee-driven innovation can be stimulated, by exploring what enabling and disabling factors there are for stimulating employee-driven innovation and the contribution of formal and informal innovation activities. This through a single-case study of a large-sized consultancy company present on the Swedish market. In the aforementioned problem discussion, the need for further empirically-based research within the field of employee-driven innovation in different contexts has been emphasized. Further, a research gap presented in prior research that is of interest to both scholars and practitioners is how to stimulate employee-driven innovation in order to utilize the valuable knowledge that employees are argued to hold, in relation to the organizational context and definition of innovation. Thus, to foster employee-driven innovation, further exploration within the given context, the consultancy industry, and a greater understanding among practitioners is required. It is of interest to explore how employee-driven innovation can be stimulated in the consultancy industry, as it is characterized by consultants being allocated at client sites partly or entirely during projects. With the purpose to bridge the gap between practice and literature, as well as create a greater understanding of the interrelationship between the definition of innovation and the stimulation of employee-driven innovation, implications for practitioners are formulated.

To fulfill the purpose and aim, the experiences of practitioners represented by both employees and managers will reflect current practices, related enablers for employee-driven innovation as well as their definition of innovation. They have been selected to emphasize the bottom-up perspective of employee-driven innovation, to intentionally reflect their experience of related enabling factors and innovation activities. In addition to the practical experiences of employees and managers, the findings are analyzed in relation to previous theoretical research within the field of employee-driven innovation. By combining the findings from both practitioners and theory, the study will provide a holistic perspective on stimulating employee-driven innovation.

The thesis strives to fulfill the purpose and address the problem discussion by answering the following research questions:

Research question: How can consulting firms stimulate employee-driven innovation?

- ***Sub-question 1: What are the enabling factors for stimulating employee-driven innovation?***
- ***Sub-question 2: How do formal and informal innovation activities contribute to employee-driven innovation?***

1.5 FIRM INTRODUCTION

The conducted research was performed in collaboration with a firm. In this report, the firm will be called Beta, for anonymity reasons. Further, some characteristics of the collaborating firm will be described, contributing to an understanding of the context in which the research was performed. Beta is a large consulting company within the IT management consulting industry with both an international and Swedish presence. Innovation is one of Beta's core practices and the organization aims to incorporate innovation into every client project.

1.6 DELIMITATIONS

In addition to the given purpose and aim which directs the research, delimitations have been established to ensure a suitable focus for the thesis. The study is limited to the firm Beta described above, due to the single-case study nature of the research design. The study is also limited in terms of a geographical limitation to Beta's Swedish branch, including the Swedish offices mainly due to resource and time constraints. Furthermore, the study is limited to the academic area of innovation management and employee-driven innovation. Throughout the thesis, factors with the potential to stimulate employee-driven innovation are described as enabling factors, however the enabling factors can also be seen as disablers for employee-driven innovation. In this study, however, the focus lies on how to stimulate employee-driven innovation, which is why mainly, but not exclusively, the enabling effect of the factors is explored. Despite the study's delimitations, the insights generated provide the opportunity to be applicable not solely to the study's data sample, but also to Beta's global organization. Further, the insights potentially can be generalized across the industry in similar organizations with the objective to stimulate employee-driven innovation.

1.7 DISPOSITION

The report is composed of the six following chapters: (1) introduction, (2) theoretical framework, (3) methodology, (4) empirics, (5) analysis, and (6) conclusion. Figure 1 provides an overview of the disposition.

Figure 1. Overview of the study's disposition.

Chapter 1, *introduction*, introduces the studied topic, collaborating firm, and motivates its relevance by outlining a contextual background and problem discussion. The thesis' purpose, research questions, and delimitations are also included. Chapter 2, *theoretical framework*, outlines the theoretical foundation of this thesis as a result of the literature review performed and described as part of the study's methodology. Chapter 3, *methodology*, aims to describe and motivate the chosen methods utilized in the study. Chapter 4, *empirics*, presents the collected primary data. Chapter 5, *analysis*, outlines the analytical conclusion drawn by applying the theoretical framework to the collected empirics. Lastly, Chapter 6, *conclusion*, summarizes the most prominent findings of the research and provides an answer to the research questions.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents previous literature within the research fields of employee-driven innovation and formal and informal innovation initiatives. The purpose of the following chapter is to develop an understanding of the subject of employee-driven innovation and how literature suggests that employee-driven innovation can be stimulated.

2.1 AN INTRODUCTION TO INNOVATION

Organizations need to innovate to keep up with the pace of change. Innovation enables organizations to capitalize on opportunities offered by changing customer demands and technological advances present in an increasingly dynamic competitive landscape (Baregheh et al., 2009). Zahra and Covin (1994, p.183) have highlighted that *"innovation is widely considered as the life blood of corporate survival and growth"*. New products, services, business models, manufacturing processes, and internal organizational processes are among others often associated with innovation. Thus, highlighted by Goffin and Mitchell (2017) innovation should not strictly be seen as a tool for creating new products and services, but rather as a multidimensional approach for organizations to use.

For innovation, there is no generally accepted definition of innovation and due to innovations' multifaceted characteristics and the different perspectives to approach innovation in research, many different definitions can be found in prior literature. Damanpour and Schneider (2006) state that innovation has been defined from different disciplines depending on within which discipline it has been studied. Historically, examples of the definition of innovation include Porter's (1990) definition which emphasizes innovation as a competitive advantage that firms can gain based on their innovativeness and ability to realize innovation projects. Rothwell (1994) further includes different degrees of innovation in the definition by differing between radical and incremental innovations. The different definitions of innovation do to some extent overlap, however, the number and differences between the definitions result in a situation with no universally established definition of innovation (Baregheh et al., 2009).

One of the innovation definitions proposed by Baragheh et al. (2009, p. 1334) is: *"Innovation is the multi-stage process whereby organizations transform ideas into new or improved products, services or processes, in order to advance, compete and differentiate themselves successfully in their market place."*. A definition with proximity to one of the most recognized definitions of innovation that defines innovation as an *"implementation of a new or significantly improved product (or service), or process, a new marketing method, or a new organizational method in business practices, workplace organization or external relations" (*OECD, 2005. p. 46*)*. Despite the lack of a general definition for innovation, emphasis is to distinguish between innovation and similar concepts, often confused with innovation, such as invention and creativity. An invention that focuses on the creation of new ideas (Roberts, 2007), is closely linked to creativity which refers to the generation of ideas considered novel (Amabile, 1983). A general misconception of the innovation definition is that it only entails the development of new products and services (Goffin and Mitchell, 2017). Recognizing the misconception of innovation is of importance in practice since employees failing to

understand innovation consequently will not be able to contribute to it (Goffin and Mitchell, 2017).

Degrees of innovation

One aspect that differentiates innovations is the degree of innovation. Rothwell (1994) includes different degrees of innovation in the definition by differing between radical and incremental innovations. Similarly, Goffin and Mitchell (2017) create a spectrum of degrees of innovations, placing incremental innovations on one side and radical innovations on the other. According to Nagji and Tuff (2012), incremental innovation consists of improvements to the current organizational offer, for example, an existing product or service that is targeting existing customers. As a result, the degree of uncertainty related to these innovations is relatively low, and according to Kristiansen and Ritala (2018), the outcome can be somewhat predicted. Radical innovations on the other hand are seen as larger leaps that have the potential to impact an entire business environment. Thus, radical innovations have the potential to be powerful but are also rare (Goffin and Mitchell, 2017). Further, O'Reilly and Tushman (1997) relate incremental innovation to exploiting the traditional core business and radical innovation to exploring new business opportunities. Oftentimes, companies direct much of their focus and budget to pursue expensive, large-scale innovation efforts with a high risk, high reward strategy with the expectation and hope to create BlockBuster (Khosla, 2018). Instead, small-scale innovations aimed at solving real customer problems can with a strategy reflecting how small actions can lead to improbably large results can be more profitable (Khosla, 2018). Day (2007) refers to incremental innovations as minor innovations that are necessary for continuous improvement and further implies that they make up a large portion of companies' innovation portfolios.

Conceptualizing innovation

Traditionally innovation has been conceptualized as a process. A process which by several has been defined as a linear process including a set of different phases including idea generation, selection, development, and launch/diffusion/commercialization (Salerno et al, 2015). Utterback (1971) was one of the first to model the innovation process as a single process including idea generation, implementation, and diffusion as the main activities. Other presented models of the innovation process include the innovation funnel (Dunphy, 1996) or the process represented as a stage-gate sequence (Cooper, 1990). Both models of the innovation process commonly define the innovation process as a linear process built up by pre-defined phases. However, Salerno et al., (2015) highlight that over time this linear approach has been questioned, and rather, the innovation process is non-linear. Salerno et al., (2015) further refer to the contingency theory as presented by Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) which emphasizes that the way to organize a business is context-dependent and should be thought of in relation to the nature of the environment in which the organization is present.

To this background, no one innovation process fits all, rather; the innovation process should be context-dependent and eight different innovation processes have been identified in the research performed by Salerno et al. (2015). The differences between these eight innovation processes originate from four main innovation aspects that are project-specific: structure,

scope, level of formality, and different ways of treating uncertainties. Insights that call for matching the innovation process with the characteristics of the innovation project. As for the differing definitions of innovation, the conceptualization of innovation includes several different perspectives. Highlighted above is the difference between linear and non-linear innovation processes. The spaghetti model of innovation adds perspective. A perspective that aims to appropriately reflect how innovation happens by highlighting that it is more complex than a process (Tidd and Bessant, 2009). Conceptualizing innovation through the spaghetti model highlights how innovation is built up by different interactions at different times, woven together in a social interaction network represented by a ball of spaghetti (Tidd and Bessant, 2009).

Tidd and Bessant (2009) further describe the spaghetti network as consisting of engineered and emergent networks. Engineered networks represent the ones specifically created to enable innovation with actively recruited participants aimed for innovation, and emergent networks are the informal ones that emerge through common interests and informal interactions. Both the engineered and emergent networks are of importance for innovation creating the non-structured conceptualization of innovation. Nonaka (1994) highlights that these informal social interactions are of importance for innovation, and emphasizes how the innovation contributions from the emergent networks should align with the formal structure within the organization. This is in line with Tidd and Bessant (2009) who also highlight the informal, emergent networks as important for innovation. Tidd and Bessant (2009) however add that the engineered, more structured networks also inherent the possibility to contribute to innovation. The spaghetti model emphasizes both the formal and informal social interactions which make up the innovation within organizations and is therefore how innovation is conceptualized further in this thesis. A conceptualization that enables further exploration into formal and informal activities as part of an organization's innovation.

Inclusive innovation

The field of innovation has as mentioned evolved in the way in which the innovation process is viewed (Salerno et al., 2015). In addition, the research field has developed to include a wider scope of which actors and participants are included in innovation. Inclusive innovation is an approach that presents an evolution from the more traditional view of innovation (Levidow and Papaioannou, 2018; Bäckström and Lindberg, 2018). Inclusive innovation broadens the scope of innovation in two main ways. Firstly, as mentioned, including a larger variety of participants in innovation and secondly emphasizing where and why new solutions to perceived needs are developed (Lindberg, 2018; Brundenius et al., 2016). Prior research within the innovation field has rather focused on the more tech-oriented innovations, commonly in industrial settings, while inclusive innovation aims to emphasize a broader spectrum of contexts, perspectives, participants and highlights the influence of a wider audience. An approach to innovation that enables better response to perceived needs by addressing and capturing complex organizational challenges (Lindberg, 2018). Thus, inclusive innovation entails that these complex challenges are properly assessed with an approach that includes a variety of perspectives, contexts, and participants.

Within the field of innovation management, concepts such as open innovation (Chesbrough, 2003), customer-based innovation (Desouza et al., 2008), and end-user innovation (Hippel, 2005) are examples of the inclusive innovation approach. Foster and Heeks (2013) further describe inclusive innovation as referring to the inclusion of currently marginalized groups in some aspects of innovation. Adding to the definition presented by Foster and Heeks (2013), Sengupta (2016) highlights the democratization aspect of inclusive innovation.

2.2 EMPLOYEE-DRIVEN INNOVATION (EDI)

The academic field of innovation today is open for the participation of various stakeholders with the acknowledgment of inclusive involvement of stakeholders other than R&D and managerial personnel, thus extending the prior focus on technological experts as the main foundation of innovation. The involvement enhances the development of solutions that are increasingly efficient, suitable, and sustainable to the perceived need (Bäckström and Lindberg, 2018). Therefore, the concept of inclusive innovation favors the participation of all (Sengupta, 2016). Likewise, employee-driven innovation (EDI) is a research field that centers on the contribution of innovative practices by any employee in the organization, regardless of the employee's level of education, background, or organizational position (Høyrup et al., 2015).

EDI is highlighted as a democratization of innovation as employees are invited and encouraged to participate in activities related to innovation, which implies activities outside of the scope of their day-to-day operational tasks (Laviolette et al., 2016). The common assumption in the EDI field is that exclusive expertise can be found in ordinary employees that consequently can be leveraged for innovation. Despite their valuable knowledge of various processes, products, and organizational practices, ordinary employees are an underutilized source for innovation in the academic field of innovation management (Bäckström and Bengtsson, 2019).

A conceptualization of EDI that is commonly recognized within the research field is the typology created by Høyrup (2012). It constitutes different generic orders separated by the actors from which the innovation process is initiated. The first order signifies bottom-up innovation initiated and developed by employees. Due to its nature, it might remain hidden from top management for a period of time (Høyrup et al., 2018). In extension, the second-order represents a process in which an idea initiated by an employee gains the support of management that further coordinates it with the purpose to introduce the innovation to the entire organization. The third order denotes a management-initiated innovation process that encourages employees to participate in innovation through the development of the idea or project. The third order is the method of management to stimulate employee participation in the innovation process (Høyrup et al., 2018). The relationship between management and employees, the two main actors in employee-driven innovation, is presented in Figure 2.

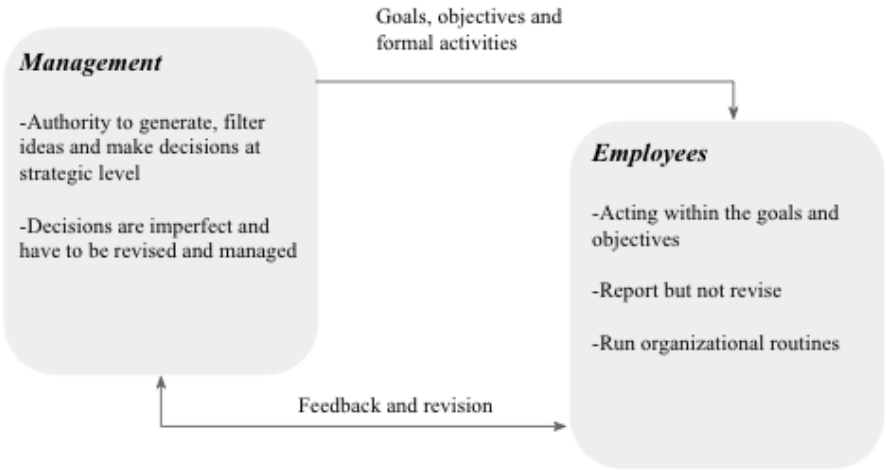

Figure 2. Visualization of management and employees in employee-driven innovation (Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010).

2.3 ENABLERS FOR EMPLOYEE-DRIVEN INNOVATION

As a component of exploring employee-driven innovation (EDI) previous research has pointed out several factors which constitute enablers for EDI (Amundsen et al., 2014; Buhl, 2018; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010; Voxted, 2018). This by exploring the conditions and pre-requisites beneficial for EDI within organizations. An overview of the enabling factors can be found in Table 1.

Enablers for employee-driven innovation (EDI)	
Cultural factors	Cooperative orientation (Amundsen et al., 2014)
	Openness and autonomy (Amundsen et al., 2014)
	Feeling and security (Amundsen et al., 2014)
	Development orientation (Amundsen et al., 2014)
	Well-being (Amundsen et al., 2014; Huhtala and Parzefall, 2007)
	Pride, trust and tolerance (Amundsen et al., 2014)
Management support	Management acceptance (Voxted, 2018; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010)
	Mentoring management (Voxted, 2018; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010)
Formal organizational factors	Organizational vision and strategy for employee-driven innovation (Voxted, 2018; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010)
	Capturing employee-driven innovation (Voxted, 2018; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010)
	Resource allocation (Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010)
	Incentives (Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010; Mazzanti et al., 2006)
Customer	Customer behavior analysis (Buhl, 2018)

orientation	Continuous testing of assumptions (Buhl, 2018)

Table 1. Employee-driven innovation (EDI) enablers (Amundsen et al., 2014; Buhl, 2018; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010; Voxted, 2018).

Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) together with Voxted (2018) point out that there is no one enabler for EDI, they complement each other and they need to be combined. Furthermore, prior research also nuances the view of enabling factors and challenges (Johnsson, 2017). Johnsson (2017) highlights that through the different ways in which innovation is defined it can be understood as a complex situation or process to navigate, thus expecting challenges or barriers along the way. As a result, these challenges can also be viewed as positive for innovation work, as they require creative solutions that have the potential to result in completely new solutions and the learning-by-failing benefits (Maidique and Zirger, 1985). Thus, throughout the description, the factors are described as enabling factors, however, in line with Johnsson (2017) and Maidique and Zirger (1985) the enabling factors can also be seen as disablers for EDI. In previous studies aiming to identify enabling factors for EDI, four main areas were identified that include cultural factors, management support, and formal organizational factors covering the intra-organizational factors and customer orientation which also takes an intra-organizational perspective, but that touches upon more of a co-creational enabler for EDI. The different perspectives of enabling factors will be further described below and divided into the four overarching factors, however, the division of enabling factors between the four overarching factors is fluid and many factors could be included in more than one overarching factor.

2.3.1 CULTURAL FACTORS

Cultural enabling factors include cooperative orientation, openness, autonomy, feeling of security, development orientation, well-being, pride, trust, and tolerance. Culture is denoted as assumptions, values, beliefs, and meanings that are strongly held within an organization (Denison, 1996). Cultural characteristics have the ability to guide employees actions and their patterns of thought (Amundsen et al., 2014). Denison (1996) points out that climate is different from the organizational culture, as the climate is the manifestation of the culture expressed as the behavior and social practices of employees. The social environment, according to Amabile et al. (1996), has the ability to influence the level of creative behavior in the organization. The culture and climate in combination determine how the individual and the group behave within the structure, expressed as to how the structures are filled with life (Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010).

Amundsen et al. (2014) found that organizations that exploit employee-driven innovation (EDI) practices and as a result manage to experience an increased innovative capacity have several common interrelated cultural characteristics. These cultural characteristics include (1) a generally high commitment among employees towards innovation, expressed as a willingness to invest an extra effort for the workplace and employees being passionate about their work. Furthermore, (2) a cooperative orientation appears as a cooperative climate between employees and management, with a comprehensive belief that it results in the

highest quality of innovation activity. Thirdly (3) prevalent is a sense of pride in working in the organization, interpretively expressed as statements concerning an employee's low-turnover rate and well-being among employees (Amundsen et al., 2014). Other authors that confirm the well-being of employees as enabling are Huhtala and Parzefall (2007), who suggest that it is highly interconnected with innovativeness. It forms a self-enhancing cycle, hence a high level of well-being is anticipated to boost the innovativeness of employees. On the contrary, a lower level of well-being is consequently perceived to decrease the innovativeness of employees. In addition, as does the perception of innovation tasks being excessive in the day-to-day tasks, acting as an overload and thus decreasing the innovativeness of employees (Buhl, 2018).

The next (4) characterizing factor presented by Amundsen et al. (2014) represents trust, where relationships within the organization are trustful both ways expressed in the management showing trust in employees and also employees showing trust in their management. Furthermore, (5) a characterizing factor is tolerance, implying that the organizations that manage to harvest the increased innovative capacity acknowledged that differences in diversity in employees are valuable and a certain tolerance for error existed. The sixth characteristic (6) implies an inherent feeling of security, expressed as employees feeling that they can provide innovative ideas or suggest improvement while feeling secure that their job will remain. A characteristic that fosters a climate where thinking out loud is possible since knowledge sharing and various ideas are welcomed positively. Next, (7) a development orientation is present, which implies that improvement and innovation is perceived by the employees to be an essential part of their job. Also, (8) an openness regarding communication both internally and externally is present, where employees can disagree with managers. Furthermore, leaders make it possible for informal contact and documents relating to decisions in the organization to be accessible to employees. Lastly, (9) autonomy is present where employees can influence how various tasks should be executed and managers are in their performance not oriented for control. Managers rather delegate responsibility and the employees within the organization accept this given responsibility.

2.3.2 MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

Management support includes the acceptance and mentoring perspectives of management support (Voxted, 2018; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010). As previously discussed, innovation and driving innovation is central to many organizations, which according to Buhl (2018) is the reason why the decision authority related to innovation, such as innovation projects and budgets is still commonly allocated to managers. Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) categorize management support into two main perspectives. Firstly, the acceptance perspective of management support which they refer to as a license needed for employees to conduct activities. This acceptance perspective depends on the organization in focus but is prominent within organizations where the decision to innovate to a large extent lies with management. In such organizations, employee-driven innovation (EDI) is dependent on the acceptance of management to deviate from defined roles and devote time and resources to innovation activities. This perspective on management support is also reflected in the research conducted by Voxted (2018) who also highlights management support as a crucial enabler for EDI.

Voxted (2018) describes the acceptance from management more in the terms of management buy-in. An acceptance or buy-in from management is crucial for ideas to get the opportunity to develop further in the innovation network or process.

The second perspective presented by Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) emphasizes management support through mentoring characteristics. This perspective is also reflected by Voxted (2018) who describes this perspective on management support as continuous management support. This perspective implies more than just an initial acceptance or buy-in, it rather emphasizes the importance of having management support throughout the entire development process from idea to implementation, despite the chosen way of conceptualizing innovation. According to both Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) and Voxted (2018) incorporating management support through a mentoring role provided a sense of engagement and commitment for the employees in EDI. Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) add a further perspective and present an approach where management support can be incorporated in EDI by enabling the employees to manage their own innovations, for example enabling employees to manage the initiative even during the decision or filtering stages. Thus, this approach implies management to transfer some of its authority temporarily to employees. The management support factors that can enable EDI are related to the cultural factors described above. Examples include trust being a two-sided relationship, tolerance of diversity and error, the feeling of security, openness in communication and decision basis, and autonomy where managers enable employees to influence how tasks are executed and delegate a responsibility are all examples of cultural factors that are influenced by management support.

2.3.3. FORMAL ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS

Formal organizational factors include organizational vision and strategy, approaches to capture employee-driven innovation, and resource allocation (Voxted, 2018; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010; Buhl, 2018).

Organizational vision and strategy for employee-driven innovation

Voxted (2018) together with Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) highlight the organization's vision and strategy for employee-driven innovation (EDI) as enablers. Voxted (2018) describes how implementing a vision for an organization's EDI is of importance, whereas Voxted (2018) promotes a broader vision rather than narrow goals and objectives. Similarly, Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) highlight the discussion about the scope and definition of innovation or a specific challenge as important. The broader the definition, the more employees can exploit their knowledge and experience. On the contrary, the further the outcome may end up in relation to the initiator's initial intent. Both researchers promote a broader approach to the vision and strategy of EDI and Voxted (2018) describes how the vision acts as a guiding light but does not create barriers for EDI. Further, this vision has the potential to create discussions around the vision and to always relate what is done and what potentially can be done to a vision (Voxted, 2018).

Approaches to capturing employee-driven innovation

The formal organizational factors also include establishing an approach that aims to capture the employee-driven innovation (EDI) (Voxted, 2018; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010). Voxted (2018) highlights how, despite the informal characteristics of EDI (Høyrup, 2012), there is a need for an established approach as to how the EDI should be captured within the organization. For the research performed by Voxted (2018), the focus lies on the transfer from ideas to projects or initiatives and highlights the challenge of balancing EDI and the management skills and practice required from management to capture the innovation created. Examples of approaches to capture EDI presented by Voxted (2018) are information systems implemented within organizations as an approach to capturing and managing EDI. Related is documentation, also highlighted by Voxted (2018). Documentation of EDI is included as an enabling factor since it enables the organization to make the employees, often more tacit knowledge, visible and relate it with academic knowledge to create organizational learning (Voxted, 2018). Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) further highlight the need to capture EDI to create an innovation bank that enables filtering and pursuing EDI.

The enabling factor of establishing an approach to capturing EDI is related to the management support factors included above. Incorporating, capturing and documenting EDI as enabling factors aims to facilitate the communication and understanding between management and employees (Voxted, 2018; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010). Thus, creating an approach for management visibility.

Resource allocation

Time, resources, and collaboration are additionally highlighted as formal organizational enabling factors for employee-driven innovation (EDI) (Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010). Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) include time, resources, and collaboration as factors that are of importance when having the aim to create an environment for creativity, which is argued to be beneficial for EDI (Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010). Allowing employees the time and resources to develop ideas or innovate and platforms for inspiration and knowledge exchange are ways in which an organization can enable EDI. Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) relate the importance of these factors to enabling employees to ask the right questions, which is an important aspect of an environment for creativity. This perspective is further contrasted by highlighting that the allocation of these resources comes with related costs and that there is no reason to simply assume that the contrary model which does not formally allocate resources to EDI is always wrong. However, pointed out is how more recent studies and well-known organizations such as Google have enabled EDI partly by formal allocation of resources (Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010).

Incentives

Incentives are an additional enabling factor presented by Kesting and Ulhøi (2010). Mazzanti et al. (2006) have identified the link between the introduction of innovative practices and incentive payment schemes. Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) however highlight how incentives and reward schemes should reflect employee-driven innovation being encouraged both within and

across organizational teams and departments, by for example emphasizing a collective effort rather than an individual.

2.3.4 CUSTOMER ORIENTATION FACTORS

Customer orientation factors include the involvement of customers in the innovation development process or network (Buhl, 2018). Buhl (2018) could identify the impact of customer involvement on the market performance of the studied innovation. This can be done by incorporating customer behavior analysis in the innovation development process or network and Berchicci (2009, p.175) states that *"testing assumptions during the development process may help identify and incorporate important market-driven requirements"*. By continuously including potential customers when developing ideas to innovations, employees can validate and adapt their ideas.

2.3.5 ENABLEMENT OF EMPLOYEE-DRIVEN INNOVATION

As highlighted above, there is no one enabler for employee-driven innovation (EDI), they complement each other and they need to be combined (Voxted, 2018; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010; Buhl, 2018). Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) have visualized the potential impact of enabling factors for EDI, by building on management and employees as two main components of EDI. The potential impact is visualized in Figure 3.

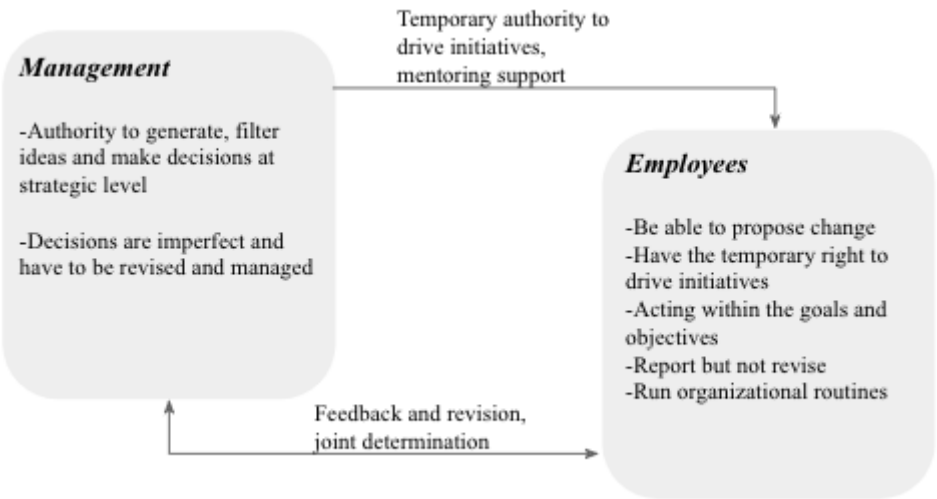

Figure 3. Visualization of the potential effect of enabling factors on employee-driven innovation (Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010).

As highlighted in Figure 3 and throughout the description of enabling or disabling factors for EDI, a large emphasis lies on the management level, thus enabling bottom-up activities to take place but also to be discovered by managers. It is of importance to emphasize how these enabling factors can also reflect barriers to EDI as highlighted by Johnsson (2017). Voxted (2018) adds a further dimension, namely the individual employees' motivation, and commitment. Despite the presence of the enabling factors highlighted in previous research such as culture, management support, customer orientation, and formal organizational factors employees will to a different extent participate in employee-driven innovation. There are established arguments for letting everyone participate, to broaden the scope of innovation

involvement. However, Voxted (2018) emphasizes that just as important as being inclusive in innovation participants is recognizing that employees will be attracted and participate unequally in EDI.

2.5 FORMAL AND INFORMAL INNOVATION ACTIVITIES

The contribution of formal and informal innovation activities in relation to employee-driven innovation (EDI) is highlighted in a study conducted by Lindland (2018). The study compares the stimulation of EDI in two different municipalities and emphasizes how both formal and informal innovation activities contribute to EDI. Formal and informal innovation activities further relate to the typology created by Høyrup (2012), where formal innovation activities reflect the third order of employee-driven innovation. Thus, formal innovation activities can be described as the management-initiated innovation process that is later introduced to the employees that are invited to participate by developing and refining the idea or project further. This order is the method for management to stimulate employee participation in the innovation process (Høyrup et al., 2018), which also can be related to the engineered networks of the innovation network (Tidd and Bessant, 2009). Within organizations, the activities initiated intending to contribute to innovation have often been tested and integrated within the organization to identify activities that are most sufficient within the specific organizational context and for its employees. However, Bessant and Tidd (2011) highlight how it is important to keep in mind that innovation management is complex and dynamic, meaning that innovation activities need to be continuously assessed and iterated, as the complex innovation environment changes. Related to the context-dependency highlighted by Bessant and Tidd (2011), it is also important to include innovation as a complex phenomenon that for example can be thought of as both a linear process or network, and that in addition varies between individuals. Through prior research, several different formal activities with the aim to contribute to EDI have been identified (Lindland, 2018; Pavel, 2020; Wegner, 2011; Timothy and K. Markham, 2017). These formal activities are disclosed in Table 2.

Formal innovation activities
Innovation projects (Lindblad, 2018)
Developing innovation plans (Lindblad, 2018)
Idea contests (Pavel, 2020)
Communities of practice (Wegner, 2011)
Training (Timothy and K. Markham, 2017)

Table 2. Collection of formal innovation activities. (Lindland, 2018; Timothy & K. Markham, 2017; Pavel, 2020; Wegner, 2011).

Lindland (2018) highlights innovation projects and the development of innovation plans as formal innovation activities. Pavel (2020) adds idea contests as one formal initiative for generating innovative ideas from employees. Wegner (2011) highlights communities of

practice which Wegner (2011) describes as groups of individuals with a shared interest that together share knowledge and learn in a shared environment. Lastly, Timothy and K. Markham (2017) add training as a formal innovation activity. Not providing sufficient training can prevent an organization from more radical innovation, missed opportunities, and growth (Timothy and K. Markham, 2017). What training on the other hand provides is according to Timothy and K. Markham (2017) an opportunity for organizations to foster an innovation-friendly culture and employees with sufficient innovation skills and a clear perception of the organization's innovation investments.

For informal innovation activities, these correspondingly are represented by the first order of EDI (Høyrup, 2012). The first order signifies bottom-up innovation, where the process is initiated, refined, and developed by employees, also related to the emergent networks as described by Tidd and Bessant (2009). Due to its nature, it might remain hidden from management for a period of time (Høyrup et al., 2018). Jensen et al. (2007) also describe these innovation activities as 'doing-using-interacting' (DUI) which, just like the first order of EDI (Høyrup, 2012), relies on informal processes. Lindland (2018) highlights that it is important for organizations' EDI to recognize both formal and informal activities. Lindland (2018) identified how the division of EDI that was done in daily work and EDI done to cater to the demand of the formalized activities of the EDI, appeared to be two separate things. Thus, identifying how the formal activities were management-owned and the more informal EDI activities rather were embedded in the local work. Lindblad's study (2018) also highlights that the informal EDI activities often were treated as something different in relation to what management identified as EDI and how the informal, bottom-up processes that managers aimed to foster were challenged by the top-down structures developed to control and enable EDI.

2.6 SYNTHESIS OF THEORY

Throughout the theoretical framework section, employee-driven innovation (EDI) has been described through prior research within the field of innovation management. A synthesis of the suggested relation between employee-driven innovation, related enabling factors, and formal and informal innovation activities is presented in Figure 4. The synthesis is based on the theoretical framework and its different perspectives presented above.

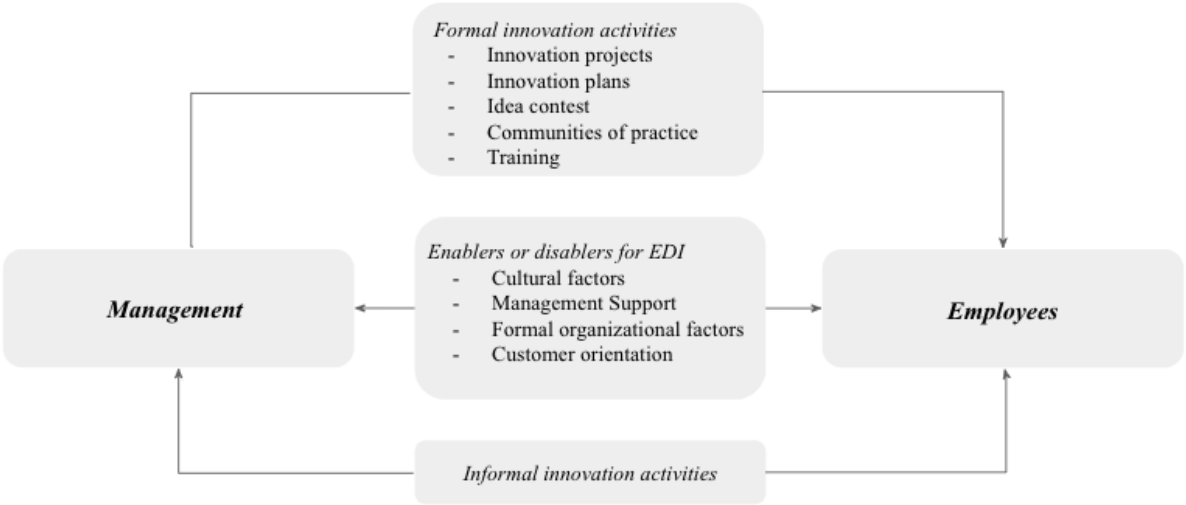

Figure 4. Synthesis of theory.

The field of EDI is context-dependent and as highlighted by Lindland (2018) the definition of innovation and its related network is of importance to consider when exploring EDI. Consequently, the definition of innovation permeates both how the innovation process is thought of, EDI, and the enabling effect of different factors (Tidd and Bessant, 2009; Lindland, 2018). Thus, the definition of innovation from management and every individual employee is reflected in what is considered EDI and what the formal and informal innovation activities contribute with. This does not limit the impact of these EDI activities to a specific stage in the innovation process or network, rather emphasizes how every employee experiences the contribution to innovation, based on their definition of innovation. Further, the synthesis of theory also highlights how the formal innovation activities are those initiated by management and how employees participate in innovation by participating in the formal innovation activities and by driving the informal innovation activities. This is reflected in Figure 4 highlighting the interrelationship between EDI, enabling or disabling factors for EDI, and the formal and informal innovation activities.

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the study's methodology. Thus it first presents an overview of the conducted research process and then motivates the chosen research strategy and design, a qualitative single-case study. It also includes the collection of data, theory gathering, and analysis followed by a research quality discussion to add to the transparency of the performed study.

3.1 RESEARCH PROCESS

In Figure 5, an overview of the research process is visualized.

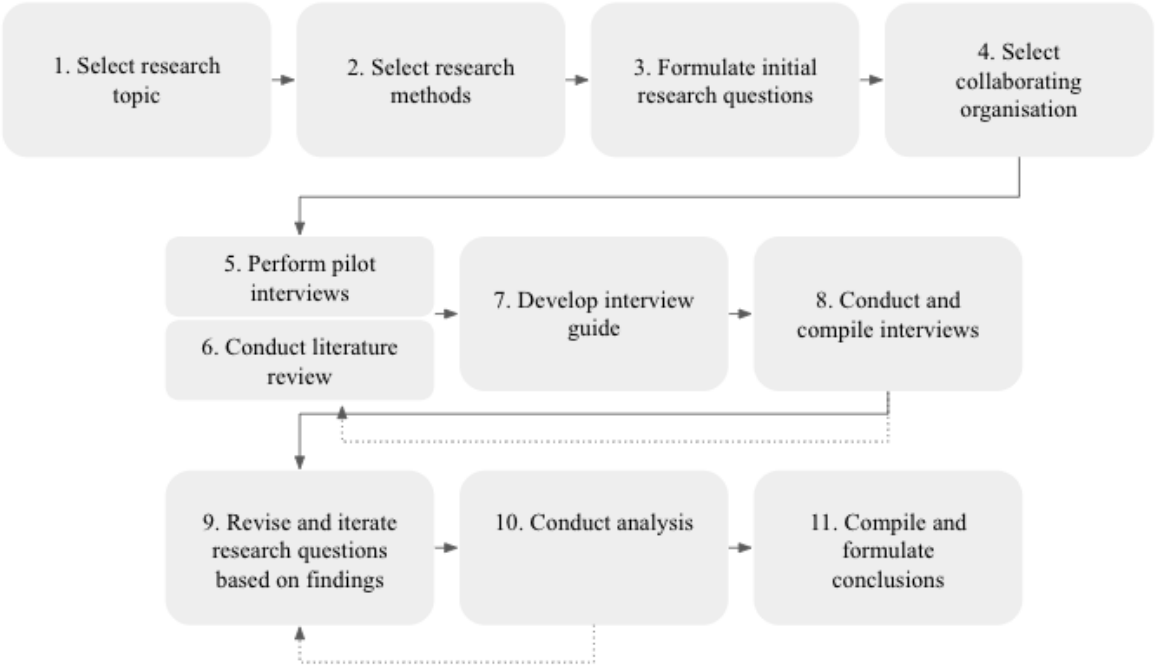

Figure 5. Overview of the research process visualized, inspired by Bryman and Bell (2019).

Employee-driven innovation (EDI) as for innovation management is context-dependent (Lemus-Aguilar and Hidalgo, 2015; Storey et al., 2016; Lindland, 2018), as highlighted in the problem discussion, and to expand the exploration of EDI and enabling factors the consultancy industry was chosen as the context for this case study. The single-case study design enabled the exploration of EDI in a chosen context. Beta was selected to be the collaborating organization for this study and provided the consultancy industry context. The study aimed to explore EDI, how it can be stimulated, and the contribution of formal and informal innovation activities. Since the researchers aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the topic, a qualitative single-case study with semi-structured interviews was chosen for the research methodology. The researchers through the chosen qualitative single-case study aimed at exploring existing research within EDI and adding to the research by complementing it with insights from the consultancy industry. The first data collection was then initiated with the literature review to gain a deeper theoretical understanding. In parallel, two pilot interviews were conducted to gain a better understanding of Beta, their experiences and the research scope, with the purpose to formulate the research design (Goffin

et al., 2019). Following, the initial research questions were formulated to guide the research. Throughout the research process, the initial research questions were revised to better reflect the core of the study based on the continuous findings.

Based on both the theoretical framework and pilot interviews, an interview guide was developed, which was used to collect empirical data. The interview guide was revised after the first set of company interviews were conducted to better align with the aim of the study and improve the interview guide structure. The collected empirical data from the performed semi-structured interviews were then compiled. The theoretical framework was also iterated throughout the research process based on continuous findings from data collection. The collected empirical data from the interviews was then analyzed through thematic analysis and also compared with the theoretical framework. Lastly, the study's conclusions were drawn based on the study's findings, along with theoretical and practical implications of the study as well as suggestions for future research.

3.2 RESEARCH STRATEGY

There is no universally accepted and unified definition of innovation (Baregheh et al, 2009). Although, certain dimensions of innovation are recurring in the many definitions of innovation, assumed to be universally accepted to create a common understanding of what innovation is. Even though the authors have chosen an innovation definition to guide them through the research process, the innovation definition in practice often differs significantly among individuals which is why employee-driven innovation (EDI) is further complicated. The study's research strategy was developed to obtain a deeper understanding of how EDI could be stimulated, by identifying enabling factors and exploring the contribution of formal and informal innovation activities. As a result, a qualitative research strategy was chosen as it is suited for obtaining a deeper understanding of the subject and exploring the interaction between several factors in a given context (Bryman and Bell, 2019). The qualitative research strategy was achieved through in-depth interviews that allowed the interviewees to express themselves freely and communicate their personal experiences of the matter. This allowed for the incorporation of a variety of participant perspectives. Furthermore, a qualitative research strategy allowed for a holistic approach to innovation as a complex system that is best studied as a whole in its situational context, within an organization (Patel and Davidsson, 2011; Bryman and Bell, 2019).

Due to the explorative nature of the study, the approach towards theory was abductive. An abductive approach is a combination of induction and deduction which allows for the original research questions to evolve and be expanded (Patel and Davidsson, 2011). The initial orientation toward literature was to find an initial starting point to derive a theoretical framework as output. Furthermore, when performing the interviews, a deduction occured to continually test the relevance of the initial theoretical framework towards the research questions and thematization of conducted interviews. This implied that the theoretical framework was continually developed and improved alongside the collection of primary data. The purpose of this approach was to allow the study to take new directions as more insights

were uncovered and to prevent the research from becoming locked in on pre-selected theory. Hence, the abductive approach was appropriate for the purpose of this study to allow the study to maintain its exploratory nature. An approach that enabled a trade-off between the predetermined deductive approach and the fully exploratory approach of induction by creating a foundational theoretical framework, while allowing for iteration based on the continuous findings from conducted interviews.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design aims at dictating the choices made throughout the research and a single-case study was chosen for the way in which the research was transformed into a plan and method that was carried out and aligned with answering the study's research questions (Bryman and Bell, 2019). A single-case study was chosen as it was perceived as the most adequate in relation to the purpose of the study, as the study was performed in collaboration with Beta to provide the research with an exploratory approach within the given organizational context. This since a case study aligns with an exploratory aim and gaining deeper insight into a case study of choice, this being for example an organization, industry, or location (Bryman and Bell, 2019; Goffin et al., 2019). A case study focuses on a phenomenon that is oftentimes difficult to distinguish from its context and therefore the phenomenon explored, is explored in its natural setting. Bryman and Bell (2019) highlight how a case study is the appropriate research design when the study aims to capture how or why something appears. The single-case study was conducted by exploring the experiences of several Beta employees and managers.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

The data collection for this study was composed of primary data and a conducted review of literature. The primary data collection was conducted through qualitative semi-structured interviews with a chosen number of Beta's employees and managers. In addition, expert interviews were performed. As previously stated, the choice of research design aims at dictating the choices made throughout the research process (Bryman and Bell, 2019). Hence, the choice of interviews as the method for primary data collection was done in consideration of the chosen single-case study design. This since interviews allowed for intensive and detailed investigation of the particular case researched (Bryman and Bell, 2019; Sanders and Stappers, 2008). To complement the primary data, a literature review was conducted and a theoretical framework was created as an output, to outline existing theories for the analysis to be built upon.

3.4.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Accompanying the primary data collection based on the performed interviews, previous research was collected by reviewing existing literature. This gathered data constitutes the studies theory chapter, which includes a theoretical framework. The majority of the data gathered for the theoretical framework was collected in the earlier stages of the study and thus established a theoretical foundation for the explored research questions. This data was gathered through a literature review including previous research touching upon the aspects

necessary for the researchers and reader to gain a relevant theoretical background and understanding of the study's topic. The theoretical framework, as an outcome of the performed literature review, serves as a foundation that in more detail, and based on performed research examines the different aspects of employee-driven innovation and its related enabling factors and formal and informal innovation activities. Further, the theoretical framework was applied as a lens when analyzing the data collected from the interviews.

The literature review was chosen as an appropriate way to gather the prior research for the theoretical framework since it is considered to result in a transparent process to minimize biases (Bryman and Bell, 2019). The search was performed in the databases ub.gu.se and via search engines on the internet to include previous research. To find relevant material for the study the following keywords were used in different combinations and variations: *innovation, inclusive innovation, employee-driven innovation, drivers of employee-driven innovation, formal and informal innovation, and innovation network.* The literature was then evaluated using inclusion and exclusion criteria reflecting the study's scope and limitations. The literature reviews inclusion and exclusion criteria can be found in Figure 6. The literature included was also identified through a snowball sampling of referenced material in obtained findings from the keyword searches. This research was also evaluated using the same inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Inclusion criteria

- Peer reviewed journal articles or published in acknowledged academic journals

-Published books

- Research related to the study's topic, touching upon the interrelated field of innovation management, employee driven innovation, inclusive innovation and formal and informal innovation.

Exclusion criteria

- Literature written in other languages than Swedish or English

- Research that does not include innovation *or* employee driven innovation *or* drivers of employee driven innovation *or* innovation activities or initiatives

Figure 6. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the literature review.

The process of reviewing previous literature within the researched field was done through several iterations. An initial theory review was conducted before the interviews. However, based on the continuous findings from the interviews and in line with the abductive approach the theoretical framework was revised continuously.

3.4.2 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

In the collection of primary data for the research, interviews were conducted to gather empirical data since it allowed for the collection of more detailed and rich insights necessary for the research questions and to gain the contextual exploration that was aimed for (Bryman and Bell, 2019). The interviews were conducted using a qualitative and semi-structured approach (Hanington and Martin, 2012), meaning that they were based on and followed an

interview guide, but the interviewer also asked follow up/probing questions to reach more in-depth answers from the interviewees (Jamshed, 2014) gaining insight into participants perspectives, experiences and opinions (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2018). The choice of a semi-structured interview method contributed some structure to the interviews and allowed for comparing the collected responses from several different respondents. With the trade-off between structure and comparability and the flexibility with the possibility for follow-up questions, the semi-structured interview was utilized for both the company and expert participants.

Before initiating the interviews three interview guides were created, two for company participants depending on their role and one for expert participants. They will be further described in their respective following sections. The included questions in each guide were developed mainly from the problem discussion, research questions, and insights gained from the literature review. The majority of the questions were open-ended questions to align with the exploratory nature of the study and the context-dependency of employee-driven innovation.

3.4.3 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Selection of Beta employees and experts for the data collection was applicable for the semi-structured interviews, however, sampling of experts was only relevant for the expert interviews.

Company participants

Aligning with the choice of a qualitative single-case study research strategy and design and further the choice of semi-structured interviews, the participants included in the research were important for the aimed research questions. A qualitative sampling was used and Marshall (1996) further points out how qualitative sampling has the purpose of gathering data from participants likely to provide insights into the research questions. Thus, the research included participants that are Beta employees to gain a deep contextual understanding. This is in line with the chosen single-case study design and the purpose and aim of the research. Bryman and Bell (2019) describe such a sampling as purposive sampling. Purposive sampling where sampling is done to add to the research questions, in a non-probable way (Bryman and Bell, 2019). Theoretical and generic sampling are two different types of purposive sampling and which type to utilize depends on the research design, strategy and corresponding research questions (Bryman and Bell, 2019; Marshall, 1996).

A generic purposive sampling was utilized for this study where the sampling is purposive to the research questions (Bryman and Bell, 2019). Thus, the participants were selected based on their ability to provide insights into the research questions. Common for the Beta employee participants was that their area of competence or tenure did not impact the sampling criteria. However, the employees were divided into two sample groups. One sample group representing ‘ordinary’ employees, as referred to in this thesis as employees. These employees did not have a management role. The other sample group included participants

with a management role. Managers' roles including personnel responsibilities differed from employees. This reflecting the bottom-up perspective aimed for and complementing it with the management perspective of employee-driven innovation (Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010). This generic purposive sampling can furthermore be done sequentially or in a fixed manner, where participants are decided beforehand (Bryman and Bell, 2019). A mix of the two is also a possible approach, which was the case for this study. Some initial participants were decided beforehand, and continuously further participants were included based on recommendations from participants. As a result, the sample size was not determined beforehand. Instead, the collection of primary data through company interviews continued until data saturation was achieved (Bryman and Bell, 2019; Marshall, 1996).

Further, the contact information for company participants was communicated through the Beta project sponsor and the participants were then contacted via Microsoft Teams. As a result, the sample of participating Beta employees and managers was affected by their availability. To incentivize Beta employees and managers to participate in the study, and to reduce the risk of filtering answers, the participants were anonymized. The anonymity can also be motivated by the strive to emphasize the responses collected rather than the individual participants. An overview of the interviewed company participants is presented in Table 3. All interviews are presented together with role, tenure, date, duration, and setting. In the sections of empirical findings and analysis later throughout this report, company respondents will be referred to as Rx.

Company interviews					
Employee participants	**Role**	**Tenure**	**Date**	**Duration**	**Setting**
R1	Employee	6 months	15/3-22	49 min	Zoom
R2	Employee	1,5 years	15/3-22	59 min	Zoom
R3	Employee	4,5 years	16/3-22	54 min	Zoom
R4	Manager	3,5 years	16/3-22	39 min	Zoom
R5	Employee	+15 years	17/3-22	43 min	Zoom
R6	Employee	4 months	17/3-22	57 min	Zoom
R7	Employee	6 months	17/3-22	1h 17 min	Zoom
R8	Employee	4 months	18/3-22	43 min	Microsoft Teams
R9	Employee	4 years	18/3-22	53 min	Zoom
R10	Employee	2 years	28/3-22	1h 1 min	Zoom
R11	Employee	3 years	28/3-22	54 min	Zoom
R12	Manager	10 years	28/3-22	50 min	Zoom

R13	Employee	2 years	29/3-22	48 min	Zoom
R14	Manager	6 months	29/3-22	44 min	Zoom
R15	Manager	11 years	30/3-22	44 min	Zoom

Table 3. Overview of company interviews including company participants, role, tenure, date, duration, and setting.

In total 15 company interviews were conducted including 11 employees and 4 managers at Beta. The interviews were all conducted in a digital setting and lasted on average 50 minutes. All company interviews, including both employees and managers, were guided by an interview guide, in line with the semi-structured interview approach. The comprehensive interview guides can be found in the appendix. Two different interview guides were created, one for employee interviews including questions about prior innovation experiences including formal and informal innovation activities, and questions aiming to explore their experience of culture, management, formal organizational, and customer orientation enabling factors for employee-driven innovation. The second interview guide was used for the management interviews and rather aimed at understanding how they work with stimulating employee-driven innovation. Both interview guides included questions about the definition of innovation.

Expert participants

The expert interviews performed had the aim to complement the data collection including the empirics from the company interviews and the prior research in the theoretical framework. The interviews conducted with experts were also composed of a semi-structured approach and touched upon the same themes utilized for the Beta employee interviews. This implied that the expert interviews did not shift focus, rather complementing the findings from the Beta employee and manager interviews with further perspectives and insights. The questions included were however more tailored to match the expertise of the participant and the aim was not to gather comparable data, but rather to get multiple perspectives from experts within the field.

The experts, in this case, not being a part of Beta, had the potential of highlighting alternative perspectives in relation to the study's research questions. Also, including expert participants allowed for a discussion of collected employee and manager findings with the purpose to add other dimensions. The experts included were aimed to not solely focus on innovation management, but also include related fields that could add value to the researched questions. The experts were contacted directly via LinkedIn with a message that shortly described the research project and how they and their knowledge could contribute. An overview of the interviewed experts is presented in Table 4. In total four expert interviews were conducted in a digital setting and lasted on average 33 minutes. All interviews are presented together with name, occupancy, date, duration, and setting. In the sections of empirical findings and analysis later throughout this report, expert respondents will be referred to as Ex. The distinction between company participants and experts is of importance as they are likely to have different perspectives.

Expert interviews					
Expert participants	**Name**	**Occupancy**	**Date**	**Duration**	**Setting**
E1	Magnus Karlsson	Adjunct Professor Innovation Management KTH, Partner and advisor	23/2-22	31 min	Zoom
E2	Håkan Ozan	Strategic innovation management & digital strategy, expert, researcher, speaker, author, teacher, consultant	25/2-22	29 min	Zoom
E3	Flemming Sørensen	Professor (MSO) in Business Studies at the Department Social Sciences and Business, Roskilde University, Denmark. Published articles, book chapters, and books about innovation in services.	24/2-22	30 min	Zoom
E4	Izabelle Bäckström	Ph.D. Industrial Engineering and Management, Senior lecturer and researcher	24/2-22	42 min	Zoom

Table 4. Overview of expert interviews including expert participants, name, occupancy, date, duration and setting.

3.4.4 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SET-UP

Both the company and expert interviews were performed in a remote setting with the help of communication tools such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. This is due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, hybrid workplaces and to prevent the risk of physical interviews being canceled. The interviews were performed in English to minimize the risk of misinterpretation of the core concepts. Before the interview, an email was sent to each participant as a reminder that contained a short description of the interviewers, the study's purpose, and the overarching subject of the interview. The interviews were recorded to ensure a precise transcription of the interviewees ' answers.

3.4.5 TRANSCRIPTION OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The conducted interviews were transcribed with the help of the recording and the transcription aimed to include as much detail as possible. According to Bryman and Bell (2019), the most prominent disadvantage of transcribing is the vast amount of time consumed. However, the researchers argued that the advantages were greater in this case since it relieved the researchers from having to take comprehensive notes during the interviews. The transcription also enabled the minimization of interviewers' perception of answers and their own interpretation of the questions asked. However, when transcribing from a recording transcription quality errors are to be considered, for example, sentence structure or mistaken word errors (Poland, 2001). The transcription for this thesis was performed with the help of an automatic transcription tool that enabled the researchers to only

revise the transcription for errors and therefore account for the transcription quality errors. In addition, to be able to provide a foundation for comparability between the interviews and for the following analysis. The transcription also enabled the inclusion of quotes in the following empirical chapter. The included quotes collected from participants via the semi-structured interviews are altered to maintain the anonymity of the company and participants.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data from the performed interviews was then analyzed with thematic analysis. According to Bryman and Bell (2019), the thematic analysis is an appropriate approach when the study's purpose is to learn more about respondent views and attitudes, from a collected set of qualitative data such as for this study. Thematic analysis does allow for and require a high degree of flexibility when interpreting the data and does add to a comparison by gathering the data into broad identified themes. However, the high flexibility mentioned does make the thematic analysis subjective and the analysis does rely on the researcher's personal opinion and interpretation. This in turn does increase the risk of the data being misinterpreted. One way to mitigate this risk is by after transcribing the interviews accepting corrections from the respondents (Patel and Davidsson, 2011). The thematic analysis was conducted by firstly identifying the themes used to code the data. This was mainly done by emerging codes identified in the collected interview data and predetermined codes based on the theoretical framework. The coding utilized for the thematic analysis is included in the appendix. Every theme was assigned to one color used to tag the data and to create a comprehensive overview of the different frequency of themes identified. This also to be able to determine which identified themes that were less frequently occurring and too vague to include as a theme, corresponding to the sample size (Bryman and Bell, 2019) and was performed in a qualitative data analysis software.

3.6 RESEARCH QUALITY

Potential quality concerns for the conducted research are discussed below by assessing the reliability and validity of the methodology utilized. A qualitative research strategy can be discussed from several different perspectives since the findings are based on subjective interpretations. Therefore, it is important to apply research quality criteria to ensure the trustworthiness and legitimacy of the research (Bryman and Bell, 2019). For this thesis, reliability and validity are the two chosen criteria that are discussed. They were chosen as they are two of the most common quality measurements and are widely utilized by researchers globally (Bryman and Bell, 2019).

3.6.1 RELIABILITY

The reliability of research refers to the degree of repeatability and whether other researchers following the same methodology steps would obtain the same results (Goffin et al., 2019). Thus, including a well-motivated methodology increases the reliability. The term reliability is further divided into internal and external reliability (Bryman and Bell, 2019). External reliability assesses the ability to understand and replicate the study. External reliability is often an embedded challenge in qualitative research as a result of the inability to replicate the

social setting in which the research took place (Bryman and Bell, 2019). With this challenge in mind, this thesis aimed to include careful documentation of the conducted methods used and the underlying motivation for choices made to maintain high reliability (Gibbert and Ruigrok, 2010). Included in the methodology are thereby the keywords used in the literature review and the interview guide together with codes used for the thematic analysis can be found in the appendix. The reliability is further increased through the inclusion of the interview preparations, interview locations and duration, and selection of interview participants. The internal reliability complements the external reliability by referring to whether the researchers agree or disagree on what is identified throughout the findings (Bryman and Bell, 2019). For this thesis, the internal reliability was maintained through continuous discussions between the researchers concerning decisions made. In addition, Goffin et al. (2019) highlight how high reliability can be ensured by independent coding followed by inter-coder reliability checks, which were included in this thesis.

3.6.2 VALIDITY

The validity of research refers to the quality of the findings and their ability to represent a real-world phenomenon. Validity can further be divided into construct, internal, and external validity (Goffin et al., 2019). Construct validity refers to whether the research has investigated what it claimed to be investigated using suiting methods (Goffin et al., 2019). This has been incorporated into this thesis by maintaining a connection between problem discussion, research questions, and conclusion, and operationalizing this by appropriate methodology. The external validity is whether the findings from the research are applicable elsewhere, possibly across a larger sample (Goffin et al., 2019). The external validity of a qualitative research strategy is criticized since related research designs tend to explore the researched topic on a small sample or case (Bryman and Bell, 2019). As a result of this thesis's chosen single-case study, this generalizability has been a challenge and the researchers are aware of the limitations in arguing that this thesis findings apply to other organizations or industries. Despite this challenge, the researchers have incorporated the benefit of triangulation present in a multiple-case research design (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). This triangulation in the thesis was created by the comparison of different formal and informal innovation activities and the responses collected from employees, managers, and experts. Further, the thesis included pilot interviews which are highlighted by Goffin et al. (2019) to increase the external validity. Internal validity refers to the correspondence between the primary data collected by the researchers and the theoretical ideas developed in the thesis (Bryman and Bell, 2019). The internal validity of the thesis was increased by the transcription of performed interviews and the structured analysis approach.

4. EMPIRICS

This chapter presents the empirics collected throughout the conducted company interviews including both employees and managers at Beta, and the conducted expert interviews. The collected empirical data originates from the performed semi-structured interviews and their corresponding interview guides which were outlined based on important elements that the theoretical framework includes. The participants' responses have been divided into four overarching themes, namely (4.1) the definition of innovation, (4.2) enablers and disablers for employee-driven innovation, (4.3) formal innovation activities, and lastly, (4.4) informal innovation activities. A structure that aims to provide a structured overview of the collected empirics and how employee-driven innovation can be stimulated, including enabling factors and formal and informal innovation activities, according to the participant's perceptions. This chapter is then further utilized as the base for the following chapter, analysis.

4.1 DEFINITION OF INNOVATION

The definition of innovation includes both the company participant's and expert's personal definition of innovation and the company participant's perception of the organizations, Beta's, definition of innovation, and their differences and similarities.

4.1.1 PERSONAL DEFINITION OF INNOVATION

How innovation is defined throughout the interviews varies and every employee, manager, and expert interviewed describe what innovation is for them differently. Despite the differences, common elements are identified in the participants' perceptions of innovation including newness, progress, degrees of innovation, innovation as a process, value creation, human-centered approach, and innovation as a buzzword. The element of newness is expressed as innovation being something that has not been done before (R6) or doing something in a different or new way (R5, R10, R13, R15 & E1), and additionally R9 highlights how innovation also can be a combination of already existing technologies combined in a new way. Emphasizing how the newness of innovation can lie in a new combination of existing solutions, in the given context. In relation to the newness of innovation R6 also adds that simply the newness of something that has not been done before is not enough, there also has to be a market and a need for it to be a real innovation, pointing out how the idea plus the market are the two main components.

Progress is also a common element in the participants' definition of innovation. R2 expresses this progress as a way to constantly evolve and explore and also relates innovation to a personal trait of being an individual that is open-minded and that enjoys when new things come around. R8 also relates to innovation as progress of some sort and adds that innovation is a revolution rather than evolution. This aspect relates to the third commonly recurring element as innovation having a broad spectrum. Both R4 and R3 define innovation as something that can be revolutionary such as the car, but that on the other hand also can include refinement of existing processes and incremental improvements. R11 also describes innovation as having a broad spectrum and highlights how there are different layers of disruptiveness where innovation can be totally new to the world or on the other hand

incremental innovation. Further, R11 points out that the more incremental innovations are as relevant as the more radical ones. E3 also includes innovation as having a broad spectrum and also points out everyday innovation. R4 expresses it as

> "It could be small, it could be big, and it doesn't have to be Spotify. It could be a very small thing, but something that makes your day easier. And doing something that you've been doing before, but in a better way. I think it's a very broad spectrum." (R4)

Further, R2 emphasizes how innovation is not only limited to finding something new but also adds how innovation can be the process to enable change. This is also expressed by R7, who defines innovation with problems and solutions as the two main aspects, but also adds the process of creating these solutions to the definition of innovation. R13 also describes innovation as optimization and adds how R13 perceives innovation as something fun. The opportunity to create something new is what makes innovation fun according to R13 and expresses it as fun, cool, and providing joy to engage in innovation. Value creation is also a recurring element where creating value for users, customers, or the society as a whole is incorporated into the definition of innovation for R1, R11, and R12. R5 and R10 include the value creation elements by expressing how innovation also should add some type of value. What type of value that is depends on the context, but could be enabling something to be done quicker, easier, cheaper, or more fun. E1 further expresses how value creation can be creating value or reallocating existing value.

R14 highlights how the definition of innovation depends, however, highlights the human-centered approach to innovation. R14 further describes how this human-centered approach is all about asking the bigger questions and having a starting point to innovation that is more holistic. R14 perceives innovation for others as being focused on different techniques and being hands-on, but for R14 the importance of innovation lies in starting at the right point and asking the right questions. Something that R14 believes provides the right foundation for creating innovation.

When defining innovation, both R3 and R4 also include how they perceive innovation as a buzzword (R3) and even an expression that is worn out and used too much (R4). The expression from R3 is included below

> "It's kind of a buzzword, but I mean innovation is kind of, I guess, seeing things in a new way. I mean innovation could be so many things, but for me, it's like a refinement of existing processes. So it's I, I think it's a big word, innovation, what it could be. The car for instance, but innovation could also be small improvements. So I think it's a hard question, it's a really hard question." (R3)

The expression does not only highlight innovation as a buzzword, but also the elements of newness and degrees of innovation. It furthermore sheds light on the difficulty of defining

innovation. The difficulty of defining innovation and the complexity of the innovation concept was also expressed by R4 and R10. R12 expresses how the definition of innovation is something that no one can answer correctly, since there is no one answer.

4.1.2 ORGANIZATIONAL DEFINITION OF INNOVATION

When shifting focus to the organizational definition of innovation several respondents, both employees and managers, do not know what Beta's definition of innovation is or if there is one (R1, R2, R3, R6, R9 & R10). R2 does not know the common innovation definition and further adds how that might be something for Beta to consider communicating more clearly to employees. R10 adds how the organizational definition of innovation is hard to grasp due to a discrepancy between communicated definition and the following actions, and exemplifies how there are formal idea competitions that outline the organizational view on innovation, but highlights how little is communicated and known about what happens with the ideas submitted. Further, R11 does not either know the organizational definition of innovation but highlights the idea competition as reflecting Beta's definition of innovation. Resulting in a definition that includes idea generation, competing for funding, and resulting in a commercialized offer for clients. R3 does not know how Beta defines innovation and refers to their innovation department as knowing and further adds that it might be the result of being too focused on their own role. Similarly, R13 adds how there is an innovation department internally and how the organization has a definition, frameworks, and structure for working with innovation, but how R13 is not aware of these as a result of being fully dedicated to client projects. R9 does not either know if there is a common organizational definition of innovation but does add how much focus lies on collaboration with clients. Adding the perspective of Beta as a large multinational organization, R6 does not either know if there is a common view on innovation and further expresses how the perception is that Beta would not identify itself as innovative, it rather has an old IT culture. Similarly, R7 is not sure about the organizational definition of innovation and adds that it is probably similar to the participant's personal definition, but articulated in a more formal and fancy way. R5 also describes Beta's definition of innovation as similar to the participant's personal definition, but can not articulate Beta's definition. The expression from R2 is included below

> "I would think that I have to pass that one. Because I do not think that I know. And that could be like for the company, to perhaps reach out more to our employees. I actually do not know how we or Beta define innovation." (R2)

Apart from several employees and managers not knowing the organizational definition of innovation, or if there is one, human connection, client dependency, and design thinking are the main elements highlighted. The human connection is described by R4 as getting people together to solve a problem or improve something. Further, highlighting how one individual can do much, but together more can be achieved. The second element, client dependency is expressed by R6, R8, and R12. R8 perceives Beta's definition of innovation as client dependent as it is focused on clients in both finding ideas based on clients' challenges and

creating solutions aimed at clients. R6 expresses that the innovation is catered to Beta's clients. The expression from R8 is included below

> "Oh, interesting. Well Beta is of course dependent on the trends that our clients think are important, so there is the possibility of innovation within Beta but it has to be for our clients." (R8)

R14 further expresses that what the organizational definition of innovation is depends on who is asked, but highlights design thinking as a huge part of it. Common when thinking about or expressing the organizational innovation definition is that all respondents get surprised about the question and are not sure about how to answer or how Beta defines innovation, also mentioning that the definition is something that they should know of, but do not.

4.1.3 COMPARISON OF PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEFINITION OF INNOVATION

When having described both the personal definition of innovation and the organizational one, the participants were asked to compare the two. As R1, R2, R3, and R7 did not know the organizational definition of innovation they were not able to contrast the two. R5 similarly, could not articulate the organizational definition of innovation but did however point out strict similarities between the personal and organizational definitions of innovation. Furthermore, R4 perceives Beta's definition of innovation as pretty much the same as R4's personal definition and emphasizes the collaboration aspect included in R4's personal innovation definition as part of Beta's one as well. Describing how the organization collaborates, despite different geographical locations. R9 also points out similarities between the two definitions and expresses how the personal view on innovation and Beta's definition does not differ that much. R9 describes how, when thinking about innovation, what comes to mind is often a product that has been invented and uses a new medicine as an example. However, R9 further points out that innovation in more of a work context rather is improving processes and ways of working. On the other hand, R8 expresses differences between the personal and organizational definitions of innovation. R8 perceives the organizational definition of innovation as more limited. Limited, as a result of the client or customer focus and that innovation for the organization, is something that R8 describes as something that already needs to be funded by clients. The expression from R8 is included below

> "My definition is not limited in any way as for Beta, as it has to be somewhat already decided that there is money behind it." (R8)

Similarly, R11 describes how more innovation could be done at Beta. Further, explaining how this could be done by allowing for employees to post their ideas on internal improvements somewhere. R11 expresses how the innovation focus today lies in creating customer value and how revenue for Beta can be realized in the future. An approach which R11 experiences excludes other innovations that aim to improve Beta itself. As a result, internal improvements

or innovations are not captured. Further, R11 points out that the funded client innovations with a corresponding business plan are only one opportunity, but how there should be more.

R12 adds to this difference between the personal definition of innovation and the organizational one. R12 describes how the organization is very solid in the need for innovation to be done together with clients, which R12 does not perceive as something negative. However, R12 points out how this leads to the organization seldomly self-investing in ideas. R12 further expresses how collaborating with clients for innovation has the positive side of the customer buy-in and the potential to create a joint venture, but also expresses how there are also innovative ideas that do not directly have a client connection, but that are still very good ideas. These ideas become difficult to explore according to R12.

4.2 ENABLERS AND DISABLERS FOR EMPLOYEE-DRIVEN INNOVATION (EDI)

The enablers and disablers for employee-driven innovation (EDI) include both the company participants' experiences of factors that they experience have had an enabling or disabling impact on EDI.

4.2.1 CULTURAL FACTORS

Cultural factors that participants experience enable or disable employee-driven innovation (EDI) include the internal network, an open culture, the approach to new ideas, engagement, organizational structures and processes, internal communication, and language as important factors.

R1 highlights the network of people as one of the greatest resources available within Beta for innovation. R3, R5, R7, R8, and R11 also point out the internal network as important for innovation work and reach out within the internal network to leverage knowledge from other colleagues. R1 further describes that an open culture is something that makes innovation experiences more fun and describes an open culture as an environment when people feel confident in pitching their ideas without feeling stupid or being afraid of someone judging their idea. A culture that R1 also identifies as beneficial for innovation since it enables the discussion of different ideas, something that R1 points out as crucial for innovation. R5 also points out an open culture as important for EDI, and for R5 this open culture is experienced by a cultural environment where new ideas are listened to. However, R5 highlights how all employees might not be aware of this open culture. R7 also touches upon the openness of the culture and adds that creating a positive way of sharing failures is important. This to recognize failures and aim to create valuable learning experiences. An example R7 describes is having "Mistake Mondays" (R7), where the Monday meeting has a failure focus. The manager R14 also points out a friendly climate as important for EDI, a climate where everything is allowed including mistakes. A climate that R14 aims to foster by a coaching leadership style and encouraging feedback.

The approach to new ideas is also highlighted as an important factor in enabling EDI through the organizational culture. R2 points out an open mindset as a key aspect of an organizational culture that is beneficial for innovation. R2 expresses that at times, new ideas are met with negativity or a response implying that those ideas have already been tested before. Negativity that R2 finds has a negative impact on the organizational culture. Instead, meeting new ideas with curiosity and wanting to learn more by asking questions is something that R2 believes would enable the culture to become more innovation-friendly. This by creating some sort of cultural baseline, about how new ideas should be met. R2 exemplifies this with one employee having a negative approach to a new idea, which will quite quickly kill the idea, and future ideas to come. R9 also expresses the willingness to listen and engage in others' ideas as important and also describes how there will always be those people who have a negative approach to new ideas, but how those people run the risk of killing the future new ideas. R9 expresses it as

> "You know there are always people that think that we have been doing this before and this is how we usually do it and that's a killer for creativeness and innovation." (R9)

R2 further expresses how there today are channels or different forums for reaching out to colleagues to ask questions, but R2 mentions how these channels are something that the participant has never used. R2 expresses how there is a fear of posting a question or reaching out in these channels due to a large number of colleagues part of them and the fear of embarrassment. In relation, R2 highlights the need to create a safe space for enabling employees to ask questions and share knowledge. R10 furthermore highlights engagement as important for an innovative organizational culture. R10 expresses how the organizational culture does not reflect innovation or creativity due to a lack of engagement from employees. R10 describes how no one wants to feel like a "one-man show" (R10) and how there are always the same two to three employees that are engaged in innovation activities. R10 is currently driving an innovation activity initiative and explains how reminders and invitations to this workshop have been sent out for more than one month, but how there are still only nine ideas submitted to the workshop, from a team including 80 people. R10 further adds how several of the ideas are submitted by the same person and how this lack of engagement does not foster an innovation culture. A lack of engagement from colleagues that R10 finds sad.

Furthermore, the organizational structure and processes are perceived as disablers for EDI. R2, R10, and R13 express how the characteristics of a large firm with structures and processes for things are something that hinders a creative culture. R10 expresses how this is experienced by the time and personal motivation required for an initiative or idea to move upwards in the organization. R10 expresses it as

> "You feel like a little ant in front of an elephant." (R10)

In relation, R2 also sheds light on the differences between different employees and how some might gain inspiration by being freer, but how some, on the other hand, might lack the structure and feel more lost with no sense of direction. R6 also finds the organizational structure, with a clear hierarchy, as a barrier to an innovative culture. Further, R6 expresses how an innovative culture has to permeate everything within an organization, not only the organizational structure. R6 mentions branding, external communication, and internal communication as important aspects and describes how aiming to create and maintain a culture beneficial for innovation needs to shine through in the company's branding to external stakeholders, but also internally. Examples that R6 highlights are the design of internal communication including documents, and the presence of meeting templates for certain meetings. Things that R6 does not perceive as reflecting or creating an innovative culture. R6 expresses it as

> "The communication should not be signaling security and trust necessarily, but more creativity and the human factor." (R6)

R10 and R13 also highlight internal communication as important for culture and innovation and adds how there is a lack of communication about innovation within the organization. R10 exemplifies with the idea competition and how there is a lack of communication about what happens to the ideas that win the competition and get funding. Further, R10 adds that it might be communicated, but how the communication gets lost in the internal information flows. Something that R10 perceives as enhancing the discrepancy between what is said to be done and what is actually done. R6 further expresses how the language utilized within the organization becomes important for the culture. R6 exemplifies this by referring to the wording used in different job ads and highlights how different wording might appeal more to certain people. Further, how a language where more masculine or conservative lingo should be removed and where a more clean language is used is perceived as more inclusive.

4.2.2 MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

Management support is experienced in different ways, including the management of ideas and the encouragement of employees to participate in innovation. Several of the participants highlight management as supportive of new ideas and R10 highlights how when having an idea for an innovation activity, management welcomed the idea and supported the idea by involving further management and arranging the time for the activity to be discussed. R1 expresses a lack of ownership for innovation work. Pointing out that there often is a manager formally responsible for the innovation project, idea, or work, but still experiences a struggle to find someone to take the responsibility for it and manage it onward. So both finding it challenging to get the acceptance from management, but also finding someone willing to take ownership of innovation ideas or projects and drive them forward. Also relating this lack of ownership to the limited time both managers and employees have to dedicate to innovation work internally. R3 similarly describes how there are many ideas for innovation or improvements in different ways, but how having innovation leaders that can pick up these ideas and manage them onwards would be valuable. A role that R3 is not able to take on due to the high workload.

Also in relation to management support, R11 highlights how the organization and many employees work in different silos and how for innovation projects, employees working more holistically and across different departments and silos would be beneficial to bridge the gaps between different departments and areas of expertise. Bridging the gap between these silos is something that R11 perceives as important for innovation as it has the potential to combine experiences and knowledge in new ways.

R1 further highlights that one key aspect for management is to encourage employees to participate in innovation work, this by urging everyone to participate and by enabling them the time needed to do so. Something that R1 perceives as needed to be initiated by management. R2 similarly expresses how managers need to encourage employees to share their knowledge internally and facilitate the forum for them to do so. The management support is something that R10 experiences as good and describes how management does support new ideas, however, points out areas of improvement when it comes to engagement from management. R10 explains how the closest team manager has never tried to even organize an after-work for the team, and R10 perceives it as hard to motivate others to participate when not participating yourself.

R3 describes the current management support as distant and refers to an innovation project where the involvement of management was present when ensuring that the project's budget was kept. R3 perceives the involvement in innovation rather occurring between different colleges or teams than with management. In addition, R10 mentions how the support from management is present in terms of the acceptance of different innovation initiatives, and R3 mentions how the involvement from management probably would have been more extensive if they had the time. R6 does not either experience a clear management involvement in innovation projects and highlights how innovation is not usually discussed, more than when interacting with the innovation department. However, R6 expresses how management might be supportive without knowing. This by creating an environment with room for discussion and where there are no stupid questions. R9 finds the management support more clear and perceives the support as open to new suggestions, both if it concerns a more radical idea or more of an incremental improvement. Management support that R9 finds crucial for the innovation culture and a prerequisite for employee-driven innovation. R9 expresses it as

> “They're very open. So that's, of course, a prerequisite for our innovation culture.” (R9)

R9 also highlights that there are leaders that could do even more to encourage innovation if they wanted to, by prioritizing the allocation of time for innovation activities.

R4 as a manager also adds how it would be beneficial to have a dedicated team working with innovation that also is provided the time and funding for it. R12 who also is a manager at Beta highlights how much of the support that management provides is facilitating further contacts within the internal network of colleagues to leverage the internal network. The

manager R14 also adds that the best way to support employees is to encourage self-leadership. This self-leadership gives the employees the confidence and space to drive initiatives, and not to the same extent be management dependent. A self-leadership that R14 strives for and aims to foster by not delivering answers, but rather asking questions and taking a step back. R15 who also is a manager highlights the importance of enabling employees to drive their own ideas and expresses it as

> "... oftentimes it's an enthusiast and without that enthusiast the idea is nothing." (R15)

4.2.3 FORMAL ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS

The formal organizational factors include several different aspects expressed from participants including the organizational vision and strategy, capturing of employee-driven innovation, resources, incentives, and innovation education.

Organizational vision and strategy

R1 and R6 express the need for a clear organizational strategy for innovation. R6 expresses how top management needs to decide on an innovation strategy, and if they truly want to be an innovative company, and then formulate a strategy to guide the journey to become innovative. R6 expresses it as

> "You know you need to decide that you want to really be an innovative company and then that needs to be a central strategy…" (R6)

Something that R6 experiences as lacking today. R1 describes how this strategy could provide the employees with a sense of direction given by management. Furthermore, describing that this will enable the ideas coming from employees to be better, as a result of them being in line with the organizational strategy. Enabling employees to have the time to innovate is something that R1 perceives as more or less useless if there is no overall communicated innovation strategy to guide the direction. R3 further describes an innovation project and points out that the common vision and goal for that project was what created energy and encouragement to participate in the project. In this case, R2 describes how the shared vision and goal created motivation. R3 expresses it as

> "I mean everybody got pretty excited and everyone could see that everyone had the same picture in mind, where we were going and there was a real positive energy." (R3)

Capturing employee-driven innovation

For actions aiming to capture employee-driven innovation (EDI) R1 highlights that the idea competition is one mechanism for capturing EDI. However, expresses how innovation should not be a once-a-year type of thing, rather something continuous. R1's perception is that more time would enable a more continuous innovation approach. R7 highlights how Beta should

not have too much of a focus on scalability and replicability when aiming to identify EDI. R7 expresses how scalability could be beneficial for an innovation to spread, but how it has the potential to be an innovation, without being scalable. For replicability, R7 highlights how that in some cases might also be beneficial, but also how replicability on the other hand might not be desired for a company aiming to capitalize on innovation, referring to the possibility for competitors to imitate. R7 concludes that when Beta aims to capture EDI the scope should be broader, and not necessarily limited to scalability and replicability.

The managers R4 and R12 explain how an open mindset is one of the most important aspects for management to capture EDI, and further highlights the idea competition as a more formal way of capturing ideas from employees. However, emphasizes how it is important that employees bringing ideas to management get a good feeling. This good feeling can be aimed for by approaching employees with curiosity and questions according to R4 and R14. R4 expresses

> "Treat people so that they will share the next idea as well." (R4)

Resource allocation - time

Time as a resource has been highlighted and emphasized by all participants. R1 expresses how, for the formal innovation idea contest, R1 found it frustrating to find the time for everyone to participate in the project team. This is since all employees are allocated 100% to client projects, resulting in innovation projects allocated to the time in between clients' projects, during lunch hours, or after office hours. R5 and R6 also identify time as a barrier to participating in formal innovation activities. R1 expresses it as a shame that the same time allocated to innovating for clients/others is not able to be spent innovating within the organization itself. Having to fit innovation work into these time slots and after working hours is also something that R1 perceives as creating stress. R1 also expresses how more time, which for the organization also corresponds to money, would be needed to facilitate a more continuous approach to employee-driven innovation and capturing ideas from employees. In relation, R1 also expresses how employees need to be able to spend time on innovation projects, and that all innovation projects should not necessarily be funded by clients. Actions that R1 believes have a signaling value and that send a message from management, showing that they want employees to participate in innovation work, and doing so by providing them the time needed to be able to do so. R6 also expresses how it would be great if employees never had 100% of their time dedicated to client projects.

R2 further highlights the aspect of time as the most important resource to be able to utilize for innovation work. Also highlighting the nature of a consulting firm, R2 mentions how time has to be allocated to clients' projects, but how time is something that can be prioritized for different activities, both client projects, and internal innovation work. Being able to freely prioritize the time and find time for innovation work is something that R2 highlights as important, and is something that R2 perceives as common for colleagues to be able to do as well. R2 also highlights that currently, all time is spent on being innovative within the clients'

organizations, and then when aiming to innovate internally, there is a lack of inspiration to do so. Something that R2 relates to the lack of time, and with more time, R2 also expresses how internal innovation work also could be a priority. A drawback of the limited time for innovation that R2 mentions is also that being a part of an innovation project from start to end, often is not possible, since clients' projects or other things with higher priority come in the way. What is possible is rather to be a part of certain chosen parts of projects.

R3 and R5 describe the lack of time to innovate by describing how the high workload allows only for focusing on what is needed today, rather than enabling a future-oriented focus. R3 expresses it as

> "You're always putting out fires, and that kind of restricts the ability to be innovative because you have to be here instead of maybe looking forward." (R3)

R11 further highlights how the acceptance from management to allocate time to innovation is related to where the potential future revenue will be allocated. R11 exemplifies by describing how allocating time for a client project based in another country is not encouraged since the potential revenue from that project will be allocated to that country and not to the country and business of the employee. R11 understands how that is part of allocating revenue to different business units from an organizational perspective, but does experience it as a barrier to innovation. R8 also sheds light on time and how the lack of time also affects the involvement of management in innovation. This is in line with R3. R8 perceives management as very busy and describes how managers are running teams that are too big. R8 suggests that creating smaller teams would enable managers to allocate more time to each individual, which in turn could enable personal development and more of a mentoring management support.

R4, R12, R14, and R15 who are managers at Beta also highlight the importance of and impact of time as a resource for employee-driven innovation. R4 describes how the experience of participating in innovation initiatives is fantastic and also adds how the tools needed to be able to do innovation projects are there, but what is missed is the time for it. R4 expresses sadness and explains how there really is no time to allocate to innovation today but wishes that there was. A lack of time which also affects the innovation projects where they are not always able to be realized or further worked on. R12 further highlights time by expressing how hours provided to clients is one of the most important KPIs and how as a result, internal innovation does not come naturally in a consultancy organization. R12 further describes that to free up time for internal innovation activities the manager is required to take a risk in doing so by freeing internal time to grow and be creative with an uncertain revenue stream. R12 expresses it as

> "So it's a risk I take and I will take that and it's important to take that chance." (R12)

Further, R12 describes the motivation for taking those risks as the focus on creating pride amongst the employees with Beta and offering employees the opportunity to grow and develop. R12 also adds that the expected or predicted value of this idea or innovation that is going to be allocated time is of course a part of the consideration as well.

Resource allocation - funding

For funding of innovation projects or activities R1 expresses how employees need to be able to spend time on innovation projects, and that all innovation projects should not necessarily be funded by clients. R7 also finds it difficult to get funding to do things without a customer contract. R4 and R12 as managers also highlight how clients are a key in funding innovation. R4 describes how some ideas are good, but how when clients are on board is when innovation really happens. This since the ideas have the possibility of being realized, because the customer is ready to take on the solution. If not having a client onboard, an idea can be very much in the future, and the customer might not be ready for it.

Incentives

For incentives to innovate R2 describes how there currently are no incentives provided by management to participate in internal innovation work, however, highlights how allocated time for innovation work could be one potential incentive that management could provide. Something that R2 thinks could drive engagement and participation in innovation work. R9 also expresses how

> "...you can make things very fun and festive, but if people don't have time or they constantly feel pressured to do something else at the same time, then the feeling will not be there anyway". (R9)

R9 also mentions money as a potential motivator for some and highlights that what motivates individuals differs. However, emphasizing that within the consultancy industry time is an important resource, that could motivate or incentivize employees to participate in internal innovation activities. Furthermore, in relation to management support, R9 highlights how managers could incentivize innovation to a larger extent by reflecting innovation work as beneficial in the utilized goals and KPIs.

R4 as a manager adds how management aims to praise employees when proposing good ideas or something extraordinary, so through goodwill. The manager R12 also highlights how incentives might be something to consider, but how currently the incentive that employees have to engage in innovation lies in their own drive to learn and develop. The manager R15 also highlights praise as an incentive and further adds how some business units or regions do have sales bonuses that can be allocated to ideas that get commercialized.

Innovation education

R2 highlights that some knowledge around innovation and innovation work might be beneficial for employees that do not have an educational background including innovation in

some way. R2 relates to not knowing the organizational definition of innovation and highlights how internal innovation education about how Beta views innovation and how innovation is worked with internally could benefit the organization's innovation. Mentioning how to educate about Beta's innovation process and not only how to get new ideas, but also how to realize them could be an important part of this education. R1 believes that this education could build engagement and expresses it as

> "I think that it would build engagement and lower the step to be part of innovation. Because it is like you know very blurry and people are like ooh this is scary. It would give people more control and feel like they can participate in this." (R2)

R8 also mentions how education within design and design thinking could be beneficial for employee-driven innovation. Furthermore, how it could be beneficial to understand innovation from a psychological perspective to further understand the different stages of creativity and that the different phases are a natural part of innovation. Something that R8 perceives as important for employees to feel confident in innovation work. Further, R8 expresses how having a baseline of education related to innovation also could create a sense of awareness within Beta. An awareness that R8 expresses as

> "...open new opportunities because people are more aware of looking for opportunities because a lot of innovation is about opportunities" (R8)

4.2.4 CUSTOMER ORIENTATION FACTORS

R3 expresses that a lot of ideas for innovation arise from clients' involvement and expresses it as

> "Yeah, I mean I guess most of our innovations come from the customer or the customer perspective or from their customers too like it's kind of coming from the root and up." (R3)

R3 also points out that more customer involvement in innovation is wanted, this since the largest portion of ideas come from customers. Finding and enabling ways to co-create with customers is something that R3 thinks could benefit innovation. R10 and the manager R15 also highlight how many ideas emerge from customers and when together in customer meetings discussing future projects together.

The manager R12 also mentions the characteristics of a consultancy firm and describes how client validation is needed. Further R12 highlights how most of the innovation work is done in collaboration with clients and how there has to be a tight link between their needs and Beta's way of operating, emphasizing a joint venture as the absolute best way of doing this.

4.3 FORMAL INNOVATION ACTIVITIES

The formal innovation activities include the idea contest, training, innovation projects and also include the participants' expressed motivation for participating in these formal innovation activities.

4.3.1 IDEA CONTEST

R1 perceives the idea contest as a great experience and experienced it as a structured activity where there was a clear program for the contest where the ideas competed to get picked out and funded. R1 adds how there was a lot of engagement from many different departments and countries, also highlighting how the employees participating of course had an interest in innovation and wanted to be a part of the competition and innovate together. R1 expresses it as

> "So that's I guess also part of why it was a good experience because everyone there wanted to be a part of it." (R1)

Furthermore, R1 highlights how it was perceived as difficult to find the time for the ideas part of the competition and also to find ownership for the ideas. R2 also highlights the idea competition as a formal innovation activity and describes it as a once-a-year event where ideas are developed to be able to create something that can be sold to clients in the future. Further, R2 describes how, through workshops, a large number of ideas submitted by employees were consolidated into main themes to further workaround. After approximately 6 months' work, the aim was to end up with two to three ideas that could be submitted to the idea competition. R2 describes how the participation in deriving ideas was more sporadic and when time allowed.

R6 touches on the idea contest as well, but as a new joiner to Beta, R6 has not participated in the contest. R6 does however express how the contest could develop and potentially increase the motivation for employees to participate by creating different themes to focus on for each contest, but also to give something in return to the employees contributing with ideas. R6 explains further by describing how employees would want something in return when contributing ideas to the contest, something that is not included currently. R9 also mentions how the organization should consider giving something in return to the employees submitting ideas to the contest. Further describing how motivation is an entire theme of its own, and how it differs for every individual, but how an example could be arranging a full day of innovation activities such as workshops and discussion to in that sense give back. R9 points out that it does not have to be monetary, it could rather be learnings, and challenges, but also the time for employees to develop their submitted ideas. R7, R9, and R10 also highlight the idea contest as a formal innovation activity. R9 further expresses how the contest is well intended, but how its lack of priority makes it difficult. Further describing how the client projects are the number one priority and how the ideas then become dependent on people spending time outside of working hours or leveraging people without a current client assignment. R9 also points out that speed is an important aspect for these ideas to move forward, but highlights

how too little time is spent on the initial data collection to truly understand and evaluate these ideas and expresses it as

> "They are very quick and dirty products." (R9)

4.3.2 TRAINING

R1 highlights an internal training aimed at improving teamwork. An aspect that R1 perceives as important since a lot of focus is on people and expresses it as

> "If we work better together, if we improve the way we work better together there, that's also a way to innovate." (R1)

R2 expresses how more education and training would be beneficial to encourage employees to participate in innovation work. R2 expresses it as

> "Because I think that it would build engagement and lower the step to be part of innovation. Because it is like you know very blurry and people are like ooh this is scary. It would give people more control and feel like they can participate in this." (R2)

4.3.3 INNOVATION PROJECTS

Innovation projects based on insights from client interactions are a formal innovation activity that R5, R12, R4, R14, and R15 highlight. These projects are conducted in collaboration with a client and as highlighted by R15 most projects arise from client conversations and interactions.

4.3.4 MOTIVATION FOR PARTICIPATING IN FORMAL INNOVATION ACTIVITIES

R1 explains how the choice to participate in the idea contest lies very much in curiosity and how, as new to Beta, the participant had not been a part of the contest before. R1 expresses how another reason for participating was to get to know new people and like-minded people also engaged in innovation. In addition, the idea worked on was something that R1 found interesting. R2 further explains the motivation for participating in the idea contest as a personal motivation to always evolve and move forward. Also a will to always be a part of what is happening and staying up to date. Another aspect of the motivation to participate was also the perception of being able to add value to the idea contest. Something that R2 describes as a result of an educational background within innovation that creates confidence in the ability to add value to the contest. R5 adds how these formal innovation activities sometimes are part of meetings or conferences for example, and then there is no real personal motivation behind participating. But when the engagement in formal innovation lies outside and is not incorporated into regular meetings or conferences, R5 finds it hard to allocate time to these activities. R10 also highlights curiosity as the main motivation for participating in formal innovation activities, and R10 also sees them as an opportunity to learn more about

Beta's view on innovation and how innovation activities are conducted. The manager R15 adds how engaging in these formal innovation activities is a given part of being a part of Beta, and how engagement is something that is informally included in the role of a consultant. R4 who also has a management role explains the involvement in innovation work by describing an initiated innovation plan. The creation and realization of the innovation plan is delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic but is aimed to create a roadmap for the office's innovation work including activities and happenings throughout the year.

4.4 INFORMAL INNOVATION ACTIVITIES

The informal innovation activities include the participants' view on informal innovation, the coffee machine and after work, discussion sessions, daily stand-ups, teamwork, client offerings, and Friday questionnaires

4.4.1 PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCE OF INFORMAL INNOVATION

R1 describes informal innovation as something that can be recognized by management or not and exemplifies that sometimes people pitch ideas that get picked up by management. Or there might not be an established way of taking care of these ideas and some might feel discouraged while others continue and do not give up on the idea. R1 expresses it as

> "It could be both recognized or not, at least that is what I've seen. Sometimes if people pitch ideas they get picked up because maybe they were really great and sometimes it can be that management doesn't care at all. Right? Or they don't have a system for taking care of ideas, and they don't know what to do with them, and then that gives very poor feedback to the one who pitches their ideas, which could either be discouraging and they quit, they won't give any new ideas again. Or if they are real champions and believe it anyway. Some people continue it even without management's approval." (R1)

R3 describes the informal innovations mostly steaming from customers and describes it as

> "I mean most of our things come from the client-side. There could be, yeah we don't get kind of anything from the top, only when concerning regulations, laws, and rules." (R3)

For R6, informal innovation is when doing things in groups and when relaxing. R6 expresses

> "To be very private when you're in the shower. Often the ideas come to you, and that's because of the tactile. The water is flowing over and you relax. And then something clicks in your brain, something you've been working on and it's the same. It's similar in a group, I would think. I mean can't really be forced and you need to create a space where you feel relaxed and safe to start having ideas." (R6)

Something that R6 also describes can happen during a walk. R9 describes informal innovations as micro-innovations and refers to the small things that are improved in the day-to-day work, but that might not be thought of as innovation necessarily. R10 views informal innovation activities as those that are self-started and where no planning is done in advance. R10 highlights examples such as a fika, sketching on the whiteboard, or the coffee machine chats as examples and expresses how the motivation to participate in those informal activities depends on the personal connection, but also the lack of expectations related to delivery. For R1,1 the informal innovation and related activities occur mainly in random interactions with colleagues or when ideating new client projects together with customers. R11 further highlights how the motivation to participate stems from wanting to develop and learn. R11 also highlights the experience of participating in informal innovation, especially in the development of new client offerings as shifting from the often short-term focus to the more long-term focus. R11 further describes how the perception is that much focus lies short term as a result of wanting to sustain current revenue and also as a result of the KPIs and goals related to occupancy rate for consultants. However, R11 experiences that engaging in informal innovation might not have as much of that short-term focus, but rather has the possibility to create solutions and innovation for the future more long term. Engaging in these potentially more disruptive innovations is mentioned by R11 as a motivation for participation.

The manager R4 describes informal innovation as small changes in the everyday work and highlights that if that is included in innovation depends on how innovation is defined. R15, R6 and R9 mention making small changes every day as a part of informal innovation activities. R4 further describes how informal innovation is to try each and every day to make things better and exemplifies replacing paper documentation with an Excel sheet for example. Similarly, R15 perceives the constant improvement and drive to make things more efficient is inhibited in being a consultant. R9 further describes these incremental improvements as micro-innovations. R4 expresses it as

> "It happens, but you do not think of it as innovation or change." (R4)

R14 who also has a management role describes informal innovation as needing to be supported by a culture that encourages innovation and thinking outside of the box, and highlights that in such a culture informal innovation will succeed.

4.4.2 THE COFFEE MACHINE

R6 expresses that the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about informal innovation is the coffee machine, and also after work. R7, R10, R11, and the manager R15 also mention the coffee machine as an informal activity. R6 further expresses how informal innovation occurs when people get together and meet physically in an open space. Further, R6 points out that the geographical flexibility in terms of the possibility to work remotely that Beta provides is great and provides a lot of freedom. However, R6 explains how it is hard to know when everybody is in the office. Suggesting that deciding on two hours every week when

everyone is in office could be a good idea, to get the routine of meeting up continuously. R6 expresses that

> "You need to feel safe in order to have ideas and be comfortable sharing them. So I think it's really important to actually meet." (R6)

R6 further describes how the motivation to participate in these informal activities comes from knowing that other colleagues are joining and that there is a mix of people included. In relation highlights how such initiatives not only should be limited to single business units. R7 also points out the coffee machine and expresses

> "Coffee machine as a central point for information sharing at the office." (R7)

Also emphasizing the importance of getting people into the office from time to time, and that the motivation to participate in the coffee machine discussion comes from the drive to create a helpful culture.

4.4.3 AFTER WORK

After work is highlighted as an informal innovation activity and both R6 and R10, and just as for the coffee machine they highlight this informal innovation as occurring when people get together. R10 further explains these social activities, such as an after-work as important to enable people to get to know each other and describes social activities as something that creates a glue between people. A glue that R10 points out as very important as it makes people feel less shy and facilitates an open environment that hopefully fosters idea-sharing. In relation to after-work, R10 highlights that it is important for these activities to not take up too much personal time and that the organization sees the value of these types of activities, and as a result, allocates time during working hours. R10 suggests arranging the after-work, or social activities at 2 PM rather than at 5 PM to enable people to participate.

4.4.4 DISCUSSION SESSION

R2 highlights how there have been digital sessions for discussing questions together with colleagues. An informal activity that R2 found valuable for sharing knowledge. When arranging something similar R2 does not have an exact idea of how but does highlight that the initiative needs to be a success from the start. Something that R2 explains as

> "I don't know how it would be organized, but I think that the most important is that if you would launch something like this within our firm, because if it is a failure from the first session, where like three people attend, and there is no drive, then it would be hard to drive future engagement". (R2)

Recommending to go big from the start to create a buzz internally.

4.4.5 DAILY STAND-UPS

R3 expresses how informal innovation, through knowledge sharing, occurs in the team's daily stand-ups. During those meetings R3 describes how potential questions are discussed, future projects are presented and coordinated, and how it acts as a daily get-together for the team. R3 further describes how the motivation for participating in these informal innovation activities lies in the idea that things always can be improved. R3 expresses that

> "I mean it's kind of my main thought everywhere. I mean, it's outside work, it's at home, it's everywhere and I think I love that with innovation. I love new technologies, I love changes, I mean, I even can enjoy when you have a restructuring within the company and you get new roles."(R3)

4.4.6 TEAMWORK

R2 explains how informal innovation has occurred when working as a team on a project. R2 describes how when working together with others and discussing how things are done, reflected upon has been how different things are done currently and how they can be done in a better way. R2 describes how often, when working in teams, ideas for improvements have been able to be realized. This as a result of the different competencies within the team. In relation, R2 highlights how this has become more difficult during the pandemic, when these more informal discussions do not occur as naturally, due to the digital setting. R2 highlights these informal innovation activities as beneficial for employee-driven innovation since they become more ad hoc and free. R2 expresses how these settings do not have any established goals or KPIs and therefore there is no pressure or demand to identify for example a certain number of ideas. R2 expresses it as

> "I think it makes people not think that they are coming up with ideas" (R2).

Something that makes R2 perceive the informal activities as easier and as activities creating a larger satisfaction for the employees participating since the innovation or ideas is not something that is expected. R3 also includes the aspect or activity of teamwork when describing informal innovation activities and describes how an initiative has been to do calendar booking with colleagues to get the opportunity to discuss ideas. R5 and R7 further identify informal innovation in daily activities such as customer conversations and point out that it also occurs when in teams discussing clients' challenges and planning for client projects. R7 expresses how getting the team together can be done by hosting breakfasts with different themes, for example, to facilitate getting the team together, encouraging people to join, and having an idea of what should be expected when joining having a theme for every occasion. R9 expresses it as

> "That is usually informal but very effective ways of working with innovation within a company." (R9)

when referring to meeting up with colleagues and sharing experiences from different client projects.

The manager, R4, adds how more team initiatives would be beneficial and prioritized if the time allowed. R4 believes in gathering people and providing them the courage and tools to do so. Gathering a diverse group of people with different experiences, knowledge, and backgrounds and combining that with an environment where there are no stupid ideas is where R4 sees potential for employee-driven innovation. R12 who also has a management role also highlights how lunch meetings are one way in which the team of consultants meets to discuss and share experiences. The manager R14 also highlights sharing knowledge and experiences as a team as an informal innovation activity and in relation to where this occurs today and where it will occur in the future R14 highlights the remote or hybrid setting as a challenge. R14 expresses how where or how these informal team activities will occur is still unknown and being constantly explored. Despite the exploration of these settings currently, R14 points out the importance of meeting and the synergies that the interaction creates.

4.4.7 CREATING NEW CLIENT OFFERINGS

R1, R6, and R10 highlight how working on new client offerings is an informal innovation activity. An activity where colleagues get together in teams, and make use of their experiences and knowledge from prior experiences, by identifying and coming up with new ideas for how something that has been done for another client, might be beneficial in an offering for another client. Making use of the internal network of experiences, R1 expresses how this usually results in a lot of new ideas of how to do things differently. R7 and R10 also add how customer meetings can be an informal innovation activity and how these meetings often are what sparks these new ideas. Something that engages the internal network within Beta to further discuss and share how prior experiences and knowledge can be utilized to solve this new client challenge.

The managers R14 and R15 also point out the creation of new client offerings as an informal innovation activity and mention how consultative selling often sparks innovative discussions with clients. Discussions that R14 further explains, activate the internal network to combine experiences to create these new offerings.

4.4.8 FRIDAY QUESTIONNAIRES

R4, a manager within Beta, describes how a question to employees is sent out every Friday, which is answered in a Mentimeter. R4 then compiles the answers and shares them within the team. R4 explains that this informal innovation initiative was initiated after the employees were sent to their home offices due to the Covid-19 pandemic in order to keep the togetherness of the employees within the team. R4 describes the questionnaires as

> "And so the questions were very different. 'What would you like to see in an office space?' For example 'What would be important for you to have in the office when you get back?' for one example. And one Friday I think I wrote

> something like `Is there any new habit you have started with when starting to work at home and will you keep it when we go back to the office?'." (R4)

Sending out Friday questionnaires are meant to keep the community feel of the organization through the pandemic.

5. ANALYSIS

In the following chapter, the findings derived from the semi-structured interviews with employees and managerial staff of Beta are compared with the previous literature within the field. The chapter is structured by the innovation definition and employee-driven innovation, enabling or disabling factors for employee-driven innovation, and the contribution of formal and informal innovation activities.

5.1 THE INNOVATION DEFINITION AND EMPLOYEE-DRIVEN INNOVATION

Not knowing the organizational definition of innovation was common for both employees and managers, with no difference depending on the role. The organizational definition is not defined within Beta, although there are clear requirements of what criteria need to be met in order to fit within and receive funding from the innovation portfolio. For example, the idea and future solution needs to be scalable and commercializable. Employees mentioned that the innovation definition at Beta is very client-focused, especially considering commercializable value for customers. Although many employees and managers consider innovation as more than solely creating new customer value, that innovation can be more than revolutionizing and large changes. Small improvements were mentioned to be part of the definition, and in addition, the interviewees expressed that those smaller changes were not always considered to be innovations both by the organization and the employees themselves. The definition of innovation expressed by both employees and managers reflect the different degrees of innovation in the definition as highlighted by, amongst others, Rothwell (1994) and Goffin and Mitchell (2017). Many employees initially expressed during interviews that they did not work with innovation in their day-to-day tasks. Although after consideration, employees expressed that they did work with innovation after all through more informal activities in day-to-day activities, such as participating in discussions centered around ideas and conveying contacts in their network to help connect employees with innovation ideas with the right people to develop the idea further or to help with collecting the right competencies for the innovation project.

As highlighted by Damanpour and Schneider (2006), the definition of innovation is not unified and does differ depending on the context which also is reflected in the individual definition and organizational definition of innovation expressed by the Beta employees and managers. For employee-driven innovation, this can imply that when the definition of innovation differs amongst employees and managers, innovation work may not be recognized within the organization or among employees. This exemplifies how formal and informal innovation activities differ, where formal innovation activities are widely recognized to be innovation. This is due to the formal activities fitting the unofficial organizational definition of innovation with an emphasis on creating new customer value, and they are also initiated by management, as described by Høyrup (2012). Informal innovation activities, on the other hand, do not fit within the recognized definition of innovation within the organization. Although, the informal innovation activities fit within the personal definition of innovation which in the performed interviews was found to be a wider definition with an emphasis that innovation implies creating new value in one way or another, not only for the client. The

informal innovation activities present within Beta were related more to the wider definition of innovation presented in the literature review, incorporating different kinds of value creation (Damanpour and Schneider, 2006; Goffin and Mitchell, 2017; Baregheh et al., 2009). Further, informal innovation activities were also more related to incremental innovation, which in relation to the organizational definition of innovation was not as recognized as being part of the innovation portfolio due to an organizational view of innovation as strictly customer focused, scalability, and replicability. Furthermore, the network conceptualization (Tidd and Bessant, 2009) of innovation was widely present within the organization.

Formal innovation activities and their related interactions can be related to engineered innovation networks (Tidd and Bessant, 2009) within the organization. Informal innovation activities and informal interactions on the other hand can be related to emergent networks (Tidd and Bessant, 2009), which highlights how important both types of networks are for innovation. Many employees expressed the feeling of no pressure or expectation to perform or produce ideas or deliverables that occur in informal interactions and are part of informal activities, which makes it easier and more fun to innovate. Also, for the motivation to drive innovation projects employees were more passionate about working on their own innovation initiatives than participating in formal innovation activities. Employees expressed that their main driver for participating in formal and informal innovation activities stems from them considering innovation to be fun, as a result of innovation activities being different from operational tasks. Also, meeting, interacting, and working with new people within the organization was one driver to participate in innovation activities, further reflecting innovation as a network (Tidd and Bessant, 2009).

5.2 THE ENABLING FACTORS FOR STIMULATING EMPLOYEE-DRIVEN INNOVATION

As for the theoretical framework, the enabling factors for stimulating employee-driven innovation are divided into the overarching factors; cultural factors, management support, formal organizational factors, and customer orientation. Based on the findings of the study, the cultural enabling factors, together with the management support factors in terms of time to innovate, were most frequently mentioned by Beta employees and managers as enabling for employee-driven innovation.

Cultural factors

Several cultural factors presented in previous literature were prevalent in the empirical findings. The ability to share ideas and openly discuss improvements described as an open culture and a positive approach toward new ideas was the most commonly mentioned cultural enabling factor among interviewees. Related to previous literature presented, the empirical finding of openness within the organizational culture relates to several factors presented by Amundsen et al., (2014). The respondents shared that the possibility to speak up about ideas without feeling stupid or afraid of consequences was important for innovation, as it enables the idea to be refined and evolve from its original form. Being able to speak up both requires a form of trust between employees and managers to be present as well as a feeling of security

and tolerance of disagreement (Amundsen et al., 2014). On the other hand, according to the empirical findings, a lack of openness would contribute to either good ideas not being brought up within the organization, or pursuing bad innovations. This as a result of the development of ideas that were accepted without being refined to fit the need better, due to employees' valuable input not being voiced as insights were kept for themselves in fear of being embarrassed or discouraged. Therefore, creating openness within the organizational culture is enabling for stimulating employee-driven innovation as it highlights three out of eight cultural characteristics described in previous literature (Amundsen et al., 2014).

A factor within the culture that was mentioned often as enabling innovation was having an internal network in order to speak with the right person when having an innovation idea and leveraging colleagues' knowledge and experiences. The interviewees also emphasized having the ability to speak with their manager about their innovation ideas and always being received positively. This empirical finding fits the cooperation factor presented by Amundsen et al. (2014). Although many respondents experienced that their ideas were received with a positive and curious attitude, the manager was not always inclined to be engaged and invest themselves in the idea as a buy-in. The actions most often taken by the manager was referring the employee to 'the right person' within their network. Some managers also investigated the ability to work on the innovation idea during working hours, if the incentive of creating customer value and revenue was present for them in the idea. Relating this empirical finding to the Amundsen et al., (2014) cultural characteristics, it arguably could be linked to the cooperation factor. Further, a dimension within the empirical findings that is not present in the Amundsen et al., (2014) framework is how employees find it important for cooperation among each other to occur cross-functionally. Respondents mentioned organizing informal groups working cross-functionally with for example weekly discussions to enable innovation within the organization. This to break organizational silos and facilitate collaboration between colleagues with different competencies.

Furthermore, an additional dimension of the cultural enabling factors that is not included in prior research and the theoretical framework is the importance of internal communication and language. This was mentioned in conjunction with the organizational structure being hierarchical and creating a barrier for employee-driven innovation, further discussed in formal organizational factors below. Three employees highlighted internal communication as important for an innovative organizational culture in different dimensions. R6 reasons that internal branding and communication are as important as external communication to stakeholders, such as considering the design of documents and templates to communicate creativity and the human factor to enhance the innovative culture. In addition, R10 and R13 highlighted a lack in communication about how the winning ideas of the formal organizational innovation activities are pursued and what happened with them. Another dimension of cultural factors that was not present in the previous literature is to consider how for example job roles are worded, as it might appeal to different people as highlighted by R6 and have an effect on the innovative culture. Also, considering and eliminating masculine and conservative lingo would enable the culture to become more inclusive and consequently enabling innovation, according to R6.

The cultural factor of employee well-being described by Amundsen et al., (2014) and Huhtala and Parzefall (2007) was not confirmed within the empirical findings, however well-being was mentioned by employees in relation to informal innovation activities and the lack of time to be innovative. Amundsen et al., (2014) describe that the well-being of employees would boost innovativeness, and although well-being can be related to the organizational factor of time, the well-being factor was not confirmed within the empirical data. Further factors included in the theoretical framework for cultural factors that were not confirmed within the empirical findings were the development orientation factor where innovation is perceived by employees as an essential part of their job. On the contrary, the majority of respondents did not perceive that innovation was part of their day-to-day tasks. Also, neither a sense of pride of working within the organization or autonomy of work tasks were confirmed, the latter as a majority of respondents expressed that they would like to work more with innovation although they lack the time and incentive to do so.

In summary, the enabling cultural factors highlighted by Amundsen et al. (2014) including cooperation orientation, openness and feeling of security were all identified within Beta as enablers for EDI. In addition, internal communication and language is added as a cultural enabler or disabler for EDI. Factors part of the theoretical framework that were not confirmed within the empirical findings include employee well-being, task autonomy, development orientation which was contradicted within the empirical findings and lastly, a sense of pride of working within the organization.

Management support

The management support factors are closely related to the cultural enabling factors. In relation to the management support as buy-in (Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010), included in the theoretical framework, the empirical findings suggest that Beta management supports receiving employees with positive reception when ideas are shared. Although, a disabler in the empirical findings suggests that the employees do not find that the manager's buy-in is enough. Beta employees perceived management as open to new ideas and highlighted the more accepting role of management (Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010), also as the decision of allocating time to an idea lies with management. However, the employees expressed how the more mentoring and continuous management involvement (Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010) was not as prevalent. Employees expressed how the management involvement was more about making sure that the budget was held, something that the respondents also tie back to a lack of time also for management. With more time, and smaller teams to manage, managers would be able to take more of a mentoring role as well. The empirical findings from the management interviews imply that mentorship is important for innovation. Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) express that mentorship is a perspective of management support.

Furthermore, time as when an employee approaches their manager with an idea and is allowed to work with the innovation during working hours was mentioned in relation to management support. Time was also often discussed in combination with profitability KPIs and the business model at Beta, which is further analyzed below as a formal organizational

factor. Although, it can be argued that the profitability KPIs and business model at Beta can have an impact on the management support as well. Thus since they provide incentives or disincentives for manager support concerning employee-driven innovation, especially in terms of management being able to allocate time to the exploration of ideas.

Formal organizational factors

Closely related to formal organizational factors is the empirical finding that Beta does not have a formal organizational definition of innovation, also without a clear innovation strategy. In previous literature, both Voxted (2018) and Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) highlight the importance of defining a scope for innovation or an innovation definition, along with a strategy of how to capture employee-driven innovation. The empirical findings support the enabling effect of having an innovation definition that clarifies the scope of innovation, as respondents imply that in some instances this has resulted in a lack of direction in innovation ideas. R1 portrays this lack of direction as even though more time were to be allocated to innovation for employees, it may not be fruitful since employees have no sense of direction. The positive effects of implementing a formal organizational definition of innovation implied in the empirical findings would be better ideas presented by employees since they are aware of what is in line with the organizational strategy. As a spectrum of innovation is implied within the previous literature, implementing a formal innovation definition that would produce ideas in line with the organizational strategy implies an incremental level of change within the organization, presented by Nagji and Tuff (2012) as improvements to existing products and services targeting existing customers. Therefore, Beta not having a pronounced definition of innovation arguably could open up for different degrees of innovation. If the innovation definition were to be clear, employees would propose ideas in line with the directive, implying more incremental changes. Thus, intentionally not having a formal definition might support radical innovation ideas being presented and not lost in incremental suggestions.

Furthermore, previous literature emphasizes having an organizational strategy for capturing employee-driven innovation (Voxted, 2018). The empirical findings portray how Beta has several mechanisms in place to capture employee-driven innovation. Capturing and stimulating employee-driven innovation within Beta can be interpreted as formal organizational activities such as an innovation idea contest that was mentioned in all the employee interviews. In addition, the management role at Beta implies an expressed responsibility of receiving the employees with a positive attitude so as not to discourage the employee to share ideas and thoughts moving forward. This expressed responsibility arguably can be linked to the mechanism for capturing employee-driven innovation, as ideas can be captured when the employees feel comfortable to share their ideas as they are met with curiosity and questions signaling interest from managers.

However, the employees emphasized that the time factor was a determinant for participation. In combination with culture, time was mentioned most frequently by respondents to be an enabler and vice versa the lack of time as a disabler. Time was mentioned by all of the employees to be a crucial factor. In previous literature, resource allocation was highlighted by

Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) as a formal organizational factor for enabling employee-driven innovation. Therefore, the empirical finding on the importance of time is in line with previous literature. All respondents emphasized the ability to distribute time to innovation, whereas a majority of employees expressed a lack of time to allocate to innovation activities. Time also is highlighted as a barrier to participation in formal innovation activities by R5 and R6. Mentioned in conjunction with time was employee well-being, which in previous literature is highlighted as a cultural characteristic that enhances innovativeness within the organization (Amundsen et. al., 2014; Huhtala and Parzefall, 2007). The lack of time created stress for the employees since they had to fit innovation into their tight schedules or work on them during leisure time. Therefore, the lack of time to distribute to innovation activities arguably can suppress innovation activity within Beta. Simultaneously, the employees expressed the joy of working with their own innovation ideas, especially through informal innovation activities. This empirical finding suggests that despite time pressure and having to do the work during leisure time, employees found that working on innovative ideas was joyful which can be related to, although not entirely in line with, the cultural aspect of employee well-being presented by Huhtala and Parzefall (2007).

In addition, other resources highlighted as important in the empirical findings were monetary resources such as funding of ideas. Funding in the empirical findings was expressed in combination with time because employees recognized that time equates to monetary resources for the organization. An additional empirical finding in line with the importance of resource allocation for employee-driven innovation was the challenge of receiving funding to develop the innovation idea. Respondents expressed that many innovation projects were funded by clients and that it was difficult to receive internal funding for innovation projects. Innovation projects are more likely to succeed if they are sponsored by customers than internally by sponsors for example. This can be connected to the unofficial innovation definition at Beta that is customer-centric highlighted prior.

Furthermore, previous literature highlights incentives as a formal organizational factor to stimulate employee-driven innovation. Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) emphasize that reward schemes should encourage EDI within the organization. Incentives were frequently brought up during interviews, where a dimension of management incentives was highlighted. KPIs and billable client hours were mentioned as a barrier to innovation mainly because they inhibit managers from allowing their employees to allocate time to innovation without negatively impacting the performance measures for the team. Consequently, the managers had to continuously consider how the performance would be affected before granting employees the ability to work on innovation projects during billable hours. Managers expressed that they need to consciously create a balance between the client project and innovation activities, which aligns with O'Reilly and Tushman (1997) description of exploitation of the traditional core business versus exploration of new opportunities. Furthermore, the individual incentives of employees were brought up during interviews, where few employees recognized that clear incentive schemes were present within Beta to stimulate employee-driven innovation. The incentives for employees to participate in formal and informal innovation activities mainly were to have fun, meet and collaborate with new

people within the organization, and do something outside of their regular operational tasks. Several employees also highlighted that monetary incentives could be an option, however, not a must, and instead suggested getting the time to develop their ideas as an incentive for employee-driven innovation.

An empirical finding reflected in the interviews that differs from previous literature on enablers for employee-driven innovation is the importance of innovation education, which arguably would be part of formal organizational factors. Innovation education is an enabling or disabling factor for EDI not explicitly included in the prior research for enabling factors performed by Amundsen et al. (2014), Buhl (2018), Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) and Voxted (2018) as presented in the theoretical framework. Employees highlighted that innovation education would be beneficial for employees with no previous educational background related to innovation to participate in innovation activities and the participants expressed the need to create a common baseline of knowledge and skills beneficial for innovation work. Competences that are highlighted as beneficial or necessary by the Beta employees when involved in innovation are project-specific domain knowledge, in combination with innovation leadership, design thinking, and the psychology behind creativity and change. R2 further adds how innovation education can include communicating and educating employees about the internal innovation process and how innovation is viewed and worked with internally. Providing innovation education, through training as a formal innovation activity, has the potential to create an awareness within the organization and enable employees to identify new innovative opportunities. Mentioned by the Beta employees is also how innovation education can enable EDI by creating a feeling of confidence for every employee to participate in innovation activities and make them feel confident in doing so. Innovation education is added as a formal organizational factor that can enable EDI and as mentioned, innovation education is tightly linked to training as a formal innovation activity, where training is the medium for the enabler of innovation education to be realized.

Organizational structure is an additional enabling or disabling factor for EDI not explicitly included in the prior research for enabling factors performed by Amundsen et al. (2014), Buhl (2018), Kesting and Ulhøi (2010), and Voxted (2018) as presented in the theoretical framework. The hierarchical organizational structure and related processes are perceived as disabling for EDI and are experienced as hindering the creation of a creative organizational culture by the Beta employees. R10 exemplifies that when having an idea wanted to be further explored or when wanting to arrange an innovation activity, a lot of time and commitment is needed from the individual driving the idea or activity for it to move upwards in the organization and potentially receive the acceptance from management needed to realize it. The organizational structure is added as an enabling or disabling factor for EDI, where reflected in the experiences of Beta employees, a hierarchical organizational structure has been disabling for EDI. However, organizational structure as an additional factor does not point out what structure is most beneficial for stimulating EDI since that is context-dependent and might differ depending on the organization. R2 sheds light on the differences between different employees and how some might gain inspiration by being freer, but how some on

the other hand might lack the more hierarchical structure and feel more lost with no sense of direction.

Customer orientation

Previous literature highlights the integration of customers in the innovation development process to validate and adopt the innovation ideas of employees (Buhl, 2018; Berchicci, 2009). At Beta, the formal innovation activities have their foundation in their client demand and evaluation, where trends and needs are investigated and pursued as formal innovation activities. Furthermore, mentioned previously that innovation ideas sponsored by clients are more likely to be realized than innovation ideas funded internally. Respondents frequently expressed how the customer is at the center of the innovation process and the unofficial innovation definition at Beta. Client validation and co-creation were highlighted as important for innovation ideas to be realized, which is in line with existing literature within the field of employee-driven innovation. Employees highlighted that many ideas have their origin in the customer or the customers' network. Creating new customer value was central for the unofficial innovation definition at Beta, which limits the ideas that can receive support and funding to be realized to mainly one sort of value which is new customer value. Respondents expressed how this can be problematic because much focus is allocated towards helping the client to innovate, while much less focus is put towards helping Beta itself innovate.

5.3 THE CONTRIBUTION OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL INNOVATION ACTIVITIES TO EMPLOYEE-DRIVEN INNOVATION

According to the theoretical framework, the formal and informal innovation activities correspond to the orders of employee-driven innovation as presented by Høyrup (2012) and can also be compared to the engineered and emergent network presented by Bessant and Tidd (2011). This perception of formal and informal innovation activities is shared with the data collected from the semi-structured interviews presented in the empirics. Below both formal and informal innovation activities are included and analyzed in relation to the theoretical framework.

5.3.1 FORMAL INNOVATION ACTIVITIES

The most commonly mentioned formal innovation activity and the first thing that came to mind for many of the Beta employees and managers when approaching innovation activities was the idea contest. The Beta employees and managers also mentioned innovation projects, developing innovation plans, communities of practice, and training as formal innovation activities. All of which have been included as formal innovation activities in prior research and included in the theoretical framework (Lindland, 2018; Pavel, 2020; Wegner, 2011; Timothy and K. Markham, 2017).

Idea contest

As described by employees and managers, part of the empirics, the idea contest is held once a year and is built on ideas generated by employees. The idea contest is the most commonly mentioned and most often referenced innovation activity within Beta that both employees and

managers have expressed when discussing employee-driven innovation during the conducted interviews. The idea contest is something that all participants know exists within Beta and is something that they either have actively participated in or taken part in more passively through internal communication. In addition, the idea contest is also an activity that is included in the way in which employees and managers view the organizational definition of innovation. The idea contest and its aim of generating commercialized value for customers is included by many participants in the organizational definition of innovation for Beta. As expressed by R1, participating in the idea contest is perceived as much fun and the activity provides the forum to work with innovation, but also to connect with new people and different competencies within the internal organizational network. The idea contest further provides aspects related to the enabling factors for employee-driven innovation (EDI), including strategy and vision (Voxted, 2018; Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010), resource allocation (Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010), incentives (Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010) and customer orientation (Buhl, 2018). As expressed by R6 the idea contest could develop and potentially increase the motivation for employees to participate by creating different themes to focus on for each contest to guide the employees in the generation of ideas and enable employees to be able to identify what lies within the given scope for the contest. Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) include strategy and vision for employee-driven innovation as an enabler for EDI and explain how the organizational vision and strategy for EDI can act as guiding light. The guiding light effect is discussed by Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) on an organizational level, but can however filter down to single innovation activities providing a sense of guidance for the employees when generating ideas for the idea contest.

The enabling factor of resource allocation in the sense of time, highlighted by Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) is also present in the idea contest. R1, R2, and R9 touch upon the time aspect in relation to the idea contest. R1 finds it difficult to find the time to participate in the contest, R2 describes the participation rather as sporadic due to client projects having a higher priority and R9 further expresses how the idea contest is not a priority and how too little time is allocated to the discovery and data collection phase of the ideas. Allocation of time for both formal and informal innovation activities is an aspect and enabling factor that permeates all interviews conducted and that participants, both employees and managers highlight as crucial for stimulating employee-driven innovation. Incentives, which also is an enabling factor highlighted by Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) is reflected in the participants' experience of the idea contest. R9 expresses how Beta should consider giving something in return to the employees submitting ideas. Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) together with Mazzanti et al. (2006) describe how incentives could be payment incentives, and how an organization should aim to incentivize teams rather than individuals. Motivation and incentives are an entire topic of its own and differ for every employee, as mentioned by R9 in the interview. Beta employees and managers highlight how incentives can be monetary, just as highlighted by Mazzanti et al. (2006), however, highlighted is how incentives span further than money. Incentivizing employee-driven innovation could be by giving back to employees by arranging an innovation day filled with inspiration, interactions and discussions, learnings, innovation challenges, and the time for employees to participate in innovation activities. Lastly, the idea

contest reflects customer orientation (Buhl, 2018), and how the contest aims to generate commercialized solutions that are possible to provide customers in the future.

Training

Training is highlighted by Timothy and K. Markham (2017), R1 and R2 as a formal innovation activity. In line with Timothy and K. Markham (2017), R2 describes how training is a fundamental formal innovation activity and how without this training Beta can miss out on opportunities. Further, how training contributes to an innovation-friendly culture and an environment with the potential to foster employee engagement and lower the barrier for employees to participate in innovation. This by providing employees with the confidence and skills to feel comfortable participating in innovation activities. The formal innovation activity, training is tightly coupled with the enabling factor of innovation education. The enabling factor of innovation education has emerged during the interviews with Beta employees and managers and highlights how fundamental innovation knowledge and skills have the potential to enable employee-driven innovation. Innovation education is an enabling or disabling factor for EDI not explicitly included in the prior research for enabling factors performed by Amundsen et al. (2014), Buhl (2018), Kesting and Ulhøi (2010), and Voxted (2018) as presented in the theoretical framework, but it as mentioned added as a formal organizational factor that enables EDI.

Innovation projects and communities of practice

Innovation projects were also highlighted during the company interviews as formal innovation activities, in line with Lindland (2018) who also includes innovation projects as formal innovation activities. R5, R12, R4, R14, and R15 describe the innovation projects as conducted in collaboration with a client and as highlighted by R15 most projects arise from client conversations and interactions. These innovation projects reflect the customer orientation within Beta. Customer orientation is highlighted by Buhl (2018) as an enabling factor for employee-driven innovation (EDI) and for Beta innovation is mainly done in collaboration with clients. As pointed out by Buhl (2018) basing innovation on customer demands and behaviors and validating ideas and solutions with customers or users, has potential benefits for innovations. This is also emphasized by Beta employees and managers. R3 expresses how finding ways to co-create together with customers would be beneficial and R12 highlights how a joint venture is the absolute best way of innovating together with customers. In this sense, the innovation projects build on customer orientation. On the contrary, the involvement of clients in innovation projects is mentioned in relation to funding. Funding is included in the resource allocation part of the formal organizational factors that enable or disable EDI. Kesting and Ulhøi (2010) include funding as a part of the resource allocation enabling EDI and in relation to innovation projects, Beta employees and managers contrast the benefits of client funded projects, by highlighting how internally funding innovation projects has the potential to result in more radical innovations and not limit the innovation projects to customer demands.

Communities of practice are included as formal innovation activities and are described by Wegner (2011) as groups of individuals with a shared interest that together share knowledge and learn in a shared environment. Such groups are present within Beta and referred to by the company participants as departments or practices. There is a dedicated innovation department where employees and managers with an interest in innovation have the opportunity to engage. These communities are formally established, however, anyone within Beta is encouraged to join. Throughout the company interviews, the innovation department, and especially the manager for the innovation department has been highlighted. When describing the organizational definition of innovation both R3 and R13 refer to this internal innovation department and much of the perception of Beta's view on innovation is influenced by and inspired by the innovation department and its manager. A role that can be described as an internal innovation champion.

5.3.2 INFORMAL INNOVATION ACTIVITIES

The informal innovation activities are defined in line with Høyrup (2012) and correspond with the first order of employee-driven innovation. The first order signifies bottom-up innovation, where the process is initiated, refined, and developed by employees (Høyrup, 2012), also related to the emergent networks as described by Tidd and Bessant (2009). The experience of informal innovation activities expressed by Beta employees and managers resonates with the bottom-up perspective described by both Høyrup (2012) and Tidd and Bessant (2009). Informal innovation activities might not be recognized by management as highlighted by Høyrup et al. (2018) and are by Beta employees and managers described as the habit of change or micro innovation. Informal innovation activities are small activities that occur continuously, but that might not be thought of as innovation depending on the definition of innovation. These small things happen in a relaxed setting and often in interactions with others. The manager R14 further adds how informal innovation needs to be supported by a culture that encourages innovation and thinking outside of the box, and highlights that in such a culture informal innovation will succeed. Within Beta, these informal innovation activities include the coffee machine and after work, discussion sessions, daily stand-ups, teamwork, client offerings and Friday questionnaires.

Coffee machine and After work

The coffee machine is described as an informal innovation activity by company participants. The coffee machine provides the space for interaction between people and is expressed by Beta employees and managers as the place where this informal innovation occurs. The interactions that occur at the coffee machine are both spontaneous and are not formalized in the same way as a meeting, and provide a commonplace of interaction between individuals within Beta with different organizational belongings, competencies, or from different projects. After works are also highlighted as an example of informal innovation activities within Beta and just as for the coffee machine, R6 and R10 highlight this informal innovation as occurring when people get together. The interactions that occur between different individuals both at the coffee machine and after work are examples of informal innovation activities, but also relate to the organizational culture. Culture as an enabling or disabling

factor for EDI is highlighted by Amundsen et al. (2014). Interactions at the coffee machine or after work enable people to get to know each other and R10 describes these social activities as something that creates a glue between people. A glue that R10 points out as very important as it makes people feel less shy and facilitates an open environment that hopefully fosters idea-sharing. Benefits that also are highlighted through trust, security, and communication are included in the culture factor presented by Amundsen et al. (2014). The informal activities creating interactions can therefore be identified as important activities to foster a culture beneficial for EDI. Further, the enabling or disabling factor of resource allocation is present when R10 describes the after works. R10 highlights that it is important for these activities to not take up too much personal time and that the organization sees the value of these types of activities, and as a result allocates time during working hours. R10 suggests arranging the after-work, or social activities at 2 PM rather than at 5 PM to enable people to participate. A suggestion that relates to the allocation of time for informal innovation activities.

Discussion sessions, daily stand-ups, and teamwork

Activities such as discussion sessions and daily stand-ups are mentioned as informal innovation activities by Beta employees and managers. Common for these activities is that sharing knowledge and experiences within and between teams and the importance of meeting and the synergies that the interactions create are at the core. The manager R4 believes in gathering people and providing them the courage and tools to be innovative. Gathering a diverse group of people with different experiences, knowledge, and backgrounds and combining that with an environment where there are no stupid ideas is where R4 sees potential for employee-driven innovation. Working together in teams together with others provides the opportunity to discuss how things are done, and reflect upon how different things are done currently and how they could be done in a better way. R2 describes how often, when working in teams, ideas for improvements have been able to be realized. This as a result of the different competencies within the team. R2 highlights these informal innovation activities as beneficial for employee-driven innovation since they become more ad hoc and free. Further, these settings do not have any established goals or KPIs and therefore there is no pressure or demand to identify for example a certain number of ideas. Once again these informal innovation activities relate to the organizational culture, where an organizational culture beneficial for EDI is seen as a prerequisite for these informal interactions in teams to occur.

Client offerings

Working together with colleagues is also mentioned as an informal innovation activity. R1, R6, R10, R14, and R15 describe how working with the creation of new client offerings is an informal activity where colleagues get together in teams, and make use of their experiences and knowledge from prior experiences, by identifying and coming up with new ideas for how something that has been done for another client, might be beneficial in an offering for another client. An informal innovation activity that emphasizes the customer orientation enabling factor presented by Buhl (2018). The creation of new client offerings often stems from client meetings or interactions where new projects or client needs are identified, making the

creation of new client offerings an informal innovation activity related to the enabling factor of customer orientation. Furthermore, creating new client offerings makes use of the organizational culture and foremost the internal network. Both employees and managers highlighting client offerings as an informal innovation activity explain how it activates the internal network by combining experiences to create these new offerings.

Friday questionnaires

Engaging employees by sending out a Friday questionnaire was also included as an informal innovation activity. The manager R4 explains that this informal innovation initiative was initiated after employees were sent to their home offices due to the Covid-19 pandemic in order to keep the togetherness of the employees within the team. Togetherness is of importance for an organization to maintain a community feel. This aimed feeling of togetherness is something that also is emphasized as an enabler for employee-driven and that is aimed to be provided through the organizational culture.

5.3.3 THE IMPACT OF A REMOTE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Throughout the interviews with both Beta employees and managers prevalent has been the topic of the Covid-19 pandemic. When conducting the interviews the focus has been on discussing employee-driven innovation, its enabling or disabling factors, and the contribution of formal and informal innovation activities. A field that is or has been highly dependent on interactions. As a consequence of the covid-19 pandemic employees and managers were forced to work from home in a remote setting. Something that the participants have highlighted as having a negative impact on employee-driven innovation. Further, the participants point out the more informal innovation activities and describe how they often, in an in-office environment, occurred spontaneously and unexpectedly. This spontaneous and unexpected interaction with colleagues is something that does not happen in a remote setting. Participants describe that calling a colleague spontaneously via an online meeting platform is something that comes across as weird or awkward, and is not something that is done. Furthermore, the interactions that occurred in a physical setting during the minutes before and after a meeting was held are removed in the current remote or hybrid work environment. Those minutes and interactions are something that the participants compare to the coffee machine interactions, and point out as crucial for innovation and building a feeling of togetherness. The manager R12 expresses how these informal interactions will happen in the future work environment is still unknown, but crucial to explore for employee-driven innovation.

6. CONCLUSION

The following chapter answers the main research question and the two related sub-questions of this thesis by outlining conclusions drawn from the analysis. Further, implications from the conclusions are included to add a discussion with the purpose to generalize, nuance, and question the conclusions drawn. Lastly, suggestions for future research are included.

6.1 STIMULATING EMPLOYEE-DRIVEN INNOVATION IN CONSULTING FIRMS

The purpose of this thesis has been to explore how employee-driven innovation can be stimulated within the consultancy industry. In doing so, it has particularly focused on what enabling and disabling factors there are for stimulating employee-driven innovation and the contribution of formal and informal innovation activities. The thesis has gained insight into stimulating employee-driven innovation within the consultancy industry, by drawing upon experiences from four experts and a total of 15 managers and employees at Beta. Combined with prior research within the field of employee-driven innovation, built up by the two sub-questions of enabling factors and formal and informal innovation activities, the main research question: ***How can consulting firms stimulate employee-driven innovation?*** is answered. First, the two sub-questions are accounted for, then the synthesis of theory presented in 2.6 is revised based on the empirical findings of this thesis.

The answer to the first sub-question: ***What are the enabling factors for stimulating employee-driven innovation?*** points out how there is no single enabler for employee-driven innovation, they complement each other and need to be combined as highlighted both in the theoretical framework and prevalent in the conducted interviews. Further, factors aimed to enable EDI, can also have the opposite effect and be experienced as disablers for EDI depending on their level of presence within the organization. The empirical findings of this study confirm cultural factors, management support, formal organizational factors and customer orientation as enabling or disabling factors for EDI, as the theoretical framework also proposes. Within cultural factors, the ability to openly discuss ideas reflected as an openness within the organizational culture, especially between employees and managers is an important enabler that if not present has the impact of producing inferior innovations due to the lacking iteration. A highlighted dimension in the empirical findings is the positive response of managers when employees share their innovation ideas, which can be related to the openness aspect of culture while also reflecting management buy-in. Furthermore, the internal network was highlighted as a key aspect of the cultural enabling factor as it enables the access to colleagues with complementary knowledge and experiences beneficial for innovation. An additional enabling factor that the study adds to the cultural factors is internal communication and language, where for example internal documents should signal creativity and the human factor. A lack of communication is perceived as a disabler for EDI and likewise the use of masculine and conservative lingo within the organization. Factors that were not confirmed within the empirical findings include employee well-being, task autonomy, development orientation which was contradicted within the empirical findings and lastly, a sense of pride of working within the organization.

Management support factors were in the empirical findings intertwined with the cultural factors and oftentimes difficult to separate due to the strong interrelationship. The empirics confirmed the need for managers to have mentoring or coaching support, as also included in the theoretical framework. As for cultural factors and management support factors, the formal organizational factors are further intertwined with the management support factors. The empirics confirm strategy and vision, resources and incentives as enabling or disabling formal organizational factors for EDI, however, based on the empirical findings, adds innovation education and organizational structure as factors. For the strategy and vision for EDI the innovation definition is of importance. An innovation strategy and definition is perceived to enable EDI by creating a direction and guiding light for employees. For resources, managers enabling employees to work with innovation during working hours was identified as an enabling factor for EDI, which in the theoretical framework is categorized as a formal organizational factor, however in practice time was often brought up in relation to management support. The allocation of time, or other resources that are provided by management as incentives for EDI were also in the empirics rather tied to management support than the formal organizational factors as in the theoretical framework. So, both time as a resource and incentives were confirmed as enabling for EDI, however, they point out that the categorization of factors is flexible. The most frequently mentioned formal organizational factor was resource allocation in terms of time and money, where time was especially pointed out as enabling employees to participate in various innovation activities while money was highlighted in connection to the further exploration of ideas. Time was also within the empirical findings prevalent as a disabler when lacking, creating stress and impacting employee well-being. Further, the study adds innovation education and organizational structure as factors.

Lastly, the customer orientation factor is confirmed within the empirical findings. Within Beta, the employees work closely with the customers which enables them to tailor innovations to customer needs. The customers are continuously involved within the innovation processes in Beta, both in formal and informal activities. The formal innovation activities were rooted in customer requests, where themes were developed for the idea contest based on trends and identified customer needs. For informal innovations, customer needs were identified in everyday work which sparked employees' motivation to start exploring the idea which could turn into a new customer offering. To add to the impact of the innovation definition, the empirical findings confirmed that it was more likely to receive funding for an innovation idea if it was either sponsored by a client or had the potential to create new customer value that could be scaled. This finding emphasizes how the organizational definition of innovation has an impact on which innovation activities or projects that receive funding.

The second sub-question: ***How do formal and informal innovation activities contribute to employee-driven innovation?*** incorporates formal and informal innovation activities. Formal innovation activities presented in both prior research, and present within Beta include idea contests, training, innovation projects, and communities of practice. Aspects within these

formal innovation activities link closely to the enabling or disabling factors for employee-driven innovation, where strategy and vision might be as important for single innovation activities as it is for the entire organization, allocation of time enabling participation, incentivizing EDI being done by innovation days filled with inspiration, interactions, discussions, learnings, innovation challenges, and foremost the time for employees to participate in or drive innovation activities, the added innovation education factor being tightly linked to training as a formal innovation activity, and customer orientation clearly incorporated in formal innovation activities and a disabler for EDI in regards to funding. The informal innovation activities identified within Beta include the interactions at the coffee machine or after work, discussion sessions, daily stand-ups, teamwork, the creation of new client offerings, and Friday questionnaires. All of which also, as for the formal innovation activities, relate to the enabling or disabling factors for employee-driven innovation. The importance of time is highlighted in relation to the coffee machine and after work, and allocating time for these social activities during working hours would signal both management engagement and importance. These social interactions also add to the organizational culture and contribute to stimulating EDI by enabling individuals to get to know each other and create a social glue. Further, working on the creation of new client offerings is also an informal innovation activity that makes use of the organizational culture and its important internal network of colleagues and competencies, and also is an activity that emphasizes customer orientation as the creation of these new offerings often is sparked by client interactions. Even for the Friday questionnaire, the aim is to create a feeling of togetherness. Doing this via Friday questionnaires sent to the team is one example of how maintaining a culture of togetherness is done in a remote environment. Common for both the formal and informal innovation activities is how they incorporate, reflect, and tightly link to the enabling or disabling factors for EDI. The activities facilitate the interaction of the internal network, cultural openness, management support, and customer orientation to be experienced. As a result, the formal and informal innovation activities contribute by having a central role in incorporating and making use of the enabling factors for EDI.

As highlighted, prevalent in both the theoretical framework and experiences of managers and employees at Beta there is no one way to stimulate employee-driven innovation in consultancy firms. There are enabling or disabling factors for employee-driven innovation including the organizational culture, management support, formal organizational factors, customer orientation, and innovation education. These factors are in turn present through or experienced by employees through both formal and informal innovation activities. Leveraging the internal network and openness and allocating the time for interactions to occur are, however, two key components of stimulating employee-driven innovation that have been most frequently mentioned by Beta employees and managers. This thesis adds internal communication and language as an enabling or disabling factor for employee-driven innovation part of the cultural factors as well as organizational structure and innovation education as enabling or disabling factors for employee-driven innovation part of the formal organizational factors. The revised synthesis of theory, based on the empirical findings of this thesis is presented in Figure 7.

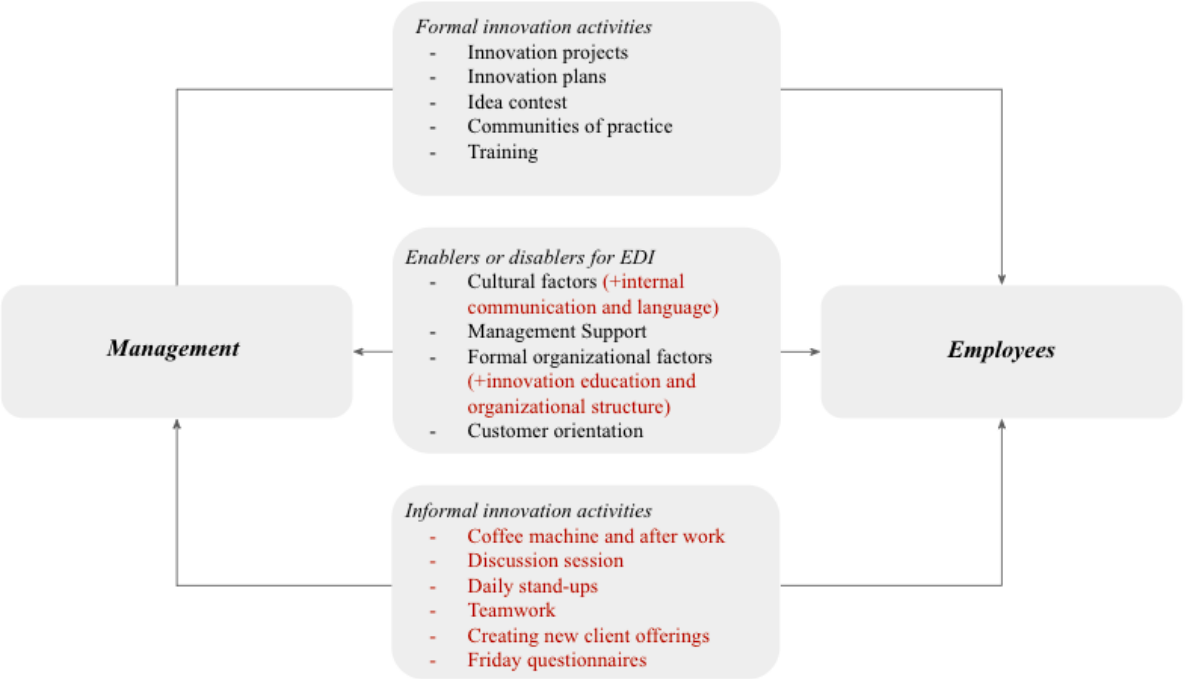

Figure 7. Revised synthesis of theory.

The revised synthesis of theory is an extension of the presented synthesis of theory that accounts for the empirical findings of the study. The research confirms that the personal definition of innovation for employees and managers permeates the view on innovation including what is considered at EDI along with what the formal and informal innovation activities contribute with. In agreement with the theoretical framework, it was found that management attempts to stimulate EDI through formal innovation activities which have their origin in the organizational definition of innovation, categorized as top-down innovation initiatives. The formal innovation activities initiated by management that the research confirms are innovation projects, innovation plans, idea contests, communities of practice and training. Furthermore, employees contribute to EDI by either participating in the formal innovation activities or by driving informal innovation activities, which reflect the definition of innovation of employees, categorized as bottom-innovation initiatives. The research contributes with identifying several of such informal innovation activities: conversations by the coffee machine and the participation in after works, organizing and participating in discussion sessions, daily stand-ups for knowledge sharing, the interaction in teamwork, creating new client offerings as actively refining and developing, and finally friday questionnaires to keep the community feel. The research furthermore confirms the enabling or disabling factors and adds dimensions to these factors by including internal communication and language as an enabling or disabling factor for employee-driven innovation part of the cultural factors as well as organizational structure and innovation education as enabling or disabling factors for employee-driven innovation part of the formal organizational factors.

As concluded, innovation as for employee-driven innovation is context-dependent. This thesis contributes to a greater context-specific understanding of the stimulation of

employee-driven innovation within the consultancy industry. An industry where the stimulation of employee-driven innovation is, amongst other factors, affected by the business model of the consultancy industry being highly dependent on billable client hours and the availability of consultants. Further, in prior research, the main focus for innovation activities has lied on the formal ones, possibly as a result of them being easier to identify. This thesis, however, contributes with a greater insight into informal innovation activities, both by understanding which they are and their contribution to employee-driven innovation. As highlighted, much focus within prior research lies on formal innovation activities, although they do not always have the intended outcome. Including informal innovation activities can have a beneficial impact on the stimulation of employee-driven innovation. Further, this thesis adds organizational structure, innovation education as well as internal communication and language as enabling or disabling factors for employee-driven innovation. In conclusion, stimulating employee-driven innovation within consultancy firms is dependent on a combination of enabling factors, and the formal and informal innovation activities contribute to employee-driven innovation by facilitating the interaction for the enablers for EDI to be experienced by employees.

6.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS AND PRACTITIONERS

As concluded, there is no one enabling or disabling factor for stimulating employee-driven innovation, however, the enabling and disabling factors need to be considered on an organizational level to anticipate factors interrelationships and the stimulating effect of combining several factors. This enables the organization to account for potential contradicting factors such as the possibility to contribute to employee-driven innovation through an idea contest, but not being able to realize the idea due to KPIs, risk, and funding. The factors aimed to stimulate employee-driven innovation need to be aligned and KPIs and incentive schemes need to signal a unified approach to employee-driven innovation, both for employees and managers. Giving back to employees by enabling them the time to work on ideas or innovations is a potential incentive for stimulating employee-driven innovation.

Further, formal innovation activities are perceived as forced, and a way in which the organization aims to force innovation. In relation, the informal innovation activities, that appear more spontaneous without articulated goals or KPIs, should not be overlooked. The informal innovation activities contribute to employee-driven innovation and consideration about how these informal activities could be stimulated becomes an important aspect of stimulating employee-driven innovation, relating back to the enabling and disabling factors for employee-driven innovation. The coffee machine was the first thing that came to mind for many employees and the coffee machine interactions might be a central activity to consider when designing the future work environment. Management was further highlighted as a central component in capturing employee-driven innovation and further emphasizing innovation leadership could enable managers' role in innovation and the realization of ideas to expand. In relation, time was the most requested resource to stimulate employee-driven innovation, also for management. Composing smaller teams could provide management with more time, and possibly more mentoring management support. Lastly, the effect of the

Covid-19 pandemic and a remote work environment has been prominent. Shifting to a remote or hybrid work environment has been perceived as having a negative impact on employee-driven innovation and foremost the informal innovation activities that rely heavily on spontaneous interactions. It is important to continue to explore how the feeling of togetherness and the facilitation of organizational culture can be maintained in the future work environment.

6.3 FUTURE RESEARCH

This thesis has provided an exploratory research approach to explore how consulting firms can stimulate employee-driven innovation (EDI) through studying enabling or disabling factors for EDI and how formal and informal innovation activities contribute to EDI. However, the research field of innovation, as for EDI, is a broad topic that leaves room for further research within the field. As emphasized throughout the thesis there is no one definition for innovation and no one way for consulting firms to stimulate EDI, both being context-dependent. This thesis is conducted as a single-case study, enabling a thorough exploration of EDI within the given organization, however, implying that they have not been explored within other organizations. To gain a broader overview of EDI within the consultancy industry or in other industries, a multiple-case study would provide a broader take on the question of how to stimulate EDI and possibly provide insights into how stimulating EDI has similarities and or differences between different industries or organizations.

Further, throughout this thesis research internal communication and language, innovation education and organizational structure as enablers or disablers for EDI have been highlighted. These factors were not included in the prior research within the field of enablers for EDI and as a result not included in the thesis theoretical framework. Establishing sufficient internal communication and language, having some sort of common education, knowledge, or skills for innovation, and understanding the organizational structures impact on EDI were rather highlighted by the thesis company participants. More thoroughly exploring what internal communication and language, what knowledge is beneficial or even necessary for innovation and the impact of the organizational structure are potential future fields of research. Highlighted in this thesis is also the Covid-19 pandemic and several participants expressed the impact of Covid-19 on EDI. Pointed out was how the remote setting, as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, has impacted formal and informal innovation activities and questioned how the organizational culture and sense of togetherness should be maintained and fostered in a remote setting. This has in particular been expressed in relation to the informal innovation activities, which rely on more spontaneous interactions. Complementing the research performed in exploring the future of work environments, the key for EDI is to understand how these formal and informal innovations and especially the prior spontaneous interactions should occur in a new remote or hybrid work environment and in turn Covid-19's impact on EDI. Furthermore, the enablers for EDI explored within this study can equally be considered as disenablers which implies the potential for an existing inverse relationship. Therefore, in future research it would be of interest to further research the potential inverse

relationship and if a tipping point exists when organizations invest too little or too much effort towards stimulating EDI and at which point an enabler for EDI becomes a disabler. Future research utilizing a quantitative methodology is therefore proposed.

Put together, the context dependency and complexity of EDI comes with further areas or perspectives to be researched in the future. Research that has the potential to both provide a broader understanding of how organizations within different industries can stimulate EDI, how the future work environment will enable EDI and the inverse relationship between enabling and disabling effects of enablers for EDI, research beneficial to further stimulate employee-driven innovation.

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8. APPENDIX

The following chapter includes the appendix. The appendix includes the interview guides for both the employee and manager company interviews.

8.1 INTERVIEW GUIDE COMPANY PARTICIPANTS - EMPLOYEE

Interview questions

1. Would you like to start off by sharing a little bit about yourself and your role within Beta?
2. How long have you been a part of Beta?
3. What does innovation mean to you? /How would you define innovation? How does Beta define innovation? How is it different/or alike your definition of innovation? Why?
4. When thinking back to your latest involvement, how has your experience of participating in innovation work been? What kind of resources did you have access to to realize your idea? When in the innovation process were these resources added? (looking for time and resources, the employee has experienced stress, high demands, high demands match the resources that are added, etc.)
5. What is an informal innovation activity to you? Which informal innovation activities have you been involved in?
6. What motivates you to participate in formal innovation activities? What motivates you to participate in informal innovation activities? Why? Could you give an example?
7. If you think back to a time, maybe the last time where you experienced an innovative or creative culture at work, what would you say were important aspects that made it feel that way for you? Why?
8. How has the company (leader) supported you in the innovation process? (Both formal and informal) Benefit? Lack? (understanding of the idea, empathy, help with realizing the idea, finding networks)
9. Is this something you have worked with during working hours and / or leisure time? Consequences for your well-being?
   Is it just a joy to be able to continue working on your idea? What has been the downside?

10. When thinking of your day to day tasks, how does innovation relate to them? Why? Tell me about the last time that you did this. How would you (as an individual employee) like to contribute to innovation through day-to-day tasks?
11. How did you work with innovation during the Covid pandemic? How did you feel that the innovation process changed when remote work was introduced?
12. If you think back to the last time that you participated in an innovation activity or project, what knowledge do you think was beneficial or necessary to have? (Think of knowledge bases, skills e.g. leadership) Why? What was lacking? What made you frustrated? How (method) would you estimate innovation knowledge? What would your knowledge level be in your own estimate?
13. Do you have other colleagues in mind that you would recommend us to reach out to? Any participating in informal innovation activities or projects?

Wrap up

- Now we have reached the end of the questions that we had for you and we want to thank you for taking the time to participate and for your valuable insights. Before we end, do you have any questions for us or something that you want to highlight that we have not touched upon?

8.2 INTERVIEW GUIDE COMPANY PARTICIPANTS - MANAGER

Introduction-questions

1. Would you like to start off by sharing a little bit about yourself and your role within Beta? Do you have personnel responsibilities?
2. How long have you been a part of Beta?
3. What does innovation mean to you? /How would you define innovation? How does Beta define innovation? How is it different/or alike your definition of innovation?
4. What is an informal innovation activity to you? Which informal innovation activities have you been involved in?
5. How do you through your day-to-day operational tasks enable innovation? Any specific actions or activities? Both formal and informal. As a manager, which day to day tasks do you conduct to enable bottom-up innovation initiatives from your employees/team?

Cultural factors

6. Thinking back to a time/the last time that you in some way participated in an innovation initiative/activity/project, how would you describe the organizational culture at Beta? What aspects of the culture enabled innovation?

7. What have you done as a manager/from a management perspective to enable an innovative culture?

Management support

8. What management structure is established to support innovation initiatives from employees? (Ideas and the realization of them)

Formal org factors

9. Would you like to share more about how you involve employees in innovation?(from a management perspective) Think back to a time when one of your colleagues (employees which you are manager of) approached you with an idea, what did you do and how did you react? Why? Benefits? Frustration?
10. How do you work to catch the innovation initiated by employees/informal innovation?
11. What incentives or disincentives are there for employees to participate in formal and informal innovation activities? What incentives does Beta create? (disincentives)
12. Which resources do you allocate and enable your employees access to, for formal and informal innovation activities? And which resources would you want to be able to allocate?

Customer orientation

13. What impact/role do customers have in the innovation initiatives?
14. What are the benefits or frustrations of involving clients in innovation work?

Final questions

15. Do you have other colleagues in mind that you think are great at enabling/stimulating innovation driven by employees that you would recommend us to reach out to?

Wrap up

- Now we have reached the end of the questions that we had for you and we want to thank you for taking the time to participate and for your valuable insights. Before we end, do you have any questions for us or something that you want to highlight that we have not touched upon?

8.3 CODING FOR THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis codes/themes/tags			
Type of theme	**Overarching theme**	**Coding utilized**	
	Innovation definition	Personal definition	
		Organizational definition	

Predetermined themes		Comparison of personal and organizational definition	
	Enablers or disablers for EDI	Culture	
		Management support	
		Formal organizational factors	Vision and strategy
			Time
			Incentives
		Customer orientation	
	Innovation activities	Formal innovation activities	
		Informal innovation activities	
Emergent themes	Enablers or disablers of EDI	Innovation education	
	Pandemic effects	Covid-19 effects	
	Motivation	Motivation for innovation	
		Motivation for participation	